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USING LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM AS A FRAMEWORK
FOR TEACHING APOLOGETICS TO POST-CONFIRMATION
YOUTH AT OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH
IN SOUTH WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT

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I dedicate this project first to our children—William, Joshua, and Brianna. The words of Luther’s Small Catechism are all the more precious to me as I watch you hear, learn, mark, and inwardly digest the Christian faith from its pages. Second, I dedicate this project to the youth of Our Savior Lutheran Church. My time spent teaching you the Catechism and our conversations about apologetics serve as the motivation and inspiration of this project. Soli Deo Gloria.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- KW Kolb, Robert, and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000.
- LSC Luther, Martin. *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*. St. Louis: Concordia, 2017.
- LW Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*. Edited by Helmut T. Lehmann and J. Pelikan. 79 vols. St. Louis: Concordia, 1957-2015.
- TDNT Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1964-1976.

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PREFACE

The relationship between a pastor and the people he serves is sacred. As I have labored over these pages, I have often paused to give thanks to God, remembering the saints at Our Savior Lutheran Church in my prayers. I have a deep sense of gratitude for the support and encouragement offered by the leadership and members of Our Savior, and in particular, the young people whose conversations and curiosity have prompted this project. It is my sincere prayer that the Holy Spirit uses these labors to shape young hearts and minds for a ready defense of the gospel.

I am deeply thankful to Kelly, my wife, for all of her love, support, and encouragement during my time in the D.Min. program. I am also thankful for the faculty and staff of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary—especially Dr. Timothy Paul Jones for serving as my project advisor. As a Lutheran among Baptist brothers and sisters, my heart has been refreshed by the unity we have in the chief cornerstone of the church catholic—Jesus Christ our Lord.

John W. Rasmussen

South Windsor, Connecticut

May 2018

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Catechesis has been central to the life of the church.¹ Ever since Jesus commanded his apostles to baptize and teach, the church has formed disciples through ongoing instruction (Matt 28:19). Since the time of the Protestant Reformation, Christians in the Lutheran tradition have utilized Luther's Small Catechism (LSC) as an introduction and ongoing guide to Christian doctrine and life.² Until recently, Luther's Small Catechism ordered generally unchallenged beliefs about God and morality toward an orthodox, biblical confession. However, recent shifts in culture have radically questioned basic societal assumptions about God, morality, and reality itself. As sojourners in the secular land of New England, believers at Our Savior Lutheran Church

¹David Rueter defines catechesis as "the sounding again of the historical truths of the Christian faith from one generation to the next." David Rueter, *Teaching the Faith at Home* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2016), 7. Since at least the third and fourth centuries, the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer formed the basis of pre-baptismal catechesis. Later additions by the church fathers included a treatment of morality, as well as the sacraments. By the time of Luther, catechesis typically involved formal instruction in the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and morality. Charles Arand, *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000), 15-23.

²Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 13-40. Often called "the Six Chief Parts," the structure of the Catechism is (1) the Ten Commandments, (2) the Creed, (3) the Lord's Prayer, (4) Holy Baptism, (5) Confession, and (6) the Sacrament of the Altar. Arand notes about LSC, "Just as it is difficult to imagine the Anglican Reformation without *The Book of Common Prayer* or the Calvinistic Reformation without the *Institutes on the Christian Religion*, so it is impossible to imagine the Lutheran Reformation without Luther's Small Catechism," Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 15. Given the limited scope of this project, attention will be devoted to the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer.

(OSLC) have felt the tremors of cultural changes stronger and earlier than those in other regions of the nation. For this reason, it is imperative for the health and perseverance of our members that the pastors of Our Savior reorient the expression of traditional catechesis in light of current apologetics.

Context

The world in which OSLC does ministry is radically different from its early days as a suburban church plant. From its inception in 1958, families flocked to the congregation, easily assimilating church membership into the normal expectations of middle-class American life. In the following decades, substantial numbers of children received baptism, catechesis from Luther's Small Catechism, and confirmation. While many of these children went on to college and careers in other cities, others remained in the South Windsor area. Only a handful of these have remained faithful members. All of these children received thorough catechesis and made a public confession of faith in the triune God. What happened? One likely possibility is that the catechetical formation offered from Luther's Small Catechism during these years did not account for the tumultuous cultural changes of the 1960s and following decades. As a result, many catechized youth (and even adults) were unable to resist the spirit of the age, and eventually capitulated to the culture rather than critique it from a Christian worldview.

The current cultural context at OSLC is similar, but more acute. A recent Barna poll ranked Hartford, Connecticut as the sixth most post-Christian city in the United States.³ South Windsor is a suburb of Hartford, and is also surrounded by other

³“The Most Post-Christian Cities in America: 2017.” Barna Group, accessed November 2, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/post-christian-cities-america-2017/>. Hartford/New Haven ranks sixth among other top-ranking cities in close proximity: Portland/Auburn, ME (1), Boston, MA/Manchester, NH (2), Albany/Schenectady/Troy, NY (3), Providence, RI/New Bedford, MA (4), and

top-ranking post-Christian cities in the Northeast. The post-Christian, secular worldview has the upper hand in South Windsor public education, especially at the secondary level. Both pastors of OSLC have watched as all too often well-catechized children enter high school confessing faith in Jesus Christ, only to graduate as lukewarm, skeptical, or worse. From the Scriptures and Luther's Small Catechism they have learned the content of the Christian faith, however, in school they receive competing catechesis in the forms of relativism, pluralism, and radical individualism. In addition, cultural voices in the forms of social media, television, and music all broadcast conflicting messages into their impressionable minds.

While some children are able to navigate their high school years as faithful Christians, the college years are particularly trying. Young people in Connecticut experience tremendous pressure to succeed in high school, gain entry into a prestigious university, and forge a future in a career deemed successful by their peers and parents. Very often, young Christians are not prepared for the intensely secular and hedonistic environment of many universities. They may know what they believe, but in the face of direct or indirect opposition, are unable to defend their faith to others. Sadly enough, some of these young people go on to confess Christ nominally, or even embrace ideologies and lifestyles in direct opposition to the Christian worldview.

The situation at OSLC is not all negative. Although our youth live in a secular Babylon, many are still faithful, confessing and following Jesus in ways that move their pastors and parents to humble thanksgiving. Nevertheless, the undercurrents of alternate

Burlington, VT/Plattsburgh, NY (5). According to this poll, it is reasonable to conclude that Hartford is located in the epicenter of post-Christian America.

worldviews that wear on the hearts and minds of young people and their parents deserve careful attention and response.

As the associate pastor of OSLC, one aspect of my calling is to oversee the faith formation of children, youth, and college students. During my six years at OSLC, I have observed two factors that contribute to youth following Jesus after high school graduation: The active involvement of parents in catechizing their children from an early age, as well as ongoing conversations in apologetics with post-confirmation youth. Those children whose parents prioritize weekly worship and study of the Scriptures and Luther's Small Catechism at home very often go on to confess Jesus Christ in later years. Furthermore, the youth who have engaged in discussions related to apologetic issues have generally navigated their high school and college years without growing skeptical. In my experience, students often pose a litany of questions regarding the frequent challenges to their catechesis. Many of these conversations have continued into their college years, along with fruitful discipleship and continued worship.

Since my arrival at OSLC, apologetics has played a major role in my preaching and teaching. Catechesis from Luther's Small Catechism has also been a central focus. I have worked to encourage and equip parents to teach Luther's Small Catechism to their children, thus providing them with a framework for interpreting and applying the Scriptures faithfully. Both of these efforts stem from a pastoral concern for the well-being of our children as they grow up in a secular society. While middle school confirmation classes touch on apologetic issues, no formal curriculum exists that utilizes the content of Luther's Small Catechism as an opportunity to provide a defense of the Christian faith. Furthermore, structured and intentional apologetic instruction is currently absent during

the critical post-confirmation high school years. Since the current context of OSLC demands such formal apologetic instruction, and since the content of Luther's Small Catechism embodies the familiar language of previous discipleship, an opportunity exists to utilize Luther's Small Catechism not only as a catechetical resource, but also as a framework for teaching apologetics to the post-confirmation youth of OSLC.

Rationale

Catechesis is a fundamental aspect of Christian discipleship.⁴ Traditionally, the church has used catechesis to impart the Christian worldview on the basis of three key elements: morality (the Ten Commandments), belief (the Apostles' Creed), and prayer (the Lord's Prayer).⁵ Many catechisms address the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper as well. Catechumens typically commit these parts to memory, along with supporting Scripture texts and explanations. The overall goal of catechesis is to form the

⁴Both the Old and New Testaments clearly command deliberate instruction in the faith. For example, in Deuteronomy 6 Moses exhorts the people, "These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children" (Deut 6:6-7). Following Jesus' command to teach the nations all that he commanded (Matt 28:19-20), there follows a consistent emphasis on teaching in Acts (Acts 2:42, 5:21, 15:35, 20:20, 28:31) and the New Testament letters (Rom 6:17, Eph 4:21, Col 1:28, 2 Thess 2:14, 1 Tim 4:13). While the New Testament uses more than one word for the general concept of instruction in the faith (frequently διδάσκω and διδαχή—but note also the use of παιδεία and νοουθεσία in Eph 6:4), it occasionally employs the word κατηχέω—the etymological root of the English words *catechesis*, *catechism*, and *catechumen*. The word literally means "to sound from above." However, in Paul's writings it refers to "giving instruction concerning the content of faith." Hermann W. Beyer, "κατηχέω," *TDNT* 3:638-40. For example, Paul writes in Gal 6:6, "Let the one who is taught (κατηχούμενος) the word share all good things with the one who teaches" (κατηχούντι). This verse carries the idea of passing on the faith in a formal relationship between teacher and student. While the New Testament does not give specific instructions about catechetical content or method, its consistent references to instruction give justification for the church's later practice of offering structured instruction in the essential articles of the faith. For a more in-depth exploration of the biblical basis for catechesis, see Rueter, *Teaching the Faith at Home*, 25-41, and J. I. Packer and Gary Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 33-50.

⁵Arand observes this structure since at least Augustine. At the time of the Reformation the three-fold structure served as the basis for later catechisms. Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 15-47.

“mind of Christ” in believers (1 Cor 2:16) and present each person “mature in Christ” (Col 1:28).

During the time of the Reformation, Luther’s Small Catechism served not only as a useful discipleship tool, but also as a polemic against the doctrinal errors of Roman Catholicism and other Reformation teachings. For example, in contrast to the Roman church’s focus on the merit of works, the key emphasis of Luther’s Small Catechism is faith.⁶ While doctrinal distinctions within Christendom are certainly important, a more urgent concern in the modern, secular West is the growing prevalence of worldviews in direct opposition to the Christian worldview. In this context, the sixteenth-century language of Luther’s Small Catechism is still an important apologetic tool.

In his book *Expository Apologetics*, Voddie Baucham argues that our historical creeds, confessions, and catechisms are our best and most immediate resources for the apologetic task.⁷ These statements of faith express very clearly what the Christian worldview is and is not. In fact, many of their affirmations were written in direct opposition to alternate worldviews. For example, to affirm, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth” communicates a rejection of philosophical naturalism and pantheism all in one statement.⁸

The post-confirmation youth of OSLC are familiar with the structure and language of Luther’s Small Catechism. However, they have not learned how to compare

⁶Each of the Six Chief Parts focus on the words “trust,” “faith,” and “believe.” The Ten Commandments begin LSC with a call to “fear, love, and *trust* in God above all things,” and the Sacrament of the Altar ends LSC by teaching that those who *believe* Christ’s words are worthy to receive the Sacrament. LSC, 13-29.

⁷Voddie Baucham, *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 85-124.

⁸LSC, 16.

and critique alternate worldviews with its creedal affirmations. At this point, the presuppositional method of apologetics pairs well with Luther's Small Catechism.⁹ Each part of the Catechism communicates a God-centered view of reality, and offers the intellectual resources needed to critique other worldviews. The Ten Commandments establish an internally consistent morality rooted in the goodness of God and his creation, whereas secular moralities tend toward pragmatism and power. The Apostles' Creed affirms that the triune God is Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, thus challenging atheism, pantheism, and the more recent pseudo-Christian remix labeled "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" (MTD).¹⁰ The Lord's Prayer communicates a relationship with God based on kingdom priorities rather than the American dream. Teaching the Catechism from this perspective aims at destroying "arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor 10:5).

The Catechism also offers an opportunity to apply the evidential method of apologetics.¹¹ For example, a discussion of creation from the first article of the Creed

⁹The father of the presuppositional apologetic method, Cornelius Van Til, defines apologetics as "the vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophy of life." Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 17. Rather than focusing on historical evidences, this method demonstrates the consistency of the Christian worldview in comparison with the inherent inconsistency of competing worldviews. Since LSC presents the basic structure of the Christian worldview, it naturally lends itself well to the presuppositional method. As Arand points out, "The catechism deals with the formation of the Christian *habitus* of the mind and heart, which looks at life and lives not from our perspective—that's philosophy—but from God's perspective—that's theology." Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 27-28.

¹⁰For a detailed treatment of Christian Smith's work (along with Melinda Lundquist Denton), see *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford, 2005), 162-76. The five basic characteristics of MTD are (1) A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth, (2) God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions, (3) The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself, (4) God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem, and (5) Good people go to heaven when they die.

¹¹This method of apologetics deals with historical evidences for the Christian faith, such as the reliability of the New Testament manuscripts and the historical support for the resurrection. For a complete summary of this method and its proponents, see Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 139-218.

invites both an evidence-based critique of atheistic approaches to science, as well as a presentation of recent discoveries in cosmology and biology that strongly suggest creation. The doctrine of redemption in the second article allows for a presentation of the evidences for the reliability of the New Testament and the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In summary, the familiarity of the youth of OSLC with Luther's Small Catechism naturally invites its use in formal apologetics training. By reengaging the structure and language of Luther's Small Catechism with presuppositional and evidential apologetic methods, I have aimed, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to undo the secular strongholds in the minds of our young people, as well as replace those conflicting worldviews with the truth of the Christian worldview. The overall goal of this endeavor is that the youth of OSLC would persevere in the confession they made at confirmation, as well as more clearly and confidently articulate the reason for the hope they have in Christ during high school, college, and beyond.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to use Luther's Small Catechism as a framework for teaching apologetics to the post-confirmation youth of Our Savior Lutheran Church in South Windsor, Connecticut.

Goals

In order to achieve the purpose of this project, four goals were established to measure the progress of the work. The first aimed to assess apologetics knowledge and skills. The second and third goals involved curriculum development and implementation

to increase apologetics knowledge and skills. The fourth goal looked toward the ongoing implementation of these goals in the life of the congregation.

1. The first goal was to assess the current level of apologetics knowledge and skills among a minimum of 10 post-confirmation youth at OSLC.
2. The second goal was to develop a 6-week curriculum that uses the structure and language of Luther's Small Catechism to teach presuppositional and evidential apologetics.
3. The third goal was to increase apologetics knowledge and skills among the post-confirmation youth of OSLC through the teaching of the aforementioned curriculum to a minimum of 10 post-confirmation youth.
4. The fourth goal was to develop a discipleship plan which includes formal apologetic training based on Luther's Small Catechism as a part of the expected faith formation of post-confirmation youth at OSLC.

The completion of these four goals was measured by specific methods of research methodology and measured successful according to planned benchmarks.¹² The following section details the research methodology and measurements of each goal.

Research Methodology

Four goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal of this project was to assess the current level of apologetics knowledge and skills among the post-confirmation youth of OSLC. This goal was measured by administering an anonymous assessment¹³ that gauged apologetics knowledge and skills in relation to topics pertinent to the content of Luther's Small Catechism. The goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 10 post-confirmation youth completed the

¹²All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

¹³See appendix 1 for a copy of the Apologetics Knowledge and Skills Assessment (AKSA). While the AKSA was administered in an online format, it was adjusted in appendix 1 for printed use.

assessment, and the results were analyzed for each, yielding a clearer picture of the current level of apologetics knowledge and skills among OSLC post-confirmation youth.¹⁴

The second goal of this project was to develop a 6-week curriculum that uses selected portions of Luther's Small Catechism as a framework for teaching apologetics.¹⁵ The curriculum utilized the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and their explanations from Luther's Small Catechism as a framework for defending the Christian worldview against other competing worldviews (the presuppositional method). The curriculum also used the content of the Apostles' Creed and its explanations to offer empirical and historical evidences for the validity of the Christian faith (the evidential method). This goal was measured by an expert panel consisting of three Lutheran pastors and a qualified lay member from OSLC.¹⁶ The panel employed a rubric¹⁷ that measures the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the rubric evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.¹⁸ If the curriculum

¹⁴The 10 participating post-confirmation youth represent roughly a third of the high school age youth at OSLC during the implementation of this project.

¹⁵The core triad of Luther's Small Catechism is the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. The curriculum was limited to these parts of Luther's Small Catechism for the sake of brevity (the use of the full Six Chief Parts is beyond the ability of this project). Furthermore, since other catechisms outside the Lutheran tradition share the same core triad of the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, the curriculum allows for potential use with these catechetical resources as well.

¹⁶The expert panel that I chose consisted of Randall Pekari, the senior pastor of OSLC; Phil Booe, pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Amston, CT, who completed a D.Min. project at Bethany Theological Seminary on the topic of assisting parents in teaching Luther's Small Catechism at home; Jeremy Pekari, senior pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church Lynnfield, MA, who has a PhD in religious education from Fordham University; and Veronica Halloran, a member of OSLC with a background in curriculum development.

¹⁷See appendix 6 for a copy of the Curriculum Assessment Rubric.

¹⁸Following Kelley's attribution theory of covariance, the rubric scores must meet or exceed a minimum of 90 percent of the indicators in order to ensure high consensus due to the quality of the

failed to meet the minimum standard it was revised until it reached the aforementioned benchmark.

The third goal of this project was to increase apologetics knowledge and skills among a minimum of 10 post-confirmation youth at OSLC through the teaching of the aforementioned curriculum. The teaching sessions lasted 45 to 50 minutes each. In order to ensure full completion of the material, OSLC youth had the opportunity to attend the course at either the previously scheduled Sunday morning high school Bible study, or during a weekday evening. Full participation was ensured by recording each session and posting it online. A record was kept of each participating student's attendance, and students completed any missed sessions before taking the post-assessment. This goal was measured by administering the same pre-assessment survey a second time in order to measure the change in apologetics knowledge and skills.¹⁹ This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre and post survey scores. A t-test for dependent samples "involves a comparison of the means from each group of scores and focuses on the differences between the scores."²⁰ Both pre and post survey data was gathered from participants by allowing them to choose a self-assigned number for the duration of the project.

curriculum and not to other independent factors among the panel. H. H. Kelley and J. L. Michela, "Attribution Theory and Research," *Annual Review of Psychology* 31 (1980): 457-501. I am thankful to Paul Ritchie—a member of OSLC—for directing me to the concept of covariance.

¹⁹See appendix 1.

²⁰Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 191.

The fourth goal of this project was to work with the leadership of OSLC²¹ to develop a discipleship plan to include formal apologetics training based on Luther's Small Catechism as a part of the expected faith formation of post-confirmation youth. This goal was measured by a panel consisting of one high school youth leader, one parent of a confirmation student, the OSLC president, vice president, and senior pastor. This panel utilized a rubric²² to evaluate the functionality and sustainability of the plan, the communication process, and the actions steps. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the rubric evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficiency level.²³ If the plan failed to meet the minimum standard it was revised until it reached aforementioned benchmark.

Definitions

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Apologetics. Multiple definitions and approaches exist for this term. This project uses a broad definition of apologetics as “the defense of the Christian faith.”²⁴

²¹ OSLC makes decisions that affect the entire congregation through its Executive Team, which consists of its two pastors, president, vice president, secretary, administrative officer, and financial officer. The associate pastor, vice president, and the leaders of each group in question make decisions related specifically to youth and children. Since the decision to add to the existing structure of formal faith formation was a major shift in practice, the panel assessing the plan according to the rubric accounts for members of the Executive Team, as well as those who will use and benefit from the curriculum directly—the high school youth leader and a parent of future high school students.

²²See appendix 9 for a copy of the Discipleship Plan Assessment Rubric.

²³Following Kelley's attribution theory of covariance, the rubric scores were required to meet or exceed a minimum of 90 percent of the indicators in order to ensure high consensus due to the quality of the discipleship plan and not to other independent factors among the panel. Kelley and Michela, “Attribution Theory,” 457-501.

²⁴Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 1. Steven Cowan expands on this simple definition: “Apologetics is concerned with the defense of the Christian faith against charges of falsehood, inconsistency, or credulity. Indeed, the very word *apologetics* is derived from the Greek *apologia*, which means ‘defense.’” Steven Cowan and Stanley Gundry, eds., *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 8.

The project makes distinctions in apologetics methods in the definitions below of evidential apologetics and presuppositional apologetics.

Catechism. A catechism is a topically arranged pedagogical tool used by the church to teach the substance of the Christian faith as drawn from the Scriptures. As Charles Arand explains, “In the catechism, the church has gathered the fundamental components of Scripture that go to the heart of defining what it means to be a Christian. It identifies those elements that constitute the very identity of a Christian.”²⁵

Catechesis. Catechesis is understood as formal instruction in the key elements of the Christian faith. This formal instruction reflects Jesus’ command to baptize and teach (Matt 28:19). Arand points out, “Catechesis provided the counterpart to baptism for the making of disciples. If baptism carries us into the church by transferring us from the kingdom of Satan into Christ’s kingdom, catechesis imparts the mind of Christ so that we put to death the old ways of thinking and bring to life the new patterns of thought.”²⁶ David Rueter explains, “Catechesis is an educational process of the Church that provides a portion of the pushing back against the tide of our culture. Through the sounding again of the truths of Scripture, one generation bequeaths to the next the essential core truths of Christianity.”²⁷

Confirmation. Confirmation is defined as it is traditionally practiced in Lutheran congregations: A period of formal catechetical instruction from the Six Chief

²⁵Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 27. He further notes concerning the structure of catechisms, “From very early in its history, the church identified certain topics as essential . . . every Christian needed to know the triad of the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and some kind of moral norm like the Ten Commandments.” Arand., 29.

²⁶Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 28.

²⁷Rueter, *Teaching the Faith at Home*, 8.

Parts of Luther's Small Catechism.²⁸ Age of instruction and duration of the program vary among Lutheran congregations. However, confirmation typically consists of formal teaching, examination by the pastor, public profession of faith, fellowship at the Lord's Supper, and adult membership in the congregation.

Evidential apologetics. Simply stated, evidential apologetics is a method of apologetics that utilizes evidences to defend the Christian faith. Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman describe this approach well:

Its emphasis is on the presentation of Christianity as *factual*—as supportable or verifiable by the examination of evidence. This type of apologetic system, while acknowledging that indisputable and absolutely certain proof of Christianity lies beyond human reach, defends the truth claims of the faith as eminently reasonable. More specifically, evidentialist apologetics argues that these crucial truths can be shown to be highly probable. Rather than defending the faith in two stages, as does classical apologetics (first by defending theism, then by defending specifically Christian claims), evidentialism uses multiple lines of evidence to support Christian theism as a whole.²⁹

Presuppositional apologetics. Presuppositional apologetics is a discipline of apologetics that defends the Christian faith by presupposing the truth of the Christian worldview³⁰ rather than working toward its confirmation via evidences. Based upon

²⁸For the purpose of this project, it is important to clarify the traditional Lutheran understanding of confirmation in comparison with other understandings of the word within Christendom. First, contra the Roman Catholic understanding, confirmation is not considered a sacrament. Second, since the rite of confirmation is never commanded in Scripture, most Lutherans see the practice as *adiaphoran*. For example, C. F. W. Walther, the first president of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, wrote in his *Pastoral Theology*, "Confirmation is an *adiaphoran*, not a divine institution, much less a sacrament; but it is a churchly institution which, if correctly used, can be accompanied by great blessing," quoted in Geoffrey R. Boyle, "Confirmation, Catechesis, and Communion: A Historical Survey," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 79, nos. 1-2 (January/April 2015): 141. Third, confirmation properly practiced never replaces the expectation that the head of the household is responsible for instructing his children, and always presupposes a continual catechesis from "cradle to grave." Boyle, "Confirmation," 140, and Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 27. Finally, confirmation is never a substitute for personal, saving faith in Jesus Christ—a key theme that ties the Six Chief Parts of LSC and Lutheran theology and life together. LSC, 13-29.

²⁹Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 139.

³⁰John Frame explains, "Apologetic argument is no more neutral than any other human activity. In apologetic argument, as in everything else we do, we must presuppose the truth of God's Word." John Frame, *Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015), 8.

Reformed theology, “the approach emphasizes the presentation of Christianity as *revealed*—as based on the authoritative revelation of God in Scripture and in Jesus Christ.”³¹ Considered the father of the presuppositional method, Cornelius Van Til defines apologetics as “the vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophy of life.”³² This method does not reject the use of evidences in apologetics.³³ Rather, it points out that all people interpret the evidence through the lens of their presuppositions, thus making neutral ground impossible between Christians and unbelievers.³⁴

Worldview. A worldview is a comprehensive view of reality. Nancy Pearcey likens a worldview to “a mental map that tells us how to navigate the world effectively. . . a network of principles that answer the fundamental questions of life: Who are we? Where did we come from? What is the purpose of life?”³⁵ D. A. Carson demonstrates the all-encompassing nature of a worldview:

A worldview must be comprehensive enough to address the questions of deity (If there is a God, what is he like?), the question of origins (Where do I come from?), the question of significance (Who am I?), the question of evil (Why is there so much suffering? If things are not the way they’re supposed to be, why not?), the question of salvation (What is the problem, and how is it resolved?), and the question of *telos* (Why am I here? What does the future hold?)³⁶

³¹Frame, *Apologetics*, 221.

³²Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, 17.

³³Van Til allows for the role of historical evidences. However, he views the facts alone as insufficient since “to interpret a fact of history involves a philosophy of history.” Therefore, philosophical arguments are central, while evidences play a supporting role. He adds, “In short, there is a historical and there is a philosophical aspect to the defense of Christian theism. Evidences deals largely with the historical while apologetics deals largely with the philosophical aspect. Each has its own work to do but they should constantly be in touch with one another.” Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, 18-19.

³⁴Frame writes, “To tell an unbeliever that we can reason with him on a neutral basis, however that claim might help to attract his attention, is a lie There is no neutrality. Our witness is either God’s wisdom or the world’s foolishness. There is nothing in between.” Frame, *Apologetics*, 8.

³⁵Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 23.

³⁶D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 95-96. An

Limitations/Delimitations

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre and post surveys depended upon the transparency of the participants' responses about apologetics knowledge and skills. To mitigate this limitation, the quantitative questionnaire data was gathered using student-selected identification numbers rather than names, and the participants were informed that their pre and post survey responses would remain anonymous. Second, the effectiveness of the apologetic instruction depended upon full completion of the teaching sessions. If the selected youth did not attend all of the teaching sessions, it would be difficult to measure the overall benefit of the curriculum. To mitigate this limitation, each teaching session was offered twice each week, and any absences were resolved by allowing participants to access and complete the teaching sessions online.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, participation in the teaching sessions and assessments was limited to post-confirmation youth who were in high school and completed two years of formal catechesis.³⁷ Since most OSLC youth complete confirmation by their freshman year, the curriculum naturally built upon concepts recently encountered in formal catechesis. Second, the project was confined to a twenty-five-week timeframe. This allowed sufficient time to prepare and teach the six-

alternate term that often communicates the same idea is “conceptual framework.” Robert Kolb describes a conceptual framework as “a set of presuppositions [that guide] the way in which we understand and apply specific topics. This conceptual framework expresses our basic view of reality. It shapes the way we establish what questions about life are important, what answers about reality we need to have.” Robert Kolb, *The Christian Faith* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1993), 15.

³⁷Formal catechesis at OSLC typically takes place during the seventh and eighth grade years. Students receive one year of biblical overview, and one year of training in the Six Chief Parts of LSC. Some youth may begin formal catechesis early (due to maturity or a desire to attend with a sibling close in age) or later (due to delay on part of the parents or recent entry into the congregation). This project assumes that most high school youth have completed two years of formal catechesis.

week curriculum and conduct the post-teaching survey once all the participants finished. This timeframe also allowed for adequate time to discuss and assess the discipleship plan in the fourth goal with the selected panel.

Conclusion

The Scriptural command to instruct God's people in the key doctrines of the Christian faith is clear.³⁸ The church has often shaped this instruction to account for opposing messages from the culture. Since the recent shifts in culture are palpably felt in New England, it is imperative that pastors apply formal catechesis with an apologetics emphasis. The next chapter will explore the historical context that called for Luther's Small Catechism, and the way it functioned as an apologetic tool in Luther's day.

³⁸ See note 4 of this chapter for an overview of the biblical basis for catechesis.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR USING LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM AS A FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING APOLOGETICS

Introduction

A discussion of Luther's Small Catechism in relation to apologetics must begin with the historical situation behind its composition, as well as the apologetic nature of its structure and language within the context of the sixteenth century Reformation. From this historical vantage point, a later examination of the apologetic potential of the Catechism for a modern context will make more sense. The thesis of this chapter is that Martin Luther reworked the structure and language of traditional catechesis into an apologetic tool with the purpose of defending an evangelical view of the world against competing Roman Catholic and Reformation teachings.

The Apologetic Nature of Catechesis

Before exploring the apologetic nature of Luther's Small Catechism, a valid question stands out: what is the intersection between catechesis and apologetics? Is it valid to speak of catechesis as apologetics? If the definition of apologetics is narrowly defined as evidences offered in response to post-Enlightenment skepticism, then the answer is *no*. Luther's Small Catechism assumes the existence of God and the veracity of the Scriptures. His opponents all assumed the same. A series of catechetical questions and answers about the historical evidence for the resurrection would be redundant for his

context. However, a broader and more robust definition of apologetics reveals that catechesis is inherently apologetic in nature. Catechesis forms the structure of apologetic dialogue, and when taught in response to opposing viewpoints, catechesis becomes not only the impartation of the faith, but also the defense of the faith.

As previously noted, apologist Cornelius Van Til defines apologetics as “the vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophy of life.”¹ As he points out, evidences are useful, but since all evidence is interpreted through the lens of one’s philosophy of life, the primary function of apologetics is to demonstrate the integrity of the Christian worldview over against the inconsistent and incoherent nature of opposing worldviews.² Since any attempt to vindicate the Christian worldview requires its articulation in comparison with other worldviews, Van Til further observes the inseparable connection between systematic theology and the practice of apologetics. “If we are to defend theism as a unit, it must be shown that its parts are really related to one another.”³ In other words, systematic theology forms the structure of apologetic discourse.

While Luther’s Small Catechism is a simple pedagogical tool for children, it is also a simple expression of systematic theology. Its short question and answer statements offer a framework for exploring theology, anthropology, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology.⁴ Each of its three main parts—the Ten Commandments,

¹Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 19.

²Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, 19.

³Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, 19.

⁴These topics are listed by Van Til as the six divisions of systematic theology. Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, 23.

the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer—functions within an interdependent system of thought about God, creation, humanity, and God’s ultimate purposes. When these catechetical truth claims interact with opposing claims about reality, they possess apologetic potential.

Voddie Baucham expands on this idea in his book *Expository Apologetics*. Recognizing the apologetic thrust of catechesis, he argues, “The key tools for training the expository apologist are creeds, confessions, and catechisms.”⁵ He further contends, “If apologetics is about knowing what we believe and why we believe it, then the first place to start with our preparation is with our ancient creeds and confessions of faith.”⁶ According to Baucham, “Creeds are the wellspring of apologetic thought” because they were formulated in response to theological error, give expression to “the hope within us,” and are easy to remember.⁷ In summary, when the church’s theology, expressed in simple creedal or catechetical statements, interacts with a diverse market place of ideas, the natural result is apologetic discussion with those who oppose or question the truth confessed therein. While the Catechism⁸ provides the structure and language for dialogue, that same structure and language, if defended well, will stand out as superior to opposing worldviews.

If apologetics is the defense of the Christian faith, then the church’s catechesis has often served an apologetic function far before the modern emphasis on evidence-based apologetic methods. Commenting on the pastor’s responsibility as catechist, Kevin

⁵Voddie Baucham, *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 87.

⁶Baucham, *Expository Apologetics*, 87.

⁷Baucham, *Expository Apologetics*, 88.

⁸Although multiple catechisms preceded and followed Luther’s Small Catechism, for the sake of simplicity I often refer to Luther’s Small Catechism as simply “the Catechism.”

Vanhoozer writes, “Pastors need to inoculate the body of Christ against idolatrous toxins, ideological infections, and other forms of false teaching.”⁹ The context of each age has required pastors to shape catechesis in response to the apologetic needs of their people. For example, the Nicene Creed offers a clear defense of monotheism, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the deity of the Holy Spirit, and numerous other affirmations in response to challenges against biblical teaching.¹⁰

The argument of this chapter is that Luther’s Small Catechism functioned in the same manner. To use Van Til’s definition of apologetics, the Catechism functioned at the lay level as the vindication of the evangelical view of the world against Roman Catholic heresy and later false applications of Reformation theology.¹¹ In response to works-centered Roman Catholic doctrine and piety, Luther shaped the Catechism to defend the heart of gospel—justification by grace alone, through faith alone, on the basis of Christ’s merits alone. In response to the later antinomianism he observed in his parish visitations and theological conflicts, Luther utilized the Catechism to defend the echo of justification by grace—holiness of life.

Historical Foundations of Luther’s Small Catechism

Luther’s composition of a catechism for his context did not arise from thin air. Rather, he worked with the raw material of previous catechetical tradition, adjusting the structure and language of well-known prayer manuals and confessionals with an

⁹Kevin Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 162.

¹⁰Baucham, *Expository Apologetics*, 89-92.

¹¹I owe the observation that apologetics often serves as a defense of the faith within the church to a conversation with Timothy Paul Jones.

evangelical bent.¹² Since at least the third and fourth centuries, the standard core of catechesis consisted of three vital elements—the Creed (what Christians believe), the Lord’s Prayer (the Christian hope), and some kind of moral standard (how Christians live in love).¹³ Historian Freidrich Bente notes that these three elements stood at the center of the medieval instruction and spirituality inherited by Luther.¹⁴ Thus, the three core elements of Luther’s later Small and Large Catechisms—the triad of the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments—were already firmly established as the catechetical norm.¹⁵

Catechesis in Need of Renewal

Although medieval catechesis did focus on these three core elements of Christian doctrine, faulty theology and idolatrous additions among the popular catechetical resources of Luther’s day often clouded the truth of the gospel. At the time of the Reformation, catechisms consisted of two elements beyond the core triad:

¹²Freidrich Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965), 65.

¹³Charles Arand, *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther’s Catechisms* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000), 30. Catechetical material in the category of moral instruction varied before the Reformation. Expositions on the Sermon on the Mount and the Seven Sins were popular. Arand notes that the church held a fairly ambivalent view of the Decalogue in its early years, most likely due to the split between church and synagogue. Nevertheless, Augustine began a tradition that favored the Decalogue—an emphasis that was reinforced later by Aquinas and Biel, who rooted the authority of the commandments in natural law and revelation. For a more detailed explanation, see Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 35-39, and Bente, *Historical Introductions*, 63-67.

¹⁴Bente summarizes the catechetical environment in which Luther grew up: “Since the middle of the thirteenth century the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, together with the Benedicite, Gratias, Ave Maria, Psalms, and other matter, were taught also in the Latin schools, where probably Luther, too, learned them.” He notes that since the ninth century, a church regulation required that all parishes have an explanation of the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer readily available. Furthermore, following the 1215 decree that confession be made at least yearly, priests also expected those making confession to recite the three chief parts. Bente, *Historical Introductions*, 65.

¹⁵For the purpose of this study, I limit the examination of Luther’s Small Catechism to these three main parts. The Catechism underwent numerous revisions. However, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer always served as the foundation. Much more space could be devoted to the apologetic nature of Luther’s expositions on baptism, confession, and the Lord’s Supper. As fruitful as this exercise would be, it would exceed the limits of this study.

confessionals and prayer manuals. Very often these resources were anything but biblical, and as a result, reinforced the Roman doctrines of merit, works, and satisfaction for sins.

According to Arand, in the Middle Ages, “The preparation and practice of confession became the matrix for the church’s catechetical work.”¹⁶ During this time, numerous confessional books (*Biechtbüchlein*) and “confessional mirrors” (*Beichtspiegel*) arose to aid congregants in self-examination and confession in preparation to receive the sacrament.¹⁷ Luther was familiar with these resources, but found them severely wanting in the new light of evangelical faith. For one, their lists of sins often dealt with extra-biblical offenses rooted in canon law rather than the clear words of the Decalogue.¹⁸ Even the manuals that did focus on the Ten Commandments did so at the expense of assurance of salvation.¹⁹

The effect of these confessional manuals was widespread uncertainty about salvation. Even when they employed the Decalogue to point out sin, the goal was still perfect confession and satisfaction rather than the freedom of absolution.²⁰ Bente points out that this emphasis on the law and conviction of sin “was not intended as a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ and to faith in the free grace of God, but merely to

¹⁶Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 64.

¹⁷Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 64. In Germany, two of the most popular manuals at this time were Johannes Wolff’s 1478 *Biechtbüchlein* and Dietrich Kolde’s 1470 *Mirror of a Christian Man*. Arand, 64-65.

¹⁸Bente, *Historical Introductions*, 65.

¹⁹Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 65. As Arand observes about Kolde’s *Mirror of a Christian Man*, “The Creed and Lord’s prayer received relatively little attention and when they did it was from the standpoint of either obeying or not obeying them. The treatment of the Decalogue tended to overshadow or even bury the other parts.”

²⁰A popular refrain from this time sums up the uncertainty well: “Spare my life, Lord God, until I do penance and improve my life.” KW, 314.

serve the interests of Roman penances, satisfactions, and work-righteousness.”²¹ As will be further examined below, a new catechism required a new focus—one that moved beyond the conviction of sin to the comfort of repentant sinners.

Closely related to confession, but still deserving a separate treatment, is the emphasis that was placed upon prayer to the saints in the catechetical literature of Luther’s day. With the clear gospel of Christ clouded, the medieval prayer manuals directed afflicted consciences not only to works of satisfaction, but also to the merits and intercessions of the saints—most significantly the Virgin Mary. The recent advent of the printing press allowed these prayer manuals to increase in both popularity and idolatrous additions.²²

As with the confession manuals, Luther’s response to the prayer manuals of his day clearly show his desire to overhaul the church’s catechetical material in light of the Reformation. Numerous of his early publications aim at correcting Roman piety.²³ As Arand notes, “He [Luther] worked to replace them with evangelical counterparts that

²¹Bente, *Historical Introductions*, 65. Luther himself had lived under the weight of such legalism before his grasp of the gospel. Reflecting on his previous bondage under Roman piety—most likely with the confessional manuals in mind—he wrote in the *Smalcald Articles*: “Confession worked like this: Each person had to enumerate all of his or her sins (which is impossible). This was a great torment . . . It is not possible to recount here what torment, rascality, and idolatry such confession has produced.” KW, 315.

²²The most popular German prayer manual of Luther’s day was the 1498 *Hortulus Animae*. Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 68. Similar in content, but available only in Latin, was the *Paradisus Animae*. Arand., 66. Not only did such prayer manuals obscure biblical faith and prayer, they also added insult to injury by claiming their content as essential for salvation, as well as expedient for release from purgatory and the attainment of earthly blessings. Arand., 66-68.

²³See Luther’s 1519 work *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism*, LW 35: 23-43 and his 1519 *An Exposition of the Lord’s Prayer for Simple Laymen*, LW 42: 17-81. In his 1522 *Personal Book of Prayer* Luther is candid about his disdain for popular prayer books and his desire for reform: “Among the many harmful books and doctrines which are misleading and deceiving Christians and give rise to countless false beliefs, I regard the personal prayer books as by no means the least objectionable . . . These books need a basic and thorough reformation if not total extermination.” LW 43:8.

would communicate evangelical piety in terms that any layman would readily accept and understand.”²⁴

The Saxon Visitation

Generally speaking, the catalyst behind Luther’s catechetical revisions was the Reformation itself. The revolutionary paradigm shift from human works to Christ-centered grace revealed the current catechetical tradition to be severely wanting and in need of revision. More specifically, Luther’s pastoral visitation of the Saxon churches and his doctrinal dispute with Johann Agricola over the role of the law in repentance and sanctification pressed him to publish a formal catechism on the basis of previous preaching and publication.

Luther participated in visitations of Saxony and Meissen from October 1528 to January 1529.²⁵ What Luther observed during these visitations impacted him profoundly, and no doubt led to his publication of the Small Catechism in 1529.²⁶ He describes with passionate, pastoral concern the situation he observed in Saxony in the preface to his catechism:

The deplorable, miserable condition that I discovered recently when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare this catechism, or Christian doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. Mercy! Dear God, what great misery I beheld! The common person, especially in the villages, has no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine.²⁷

²⁴Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 66.

²⁵ KW, 346.

²⁶ KW, 346.

²⁷LSC, 363. Beyond ignorance of basic Christian doctrine, Luther also describes blatant immorality and lawlessness among the common people in the villages.

Earlier in his career, Luther feared the damage done by medieval devotional literature. However, now he experienced an even greater evil—widespread ignorance of even the most basic Christian doctrine, as well as spiritual complacency, abuse of freedom, and blatant disregard of God’s commandments. As Luther makes clear, the spiritual and moral condition of the German people called for a catechism immediately.

The Antinomian Controversy

Beyond his visitation experience, another factor pressed Luther to write his catechism and its later revisions during his career. Perhaps with the immoral abuse of freedom among the Saxon peasants still on his mind, Luther now encountered a theological dispute between his close colleague Philip Melanchthon and former student Johann Agricola regarding the relationship between the law and repentance. Whereas Luther’s colleague Philip Melanchthon emphasized that the proclamation of the law was absolutely necessary before the proclamation of the gospel, Agricola taught that repentance was a result of God’s grace in the gospel, with no prior preaching of the law necessary. In other words, while Melanchthon believed that the fear of God creates repentance that leads to faith, Agricola believed that the gospel creates faith and new affections apart from the previous killing power of the law.²⁸

In summary, while Luther’s initial catechetical revisions focused on countering Roman Catholic errors, the circumstances surrounding the Small Catechism’s

²⁸Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 74-75. The debate between Melanchthon and Agricola is rather nuanced, especially relating to the proper role of fear in the life of the believer. For Melanchthon, the law kills by creating fear of punishment and despair of ability to keep its demands, thus leading to a preparation for the healing power of the gospel. Agricola, on the other hand, taught that God must be feared on account of himself rather than on account of punishment. Put more positively, obedience to the commandment arises only out of love for God. For a more detailed discussion, see Arand, 73-75, as well as n. 303 in Article XII of *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession* in KW, 191.

formal publication centered more on the unintended fallout of the Reformation manifested in the abuse of grace among the common people and the antinomian theology of Johann Agricola. Thus, the Catechism functioned as a defense of the evangelical faith in two directions—contra the unbelief of Roman doctrines based on human works and superstition, as well as contra the unbelief manifested in both popular and academic forms of antinomianism. Having established the historical context that elicited Luther’s Small Catechism, the next section will carefully examine its structure and language as a defense of the evangelical faith.

Contra Rome: In Defense of Grace

Luther’s defense of the gospel against Rome led him to make three major revisions to previous catechetical tradition in the Western church. He removed unnecessary or harmful elements, reordered the structure to reflect a biblical order of salvation, and crafted language that stood in direct opposition to the prevailing Roman doctrine of salvation. Each of these revisions equipped believers with the resources needed to articulate and defend a gospel-centered view of the world. As Arand summarizes succinctly, “Its structure and message helped replace old patterns of thought with new patterns, old values with new values, and legalistic forms of piety with evangelical forms of piety.”²⁹

Material Removed

As noted above, Luther took issue with the popular confessional manuals of his day. Rather than lead afflicted consciences to the merits of Christ, their requirement of a

²⁹Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 147.

detailed enumeration of sins, as well as burdensome prescriptions for satisfaction, suffocated souls under the weight of guilt and uncertainty. In order to correct this abuse, he removed confession as the central focus of his catechesis.³⁰ Instead of a detailed list of sins, replete with obsessive subcategories and arbitrary expectations, Luther centered self-examination in the divinely inspired Decalogue.

Luther's exposition of the Decalogue is simple, yet still all-demanding. In his explanation of the first commandment he calls upon his pupils to "fear, love, and trust in God above all things,"³¹ and at the close of the commandments he warns, "God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them."³² Nevertheless, contrary to previous manuals, Luther's language of grace, the merits of Christ, and faith that follow in his explanations of the Creed provide ample balm for consciences crushed by the commandments.³³

Another enemy of grace that Luther excised from his catechism was the legion of prayers to saints and angels common to German prayer manuals. With salvation firmly anchored in the merits of Christ, and access to God freely given through the Spirit, Luther directed the cry of "Abba, Father" to the Lord's Prayer.³⁴ By doing so, Luther provided

³⁰Arand summarizes Luther's intent well: "Luther needed to provide instruction for a genuinely evangelical practice of confession. So as Luther begins to arrange the catechetical material for an evangelical confessional manual, he consciously rejects the medieval penitential focus that increased a person's uncertainty and replaces it with an evangelical one in which a confidence in God's promised mercy alleviates the anxiety-laden quest for perfect confession as seen, for example, in Kolde's manual." Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 130.

³¹LSC, 13.

³²LSC, 15.

³³Luther did later include a section on confession in his Small and Large Catechisms. However, the emphasis on the practice was peripheral in comparison with medieval manuals and only served the ultimate goal of confidence in salvation.

³⁴Even though he kept the Ave Maria intact in earlier writings, he warns Christians against "cleaving to her" or trusting in her, for "such trust is worthy of God alone and is the lofty service due only to him." LW 43: 23. By 1529 no reference to Mary remains beyond the second article of the Creed and its

the common people with a truly biblical way of addressing God in prayer.³⁵ A comparison between the prayers of *Hortulus Animae* and Luther's explanation to the introduction of the Lord's Prayer clearly reveals his evangelical shift in thinking. Whereas the former places great emphasis upon Mary as "mediator between men and the righteous God" and "advocate before the stern judgment of God,"³⁶ Luther speaks of bold access to the throne of God. His explanation of "Our Father who art in heaven" is, "With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father."³⁷ Luther intentionally instilled the language of adopted children in place of the language of servitude.

Material Restructured

Although perhaps not immediately obvious, Luther deliberately structured his catechism to communicate the evangelical order of salvation. Previous catechisms (as well as later ones following the Council of Trent) typically followed Augustine's order of the Creed (faith), the Lord's Prayer (hope), and the Ten Commandments (love).³⁸ The

exposition, which refer to Mary within the context of the incarnation and birth of Christ. LSC, 15.

³⁵In further defense of this claim is the connection Luther often drew between his structure of catechesis and prayer beyond the exposition of the Lord's Prayer. For example, see his *A Simple Way to Pray*, in which Luther instructs "Peter the Barber" how to pray, utilizing not only the Lord's Prayer, but also the Ten Commandments and the Creed as a model for Christian prayer. Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, trans. Matthew C. Harrison (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012).

³⁶Quoted from Bente, *Historical Introductions*, 66.

³⁷LSC, 19.

³⁸Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 124. According to Arand, Augustine lays out his rationale in *De Catechizandis Rudibus*. "Augustine then correlates faith, hope, and love to the three texts of the catechism, the Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Law (Ten Commandments) respectively. Faith corresponds to the Creed and deals with the narrative of past events. Hope corresponds with the Lord's Prayer, which looks to the future and our final deliverance. Love corresponds to the Law and the Ten Commandments, which deal with our present life."

progression from faith as historical knowledge to the perfection of love paired well with the medieval concept of *fides caritate formata*.³⁹ Luther, on the other hand, deliberately placed the Decalogue at the beginning of his catechism.⁴⁰ This shift reflected the Reformation rediscovery of the “second use” of the Law. Rather than helping sinners attain salvation, the law condemns and kills human works and merits as utterly hopeless, thus laying the ground to receive God’s grace through faith in Christ alone.⁴¹ The Creed follows the Decalogue, leading terrified sinners to the comforts of the gospel. In other words, the structure of Luther’s catechism reflects his emphasis on law and gospel.⁴²

Contrary to the theology of medieval scholastics like Gabriel Biel, who taught that individuals could love God above all else without the assistance of divine grace,⁴³ Luther’s explanation of the first commandment deals a deadly blow to all spiritual

³⁹Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 125. “For the medieval theologian the central religious concept was ‘*caritas*—love—not faith.’ This was based on the premise that like attracts like. Since God is love, if we wish to be saved or united with God we must become like God, that is we must be shaped by love. The way of salvation in the Middle Ages was often characterized with the expression, *fides caritate formata*, faith activated and perfected by acts of love.”

⁴⁰Luther makes clear in his earlier catechetical material that his restructuring of the key elements of catechesis arose from deliberate theological reflection. For example, in the introduction to his 1522 *Personal Prayer Book*, he candidly teaches—“Three things a person must know in order to be saved. First, he must know what to do and what to leave undone. Second, when he realizes that he cannot measure up to what he should do or leave undone, he needs to know where to go to find the strength he requires. Third, he must know how to seek and obtain that strength Thus the commandments teach man to recognize his sickness, enabling him to perceive what he must do or refrain from doing . . . and so he will recognize himself to be a sinful and wicked person. The Creed will teach and show him where to find the medicine—grace—which will help him to become devout and keep the commandments.” LW 43:9-10.

⁴¹Luther’s 1518 *Heidelberg Disputation* gives full expression to the Pauline doctrine that the law creates “the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20), “brings wrath” (Rom 4:15), “came in to increase the trespass” (Rom 5:20), “kills” (Rom 7:11), and shows sin to be “sinful beyond measure” (Rom 7:13). For example, Luther states in thesis 1, “The law of God, the most salutary doctrine of life, cannot advance man on his way to righteousness, but rather hinders him.” LW 31:39.

⁴²Commenting on Luther’s earlier catechetical sermons and writings, Arand summarizes: “Clearly, Luther’s explanation of his arrangement of the catechism’s texts reflects his theology on the importance of the distinction between Law and Gospel. In one sense, the rationale for Luther’s ordering in these earlier writings reflects the existential character of his theology. Luther’s own experience as a monk had taught him that the Christian life begins with the awareness of one’s own sinfulness and inability to fulfill the divine commands. In another sense, the ordering reflected the heart of Luther’s theology of the cross, namely that God kills in order to make alive. Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 132.

⁴³Kolb explains in a footnote from the *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, “Biel held that the requirement for love of God for God’s sake or above everything else, while not easy, was still within the reach of human beings without the assistance of grace.” KW, 122n52.

presumption by commanding the full, inward and outward obedience of “fear, love, and trust in God above all things.”⁴⁴ However, unlike Biel and others, Luther did not direct sinners to the futility of their own efforts,⁴⁵ but rather he strategically placed the Creed after the commandments in order to heal the wounds dealt by the Decalogue. If the law reveals beyond a doubt that people are “lost and condemned,” it only does so in preparation for Jesus Christ, who redeems sinners from “all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil” by means of “His holy, precious blood” and “His innocent suffering and death.”⁴⁶

Luther also departed from Augustine’s ordering by placing the Lord’s Prayer last in the sequence of the three key elements.⁴⁷ The placement of the Lord’s Prayer after conviction of sin in the Decalogue and conversion through faith in Christ in the Creed reflects the Reformation doctrine of sanctification—namely that genuine faith produces the fruits of holiness in the life of the believer.⁴⁸ In stark contrast to the Roman piety of

⁴⁴LSC, 13.

⁴⁵“For Gabriel Biel and others, ‘to do what is in one’ (*facere quod in se est*) was to exercise one’s natural powers without the assistance of grace. This did not justify a person but constituted a merit of congruity, that is, a work rewarded with righteousness not because of its intrinsic worth but out of God’s goodness.” KW, 121-22n51. Luther took a radically different approach, using the Decalogue as a tool to reveal inability as opposed to any possibility of *facere quod in se est*. In fact, Luther would argue that “to do what is in one” leads not toward salvation but damnation. As he makes clear in thesis 16 of his *Heidelberg Disputation*, which was aimed at scholastics in the ilk of Biel, “The person who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty.” Thesis 18 describes in one sentence the logic behind Luther’s placement of the Decalogue before the Creed in his Small Catechism—“It is certain that a man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ.” LW 31: 40.

⁴⁶LSC, 17.

⁴⁷Scriptures and explanations related to baptism, confession, and the Lord’s Supper, as well as daily prayers and exhortations to daily vocations do follow the Lord’s Prayer, however, the three key elements of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer receive central focus and remain consistent throughout all of Luther’s catechetical preaching and writing.

⁴⁸As Arand explains, “Once God’s wrath is turned aside and we enter the Kingdom of Christ . . . the Lord’s Prayer becomes a deepening repetition of the Decalogue . . . in the Our Father, he [Luther] drastically depicts our struggling with the powers of chaos and herein shows us our sanctification as a constantly apprehending anew justification.” Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 141.

his day, Luther frames the struggle for sanctification through prayer as only possible for one who has died under the weight of the law's condemnation and risen with Christ through justification—a movement Luther intentionally followed in his ordering of commandment, Creed, and the Lord's Prayer.⁴⁹

Language Revised

In addition to removing and restructuring traditional elements of the church's catechesis to impart and defend evangelical doctrine, Luther also deliberately utilized language that countered prior Roman Catholic teaching regarding salvation. Two points deserve attention. First, he countered the Roman doctrine of merit by emphasizing God as the active agent in giving grace and salvation, and second, he repeatedly employed the language of faith, trust, and belief in opposition to Roman teachings about works, the nature of faith, and the benefits offered in the sacraments.

In contrast to the Roman doctrine and practice of merit,⁵⁰ Luther intentionally emphasized the triune God as the active giver of grace, and human beings as the passive

⁴⁹Luther makes clear in the introduction to the Lord's Prayer in the Large Catechism that the Lord's Prayer embodies the struggle for sanctification—namely by keeping the commandments in the power of the Spirit after conversion. "We have now heard what we are to do and believe . . . Now follows the third part, how we are to pray. We are in such a situation that no one can keep the Ten Commandments perfectly, even though he or she has begun to believe . . . Consequently, nothing is so necessary as to call upon God incessantly and to drum into his ears our prayer that he may give, preserve, and increase in us faith and the fulfillment of the Ten Commandments." KW, 440-41.

⁵⁰The Roman Catholic doctrine of merit was nuanced during the time of Luther, but generally speaking scholastic theologians taught two types—merit of congruity and merit of condignity. As Kolb defines each, "Merit of congruity (*meritum de congruo*): good works that merit a reward solely on the basis of God's generosity. For Biel, when persons in a state of sin do what is in them to love God according to the substance of the act, God rewards them (*de congruo*) with the infusion of first grace. Merit of condignity (*meritum de condigno*): good works that merit a reward from God on the basis of their intrinsic worth. For Biel it is an act performed in a state of grace that is then worthy of divine acceptance. Persons first earn merit by doing what is in them; upon receiving a grace-induced habit of love they can then perform condign merit for eternal reward." KW, 123nn61-62. Merit, whether attained by the individual through good works, or "borrowed" from the treasury of the merits of the saints, made one worthy of eternal life. Within the context of penance, its prescriptions for satisfaction, the expectation of purgatory, and the prohibition against certainty of salvation, this Roman doctrine created a great deal of anxiety for anyone earnestly endeavoring after salvation.

recipients of his gifts. This reversal is most evident in the Catechism in his exposition of the Creed. Starting in the first article of the Creed, Luther prepares catechumens for the free grace of justification in the second article by teaching that God offers his gifts to all of creation without regard to merit. After listing the gifts that God lavishes on humanity—“body, soul, eyes, ears,” and other natural gifts—he states, “All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.”⁵¹ While Rome would no doubt agree on this point, Luther presses the point in the first article because God’s free grace apart from merit is a thread that he will weave through the rest of the Creed, even in his expositions of the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, and the sacraments.⁵²

The active work of God in place of human work is even more explicit in the second article. Here the work of Christ—from incarnation, to suffering and death, to resurrection, ascension, and rule—all overshadow human work. Human beings are “lost and condemned persons” rather than grace-infused merit seekers. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, has taken the initiative to “redeem, purchase, and win” lost and condemned sinners from “all sins, death, and from the power of the devil.”⁵³ Almost certainly taking a jab at the lucrative indulgences that offered merit, Luther locates this redemption not in “gold or silver,” but rather in “His holy, precious blood” and “His innocent suffering and

⁵¹LSC, 16.

⁵²For example, even though Luther believed the Ten Commandments always accuse sinners (even those who are justified), he nevertheless considered the Decalogue to be a gift from God. This is evident in his explanation of the first commandment in the Large Catechism—“What this means is: ‘See to it that you let me alone be your God, and never search for another.’ In other words: ‘Whatever good thing you lack, look to me for it and seek it from me, and whenever you suffer misfortune and distress, crawl to me and cling to me. I, I myself, will give you what you need and help you out of every danger.’” KW, 387.

⁵³LSC, 17.

death.”⁵⁴ Instead of anxious penitents climbing a ladder of merit toward uncertain salvation, the end result of God’s active work in Christ is full confidence—“that I may be His own and live under Him in His Kingdom.”⁵⁵

Finally, in the third article, God takes the initiative in applying the redemption of Christ to the individual through faith. Against the scholastics, who relied on human reason and effort to attain to God, Luther boldly affirms, “I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”⁵⁶ Once again, all the initiative lies in God—not only for creation, its blessings, and the work of redemption, but also for individual conversion. Human reason and strength can neither attain merit nor contribute to conversion. The Holy Spirit is active through the gospel, operating on the passive human will. From beginning to end, God creates faith and preserves the believer safe to life everlasting. In summary, Luther crafted the language of his explanation of the Creed to highlight the active initiative of God’s grace on behalf of sinners, without regard for their merit. In other words, according to Luther, human beings are created by no merit of their own, redeemed by no merit of their own, and converted and kept to everlasting life by no merit of their own.

God’s work on behalf of helpless humanity elicits, by the power of the Holy Spirit, faith in his promises. Therefore, the language of faith, trust, and belief are central to the Catechism. In his explanation of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s

⁵⁴LSC, 17.

⁵⁵LSC, 17.

⁵⁶LSC, 17.

Prayer, and even in the more peripheral aspects of catechesis (by comparison), such as baptism, confession, and the Lord's Supper, Luther ties these together with the *sola fide* focus of the Reformation. This emphasis on faith carries apologetic weight as it collides with the Roman emphasis on justification by works, the historical nature of faith as mere knowledge, and the *ex opere operato* view of the sacraments.⁵⁷

The Ten Commandments begin and end with a call to faith. To keep the First Commandment is to “fear, love, and trust in God above all things.”⁵⁸ At the close of the commandments he summarizes, “Therefore, we should also love and trust in him and gladly do what he commands.”⁵⁹ Contrary to the scholasticism of Luther's day, this trust (faith) in God is not a dead *fides informata* that requires the infusion of the habit of love for justification, but rather a living and active faith that clings to the promises of God and fills the life of the believer with the love and life necessary to keep the commandments.⁶⁰ Since only actions that proceed from justifying faith truly please God, Luther frames the Decalogue within the language of trust.⁶¹

⁵⁷Since this study is limited to an examination of the core catechetical triad of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, attention will not be devoted in detail to the theme of faith, trust, and belief in Luther's explanation of the sacraments. However, even a brief reading of the sections in the Small Catechism on baptism, confession, and the Lord's Supper reveals that in opposition to the *ex opere operato* stance of Rome, faith goes hand in hand with the sacraments from beginning to end.

⁵⁸LSC, 13. Luther expounds further in his Large Catechism, “The intention of this commandment, therefore, is to require true faith and confidence of the heart, which fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone.” KW, 386-87.

⁵⁹LSC, 15.

⁶⁰Thomas Aquinas, as well as later scholastics, taught that faith was primarily historical knowledge. KW, 128. Melancthon's *Augsburg Confession* and following *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* make clear, among a host of other Reformation writings, that Luther and the Reformers understood the word “faith” as referring to the reception of the benefits of Christ rather than simply historical knowledge. “People are also reminded that the term ‘faith’ here does not signify only historical knowledge—the kind of faith that the ungodly and the devil have—but that it signifies faith which believes not only the history but also the effect of the history, namely, this article of the forgiveness of sins.” KW, 57. See also KW, 128-30.

⁶¹In the Large Catechism Luther indicates that the faith called for in the first commandment is the source of obedience to the remaining nine, and thus the source of Christian love (Rom 13:8-10). “For where one's head is right, one's whole life must also be right, and vice versa.” KW, 390.

Given that the Creed is framed with the affirmation “credo” (I believe), its three parts naturally invite an emphasis on faith. However, as previously noted, the medieval understanding of faith typically defined the Creed as historical information that, while necessary for salvation, does not provide salvation unless the *fides informis* becomes a *fides caritate formata*.⁶² As expected, Luther unpacks the meaning of “credo” from a *sola fide* perspective. Not only does he place the emphasis on Christ’s work of redemption, he places the work of Christ on the lips of the catechized in personal “for me” language. The incarnation is not a cold historical fact—the “true God” and “true man, born of the Virgin Mary” is “my Lord,” who through his suffering and death “has redeemed me” and “won me” so that “I may be his own.” By way of first person language, Luther invites his hearers to move from *fides informis* to *fides apprehensiva Christi*.⁶³

To add further weight to the living, active nature of saving faith, as well as to its divine origin, Luther explains the third article of the Creed with an affirmation of human inability. To say, “I believe in the Holy Spirit” means, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”⁶⁴ In other words, one cannot apprehend Christ’s benefits as “for me”

⁶²Bengt Hägglund, *History of Theology*, trans. Gene J. Lund (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968), 189-92, 226-27.

⁶³Hägglund, *History of Theology*, 227. “Justifying faith, in other words, is not only a historical knowledge of the content of the Gospel; it is the acceptance of the merits of Christ. Faith, therefore, is trust in God’s mercy for the sake of Christ. In this connection Luther coined the term *fides apprehensiva Christi*.” Luther speaks of the difference between mere historical faith and the Small Catechism language of “for me” in his 1535 *Theses Concerning Faith and Law*. Theses 17-18: “Acquired faith, or the infused faith of the sophists, says of Christ, ‘I believe that the Son of God suffered and arose again,’ and here it stops. But true faith says, ‘I certainly believe that the Son of God suffered and arose, but he did this all for me, for my sins, of that I am certain.’” LW 34:110.

⁶⁴LSC, 17.

unless the Spirit takes the initiative and establishes a relationship of trust. While some medieval theologians would admit that grace must make the first move in the process of justification, Luther prioritizes the work of the Spirit not only in creating faith, but also sanctifying the believer and keeping her in the faith to the very end. Furthermore, Luther directly opposed the optimism of the scholastics, who taught that human beings possessed the ability to apprehend God by reason after the fall into sin.⁶⁵

In summary, the structure and language of Luther's Small Catechism stands out as a clear expression of the Reformation faith in opposition to Roman Catholic errors.⁶⁶ Like previous catechisms, it certainly functioned as basic Christian instruction. However, the urgent defense of the gospel that served as both the context and catalyst for the Small Catechism's composition made it more than instruction. It was also a defense of the key doctrines of the church for lay people living in a world of conflicting theological ideas.

⁶⁵What lies behind "I cannot by my own reason or strength" is Luther's consistent teaching that human beings, after the fall, do not possess the ability to seek and find God by reason alone. In the *Smalcald Articles* he rejects the position of the scholastics, who taught "that after the fall of Adam the natural powers of the human being have remained whole and uncorrupted, and that each human being possesses by nature sound reason and a good will, as the philosophers teach." KW, 311. For a much more detailed discussion of Luther's stance, see Gordon E. Rupp and Philip S. Watson, eds., *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 169-332.

⁶⁶Space does not allow for a full examination of the language of faith in Luther's explanation of the Lord's Prayer. However, the language of faith is consistently present, so much so that Arand has called this section of the Catechism "the battle cry of faith." Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 164. Arand has also written an entire article devoted to this theme. In it he writes, "An examination of the Address and Conclusion of Luther's exposition of the Lord's Prayer as well as his explanation of the petitions will thus show that the catechisms consider the Lord's Prayer as both the cry *of faith* and at the same time the cry *for faith*. Arand, "The Battle Cry of Faith: The Catechisms' Exposition of the Lord's Prayer," *Concordia Journal* 25, no.1 (Winter 1995): 45. In the introduction, Luther interprets "Our Father who art in heaven" as words that invite faith—"With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children." The invitation to approach God with boldness in prayer is fresh and liberating in comparison to the cowering uncertainty of prayer manuals like Kolde's *A Fruitful Mirror*, where supplicants call on Mary to "deliver me from the wrath of your dear child." Quoted from KW, 241. Additionally, Luther teaches in the second petition that to pray "Thy Kingdom come" is to ask for the Holy Spirit, "so that by His grace we believe His holy Word." LSC, 20. Finally, Luther ends the Lord's prayer with an explanation of "amen" as "yes, yes, it shall be so," and in doing so communicates that the certainty of saving faith extends to the certainty of God's attentive ear in prayer. LSC, 22.

Contra Agricola: In Defense of Holiness

Both Arand and Kolb observe that while Luther's early catechetical work focused on defending *sola gratia* and *sola fide* against Roman perversions of soteriology, his later emphasis was directed toward misunderstandings of the law among Reformation theologians.⁶⁷ Even before Luther first published his Small and Large Catechisms, Johann Agricola had published *One Hundred and Thirty Common Questions* in 1527. In this work, Agricola outlined his antinomian doctrine in its nascent form.⁶⁸ Luther was mostly likely familiar with Agricola's work, and although the antinomian controversy did not reach a tipping point until 1537, three distinctive features of Luther's Small Catechism strongly suggest that he was countering Agricola's view of the law.⁶⁹

First, in contrast to Agricola's catechism, which places the gospel before the law,⁷⁰ Luther places the Decalogue first and explains its meaning in detail before preceding to the gospel in the Creed. Luther did the same in opposition to Rome, but in

⁶⁷Arand observes that whereas Luther's pre-catechism preaching and publication from 1520 to 1525 focused on what theologians call the "second use" of the law (its power to convict of sin), his later efforts in 1528 and following focused on the "third use" (the law as instruction for the regenerate). In response to three factors—his church visitations, widespread abuse of liberty, and Agricola's rejection of the law for Christian life—Luther now gave "a positive interpretation of the Ten Commandments as a description of the Christian's new life." Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 132-33.

⁶⁸In his introduction to Agricola's *One Hundred Thirty Questions*, Kolb and Nestingen comment, "In Eisleben, the contours of his (antinomian) theology began to take shape, resulting immediately in a dispute with Philip Melanchthon over the Saxon Visitation Articles of 1528 Later he insisted that Melanchthon's emphasis upon sorrow for sin out of fear of punishment contradicted Evangelical theology because true sorrow for sin arose not from the law but from the Gospel and thus from true love for God. This theological controversy is directly reflected in Agricola's catechism." Robert Kolb and James Nestingen, eds., *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2001), 13-14.

⁶⁹Luther's 1538 addition to *The Smalcald Articles* after Agricola originally signed the document in 1536 reflects the maturation of the conflict. KW, 318-19.

⁷⁰Agricola places the Ten Commandments at the end of his catechism. He ends with the words, "The Gospel says to all flesh: You are free from all laws, even you Jews from the entire Law of Moses, just do not use your freedom in a fleshly manner." Kolb and Nestingen, *Sources and Contexts*, 29. In opposite fashion, Luther ends his section on the commandments with a stern warning—"God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them." LSC, 15. Because Luther viewed the law as inseparably tied to creation, he sees it as a good gift of God—never a source of salvation, and always accusing even as it instructs—but still not a part of God's creation that can be abandoned. See Luther's *How Christians Should Regard Moses*, LW 35:161-74.

this new context Luther emphasizes the law first for a different reason. Unlike Rome, Agricola did not teach that individuals could attain righteousness before God by works. However, in Luther's opinion, Agricola did err seriously in applying the gospel to those not yet aware of their need for justification by way of a sobering encounter with divine justice. To reverse the order leads to false conversions and unwarranted security, and thus, Luther's catechetical structure stands in marked difference to Agricola.⁷¹

Second, in both of Luther's catechisms, the law takes a place of priority in comparison with other sections. In the Small Catechism, Luther's exposition of the Decalogue is about one hundred words longer than the Creed.⁷² Even more obvious is the priority he gives to the Ten Commandments in the Large Catechism. Luther devotes 333 paragraphs to the commandments, but only 70 to the Creed!⁷³ The explanation of the petitions of the Lord's prayer are lengthy as well in both catechisms, giving weight to Luther's concern for the struggle for sanctification. While Agricola does give attention to the commandments, he does not devote as much space or serious attention to them. A comparison of Luther and Agricola's catechetical works strongly suggests that Luther was consciously countering the former's antinomianism.

Third, and finally, Luther uses specific language to reinforce the killing power of the law—even in the life of the believer. While Luther did often speak of good works as proceeding from the faith of the spiritually reborn without coercion, he also recognized

⁷¹“Luther, too, was probably familiar with the *One Hundred Thirty Common Questions*. His own catechetical works stood in marked contrast to those of Agricola. The law is placed prominently at the beginning of both of his catechisms.” Kolb and Nestingen, *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord*, 14.

⁷²See LSC, 13-18.

⁷³See the Large Catechism in KW, 386-456.

that the *simul iustus et peccator* experience of Christians left them with an old Adam still in need of the threats and convictions of the law. In question 47 of his catechism, Agricola asks, “What does God require of us so that we might repay him for these aforementioned blessings?” His answer—“He demands nothing of us, except that we trust and believe his words.”⁷⁴ While Luther would agree that salvation comes freely apart from human payment, his Small Catechism does not make statements that could be taken as license for antinomian indifference. For Luther, the Christian life is not characterized by an over-realized eschatology in which sanctification proceeds from love alone. Rather, following the language of the New Testament, he allows an element of fear to check the sinful nature and drive believers continually back to the mercies of Christ anew.⁷⁵

In summary, Luther responded to his context with a defense of whichever aspect of the Christian faith was under attack at the moment. When the pure gospel of Christ suffered compromise at the hands of Rome, Luther responded with catechesis that directly opposed its legalistic soteriology. When both practical and doctrinal antinomianism arose as an unintended result of the Reformation, Luther responded by defending the Decalogue as a necessary preparation for the gospel, as well as positive instruction for the path of sanctification. All of these apologetic elements eventually coalesced into a catechism that imparted and defended the evangelical faith to hearts and minds in the years to come.

⁷⁴Kolb and Nestingen, *Sources and Contexts*, 20.

⁷⁵Luke 12:5, 1 Cor 10:12, Phil 2:12, Heb 4:1, Jude 23.

Revisiting the Question: The Catechism as Apologetics?

So far it is clear that Luther deliberately wrote his Small Catechism with the explicit purpose of countering false beliefs and practices, as well as imparting and guarding evangelical doctrine. Nevertheless, the question may persist as to whether Luther's Small Catechism qualifies to some degree as apologetics. As previously discussed, the short answer is *yes*, but not according to the typical modern understanding of apologetics. Simply put, apologetics is the defense of the Christian faith—an answer given to unbelief.⁷⁶ Unbelief comes in varied forms, and therefore the church's defense of the gospel gives an answer to the particular point at which it is challenged. Like theologians of previous ages, Luther defended the gospel in his context against errors from within and without.

The modern church has responded with apologetic answers largely in response to the growing skepticism that arose and developed after the Reformation. However, during Luther's time, no one seriously questioned the existence of God or the legitimacy of what is now called "the Christian worldview."⁷⁷ These truths were taken for granted. Rather, the Reformation dealt with an attack on the heart of the gospel, which in turn called for an apologetic response.⁷⁸

⁷⁶See Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 1.

⁷⁷"To be sure, in the sixteenth century the major disputes were internecine, since almost all scholars believed in the Christian faith." William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, eds., *Christian Apologetics Past and Present—A Primary Source Reader* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 18. More specifically to Luther, John Warwick Montgomery adds, "Admittedly, Luther did not build a formal apologetic . . . His task was not to defend the soundness of the biblical history or of its picture of Christ. In the sixteenth century, no reputable theologians of any school of thought questioned the veracity of the scriptural text." Montgomery, "The Apologetic Thrust of Lutheran Theology," in *Theologia et Apologia: Essays in Reformation Theology and Its Defense Presented to Rod Rosenblatt*, ed. Adam S. Francisco (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Sock, 2007), 14.

⁷⁸While Montgomery does not think Luther built a formal apologetic, from the perspective of a broader understanding of apologetics it is clear that Luther *was* doing apologetics—even if he did not use this term. Commenting on one of Luther's other major works, Edgar and Oliphint argue, "Luther's *Concerning Christian Liberty* is an apologetic work. There are two important aspects about this apologetic

Behind Rome’s resistance to the gospel were two general ideological factors: an overreliance on human reason and pagan philosophy.⁷⁹ In other words, as Luther and the Reformers defended the Gospel, their apologetic required waging war against the multiple century-deep strata of scholasticism—assumptions built upon Aristotle, fallen reason, and the formal exposition of scholastic theology in the Sentences and its commentaries. None of these philosophical factors were well known to the majority of the common German people to whom Luther ministered. Nevertheless, they lived with the deadly fallout of the high ideas of medieval scholasticism.

Luther’s catechism does not go into technical detail about philosophy or reason. Rather, he applied simple, memorable language to counter the effects of more sophisticated forms of unbelief. He did so not with terse theological treatises, but instead with memorable biblical truth, and the repeated questions, “What does this mean?” and “Where is this written?” These questions directed his learners back to simple, yet powerful biblical assertions about the divine drama of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. To quote Arand again, “Its structure and message helped replace old patterns of thought with new patterns, old values with new values, and legalistic forms of piety

that should not escape our attention. First, it is a *theological* apologetic. Luther is not engaging discussions such as the existence of God or the possibility of miracles. Rather, he is attempting to purify, to *reform*, that which calls itself the church of Jesus Christ. Second, we should note that there is, always and everywhere, a need for apologetics *within the church*.” Edgar and Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics Past and Present*, 22-23. The same points apply to LSC as well. Luther wrote his Small Catechism as a theological apologetic for common Christians with the aim of defending the faith within the church.

⁷⁹Luther’s *Heidelberg Disputation*, already noted above in relation to his views on the law, merit, and grace, also included a series of philosophical theses critical of the philosophy that shaped much of medieval theology. For example, in thesis 29 Luther asserts, “He who wishes to philosophize by using Aristotle without danger to his soul must first become thoroughly foolish in Christ.” LW 31:41. Concerning reason, Luther had a high view of reason when properly employed. In his Small Catechism he lists “my reason and all my senses” as gifts that God has given and still preserves. However, when it comes to justification, reason becomes a stumbling block that cannot advance people toward faith. So, against scholastics like Biel who claimed that “reason, without the Holy Spirit, can love God above all things,” Luther teaches believers to confess, “I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him.” See KW, 121 and LSC 16-18.

with evangelical forms of piety.”⁸⁰ In this light, Luther’s Small Catechism was nothing less than apologetic.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the sixteenth century context that demanded a new catechism for the church. It also established the apologetic thrust of Luther’s Small Catechism within his context. The next chapter will continue this train of thought by applying the apologetic implications of Luther’s Small Catechism to a world much different than Luther’s. However, though written almost five hundred years ago, the Christian worldview contained within the structure and language of Luther’s Catechism will provide ample opportunity to defend new forms of unbelief that now challenge the faith “once delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3).

⁸⁰Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 147.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF
USING LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM
AS A FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING
APOLOGETICS

Introduction

In her book *Total Truth*, Nancy Pearcey candidly admits about her Lutheran upbringing, "I had memorized hymns, Bible verses, the creeds, and the Lutheran catechism . . . Yet I had never been trained in apologetics, or given tools for analyzing ideas, or taught to defend Christianity against competing 'isms.'"¹ Her words describe well the current crisis in catechesis in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) Churches often offer sound, systematic instruction in the Bible and Luther's Small Catechism. Nevertheless, their pedagogical approaches have often neglected to account for the significant worldview shifts in Western thought and culture that have undermined the basic assumptions that Luther's Catechism takes for granted.

Issues in Catechesis

Successful catechesis in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod has often been a pastoral Rubick's cube that escapes solving.² Over the past few decades, pastors and

¹Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 134.

²Catechesis itself has fallen on hard times. Even before the turn of the century, Lutheran religious scholar Martin Marty remarked, "Nothing is supportive of efforts to discipline, order, express, and make attractive the Christian life through anything related to the catechism." Marin Marty, "The Future of the Catechism," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 24, no. 1 (1994): 326. Nevertheless, recent publications suggest that the LCMS is experiencing a revival in catechesis. For example, Concordia Publishing House (the official publishing house of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod) recently published a new version of

teachers have proposed multiple solutions to address the disconnect that often exists between catechesis and continued faithfulness to Christ among the catechized.³ Only recently has there been a recognition that catechesis often lacks apologetic substance. While the current crisis in catechesis no doubt stems from multiple factors, a strong argument can be made that the absence of apologetics in most catechetical instruction is a substantial one.

Geoffrey Boyle, in his recent diagnostic commentary on catechesis, poses a critical question: “While pastors struggle to defend the doctrines of our church and refute erring doctrines, how many confirmands are trained in apologetics?”⁴ In his assessment of catechesis, David Rueter finds apologetic training in short supply. He notes that the church has failed to account for recent worldview shifts—most notably the influence of postmodernism and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. By assuming what he calls a “Christendom-type of mindset” in a thoroughly post-Christian culture, pastors often unwittingly offer instruction that rings hollow in the minds of their students.⁵ Mark

Luther’s Small Catechism with revised questions and answers that respond to cultural changes. This edition also offers some apologetic explanations. See Martin Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017). Concordia has also recently published an adult coloring book catechism, as well as books that make use of the Catechism as prayer and devotion material. See Tony Cook, *The Illuminated Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), John Pless, *Praying Luther’s Small Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2016), and Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012). This recovered interest in catechesis extends beyond Lutheran circles. For example, see the Gospel Coalition’s *New City Catechism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017). This renewed interest in catechesis may be in reaction to the recent realization that the church has neglected this foundational aspect of Christian formation for decades.

³For a diagnostic overview of the multiple factors that hinder successful catechesis, see Geoffrey Boyle, “Confirmation, Catechesis, and Communion: A Historical Survey,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 79 (2015): 121-42. See also Charles Arand, “Does Catechesis in the LCMS Aim for the *Ars Vivendi Fide*?” *Concordia Journal* 22, no. 1 (January 1996): 57-65. Chapter 3 of David Rueter’s recent book addresses some of the issues related to shifts in culture and worldview. David Rueter, *Teaching the Faith at Home* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2016), 43-53. Harold Senkbeil makes the claim that “we are no longer a teaching church.” Later he hints that Luther’s Small Catechism itself contains apologetic potential. See Harold Senkbeil, “Engaging Culture Faithfully,” *Concordia Journal* 40, no. 4 (Fall 2014): 292-313.

⁴Boyle, “Confirmation, Catechesis, and Communion,” 138.

⁵“This is the point of contact at which our young people struggle. They are often taught by

Mattes has rightly remarked, “To be truly conversant in the faith is not only to know the Scriptures and the catechisms inside and out, but it is also to be aware of criticisms of the faith and have thoughtful responses to them.”⁶ If catechesis often assumes a Christendom mindset, and as a result neglects to address worldview shifts with thoughtful apologetic responses, then catechesis in the LCMS requires a significant overhaul and reorientation toward apologetic training.

Rueter proposes that pastors address their postmodern context by cultivating what he calls a “thinking climate.” Rather than offer pat answers and proof texts, pastors and teachers must help learners process through deep questions—worldview questions—in a safe and open environment. Concerning the instruction of youth, he writes,

Rather than equipping youth with the critical thinking skills needed to assess and evaluate faith challenges for themselves, too often apologetics is degraded into the provision of preset answers, often not even relevant to the questions at hand I would argue that if we are creating a thinking climate well, we will tap into questions that teens already have, whether on the surface or not, and offer a safer place in which to ask and to explore the implications of answers to those questions We do a disservice to our youth when families and churches fail to prepare students so they can provide well thought out and deeply reflective responses.⁷

leaders whose frame of reference is more Christendom oriented. This creates a confused approach for a teen fully immersed in a post-Christian cultural context. Although their parents might have existed in both eras, that time is past. Thus, we nearly can create a point of apologetic tension within the context of our own catechesis. Attempting to instruct our students in a Christendom-type of mindset rings hollow, even if our students are not able to identify what is at work.” Rueter, *Teaching the Faith*, 59.

⁶Mark Mattes, “A Lutheran Case for Apologetics,” *Logia* 23, no. 4 (2015): 25.

⁷Rueter, *Teaching the Faith*, 87-89. Rueter articulates the consequences of neglecting apologetics in catechetical instruction: “The world presents youth with real and challenging questions. Youth who head off to college with the faith maturity of a child often find their faith unraveling. Some may return with questions about their faith that we did not prepare them to deal with. Others will seek answers from local churches or campus ministries, many of which are non-Lutheran, where they may find the willingness to facilitate the critical thinking that they need while at the same time offering fellowship that includes encouragement and support. Still others forsake their faith entirely, lacking the confidence that the church has any answers to offer.” Rueter, 87-89. Rueter’s observations are strikingly similar to the context of OSLC given in chap. 1.

Rueter’s proposed catechetical remedy is reminiscent of what was lacking in Nancy Pearcey’s youth—namely the opportunity to think critically about other worldviews. What Rueter proposes is in tandem with the overall intention of this project—to use Luther’s Small Catechism as both a resource and an opportunity to engage in deep, critical thinking about worldview questions, thus fostering the “thinking climate” of apologetics.

In the previous chapter, attention was devoted to the role Luther’s Small Catechism played in defending the Christian faith against Roman Catholic and Reformation challenges. Despite radical changes in Western beliefs and values, Luther’s Small Catechism still stands as a solid exposition of the biblical faith. However, in response to such changes, the church must reorient its catechetical approach to account for a world of unbelief unlike that of Luther’s day. This chapter will examine how Luther’s Small Catechism functions as a useful apologetic framework. Although its content now addresses a world much different than Luther’s, the structure and language of Luther’s Small Catechism offers rich resources to defend the Christian faith against modern manifestations of unbelief and error. The Catechism will first be considered as an expression of the Christian worldview in comparison with other competing worldviews, thus embodying the presuppositional approach to apologetics.⁸ Opportunities to use the

⁸The use of the presuppositional method in this project could potentially yield criticism from confessional Lutherans. Consider, for example, the position of Montgomery (himself an evidentialist): “Now what kind of apologetic approach ought today’s confessional Lutheran to build on this axiomatic foundation? Let us be very clear, first of all, as to what approach he must not take. He must not fall into the trap of presuppositionalism or apriorism so attractive to orthodox Calvinists of the Dutch school (Van Til, Dooyeweerd, et al.)” John Warwick Montgomery, “Christian Apologetics in Light of the Lutheran Confessions,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 42 (July 1978): 271. From a confessional Lutheran perspective, Montgomery’s concerns are warranted to a degree, however, it appears his zeal for confessional Lutheran theology (much of which is oriented toward polemic debates with the Reformed) leaves little room for a recognition of the shared understanding between Lutheran and Reformed apologists on issues such as the depravity of man (Luther’s “bondage of the will”) and monergism. In fact, apart from the issue of epistemology, it could be argued that the theology of the Lutheran Confessions has more in common with the theology behind the presuppositional approach. For example, Luther’s affirmation in the Small Catechism, “I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord,” has more of a

Catechism to employ the evidential method of apologetics will also be discussed briefly. Overall, the aim will be a robust, well-rounded approach to apologetics that utilizes traditional catechetical language to defend the faith.

The Current Context

Much ink has been spilt on the current religious and cultural landscape of the United States.⁹ The purpose of this argument is not to rehash statistics or rehearse in detail what pastors know all too well—the brave new world of the twenty-first century is a post-Christian America that increasingly reflects the beliefs and values of secularity, relativism, pluralism, and a myriad of other labels at odds with the basic assumptions of biblical Christianity. The nature of these beliefs and values are often difficult to pin down, especially given the tendency for many people to blend contradictory elements of each.¹⁰ For the purpose of this project, attention will be devoted to two general manifestations of unbelief—secularity and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (commonly referred to as MTD).¹¹ Each of these will be examined through the lens of worldview

Reformed flavor to it than the Arminian theology upon which much popular American evidentialism rests.

⁹For example, see David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity . . . and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), and David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving the Church . . . and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).

¹⁰Theologian Joel Okamoto sees this fluidity in belief as symptomatic of postmodernism. “Two of the most evident characteristics of a postmodern world are its relativistic attitude and its pluralistic ethos. The postmodern person reflects a relativistic attitude where they are suspicious of universal truth claims, of metanarratives, of moral absolutes. Consequently, the postmodern argues for pluralism: in the face of differences and diversity, we need to be tolerant, accepting, and nonjudgmental.” Joel Okamoto, “Lutherans Speaking the Gospel into Postmodern Ears,” *Concordia Journal* 27, no. 2 (April 2001): 102.

¹¹Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton coined this term in reference to the prevailing spiritual beliefs of America teenagers in their book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford Press, 2005), 162-71. The term, along with the findings of their study, have echoed throughout the literature of numerous Christian writers assessing the current state of culture and religious belief. For example, see Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (New York, Oxford: 2010), 3-42.

questions—namely, who am I? Why am I here? What went wrong? What’s the solution?¹²

Secularity

In his massive volume *A Secular Age*, philosopher Charles Taylor observes that the word “secular” has functioned at three different levels.¹³ At the first level, the word refers to the division between sacred and common pursuits—more recently expressed in the removal of God and religious practice from public spaces.¹⁴ At a second level, the word denotes a more pervasive unbelief—a general societal trend in which unbelief is more common and religion is in decline.¹⁵ Finally, at an even higher level, “secular” or “secularity” refers to a society in which unbelief is the prevailing norm.¹⁶ The paradigm of secular presuppositions that gave rise to this full expression of secularity

¹²Numerous questions can be utilized to examine worldview assumptions. While a plurality of questions are available to assess worldviews, each aims to unlock the basic assumptions behind the implied narrative guiding one’s life.

¹³Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 1-22. For a helpful interpretation of Taylor’s work, especially his definitions of the word “secular,” see James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 18-23.

¹⁴“One understanding of secularity then is in terms of public spaces. These have allegedly been emptied of God, or of any reference to ultimate reality. Or taken from another side, as we function within various spheres of activities—economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, recreational—the norms and principles we follow, the deliberations we engage in, generally don’t refer us to God or to any religious beliefs.” Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2.

¹⁵“In this second meaning, secularity consists in the falling off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to church. In this sense, the countries of western Europe have mainly become secular—even those who retain the vestigial public reference to God in public space.” Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2.

¹⁶“So what I want to do is examine our society as secular in this third sense, which I could perhaps encapsulate in this way: the change I want to define and trace is one which takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others Belief in God is no longer axiomatic. There are alternatives.” Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 3.

is the secular worldview—an approach to ultimate and immediate questions that leads to default unbelief as opposed to previous ages of default belief.¹⁷

In summary, while “secular” can refer to either an approach to civil life that excludes religious opinions from the public square, or to a general decline in religious belief, a deeper view—best termed as “secularity”—assumes a world void of supernatural and transcendent meaning at every level of life.¹⁸ In sum, this worldview presupposes atheism from beginning to end, and is therefore hostile to religious explanations to basic questions about origins, morals, and the purpose of life.¹⁹

Philosopher Mark Mattes offers the following rough sketch of secularity as a worldview:

To be secular means (1) to see life from within the immediate physical and temporal world without reference to God; (2) to establish one’s own value system apart from any reference to God, who is only an “external authority”; and (3) to believe that there are no absolutes in life — that all truth is situational.²⁰

So, in general, how does the secular worldview approach the aforementioned worldview questions?

¹⁷Commenting on what he labels “secular₃,” Smith explains, “It is the emergence of ‘the secular’ in this sense that makes possible the emergence of an ‘exclusive humanism’—a radically new option in the marketplace of beliefs, a vision of life in which anything beyond the immanent is eclipsed.” Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 22-23.

¹⁸In order to avoid confusion regarding the multiple layers of meaning behind the word “secular,” I will typically refer to Taylor’s third level of secular society and its supporting worldview as “secularity” and “the secular worldview.” Some sources—namely Mattes and Pearcey—prefer to use the more general term “secularism.”

¹⁹For example, see Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Hachette, 2009), and Jerry Coyne, *Faith Versus Fact: Why Science and Religion Are Incompatible* (New York: Penguin, 2015). These represent a small cross section, many of which are bestsellers.

²⁰Mattes, “A Lutheran Case for Apologetics,” 26.

Who am I? From a purely scientific perspective, human beings are atoms, molecules, and energy—or as Andrew Klavan puts it, “a chemistry set crossed with a computer.”²¹ Rather than being purposely created image bearers of God, humans are the product of blind, naturalistic processes.²² From the vantage point of secular social sciences, human beings are social animals shaped by a mixture of genetic predispositions and environmental factors, thus making personality, like existence, a product of chance—the naturalistic role of the dice instead of the result of divine purpose.

Why am I here? The straightforward biological answer to this question is to survive and pass on genes. Obviously most secular people view their own purpose in life as much more than survival and reproduction. At this point some kind of existential leap fills in the vacuum left by pure atheism. Mattes states the matter succinctly—“Seeing life as its own end, people seek to find meaning by racking up experiences.”²³ In sum, the secular worldviews leaves questions of meaning and purpose open to individual preference rather than transcendence.

What went wrong? This is where the question becomes confusing. At the most basic level, nothing is wrong. To speak of blind evolution and mistakes is contradictory. Nevertheless, the secular worldview does find fault with much in humanity—especially religious or political barriers to human progress defined in secular

²¹Andrew Klavan, “Faith That Upholds Humanity—And Liberty,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 2016, accessed March 16, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/faith-that-upholds-humanityand-liberty-1483053830>.

²²These ideas are laid out in books like Richard Dawkins’ *The Selfish Gene* (New York: Oxford, 2006) and Daniel Dennett’s *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Touchstone, 1995). Both thinkers embody a tendency among many atheists to push evolutionary science into the realms of psychology and sociology.

²³Mattes, “A Lutheran Case for Apologetics,” 26.

terms, which often center on freedom of expression and pursuit of pleasure. For example, recently many secular writers have expressed a visceral contempt for religion.²⁴

What's the solution? If nothing is inherently wrong with this world, then no solution exists. However, secular solutions to the difficulties of existence often center on scientific, medical, and technological progress. And, if as previously mentioned, religion is a thorn in the side of progress, then the secularization of education, politics, and the public square will prove salvific. Overall, solutions are oriented toward the resolution of whatever setbacks humans experience in their search for self-determined meaning and fulfillment.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

The next worldview, labeled by sociologist Christian Smith as “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism,” is much more eclectic and harder to pin down than secularity. It embodies elements of secularity, pluralism, relativism, and orthodox biblical faith. Rather than being anti-religious, its beliefs often take up parasitic residence within churches that claim some degree of orthodoxy.²⁵ Although it has no official creed, Smith locates within MTD five basic affirmations:

²⁴Titles such as *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* and *Faith Versus Fact: Why Science and Religion Are Incompatible* suggest that religion is the culprit behind many of humanity's woes. See Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great* (New York: Hachette, 2009), and Coyne, *Faith Versus Fact*.

²⁵Smith and Denton describe MTD less as an official religion, and more like a parasitic invasion that relies upon an orthodox host. “We are not suggesting that Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is a religion that teenagers (and adults) either adopt and practice wholesale or not at all. Instead, the elements of its creed are normally assimilated by degrees, in parts, admixed with elements of more traditional religious faiths. Indeed, this religious creed appears to operate as a parasitic faith. It cannot sustain its own integral, independent life; rather, it must attach itself like an incubus to established historical religious traditions, feeding on their doctrines and sensibilities, and expanding by mutating their theological substance to resemble its own distinctive image.” Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 166. The same can also be said of MTD as a worldview. In and of itself, MTD does not rest on the same kind of intellectual or spiritual heritage that undergirds worldviews such as secularity, Buddhism, or Islam. Rather, it is the result of

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.²⁶

Given its lack of structure apart from a “host religion,” speaking about MTD in terms of worldview is difficult.²⁷ Nevertheless, based on Smith's general description, MTD does offer some general—albeit fluid—answers to the following worldview questions.

Who am I? People are created by God. While not perfect, human beings are generally good. *Why am I here?* Human beings exist to be happy and nice to one another, and “heaven” awaits those who qualify as “good people.” *What went wrong?* Nowhere does MTD specifically describe the human predicament, however, given that God wants people to be “good, nice, and fair to one another,” it assumes the possibility of the opposite of such vague values. *What's the solution?* God offers a solution only as needed—typically the self-defined eschatology of “being happy and feeling good about oneself.” And, of course, heaven awaits good people as an added “bonus feature” for a mostly satisfying present existence.

Overall, these two worldviews embody the current challenge to the Christian faith of young people in America. The first, secularity, is more intellectually mature, and often does its worst work during the high school and college years. The second, MTD, is

various elements from other worldviews gathered in service of American individualism.

²⁶Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 162-63.

²⁷Unlike most distinct worldviews, no direct link can be made between MTD and a sacred text, a philosopher, or an ideology. Rather, its view of the world is more eclectic—like pieces of popular culture and religious wisdom blended into religious opinions that are neither coherent nor consistent.

more emotive than intellectual, and while not as openly opposed to Christian faith, it has the potential to vaccinate against genuine conversion, hinder sanctification, and even set the stage for later apostasy—perhaps even outright secularity. For this reason, the following discussion of Luther’s Small Catechism as an apologetic tool will compare these two worldviews with the biblical worldview of Luther’s Small Catechism.

The Worldview of Luther’s Small Catechism

Martin Marty once wrote, “Line one of Heidelberg is enough to set one thinking and living for years; many lines of Luther are the same.”²⁸ It is worldview that moves people toward thinking and living, and certainly Luther’s Small Catechism offers rich substance for both.²⁹ As an expression of the Christian worldview, the Catechism answers basic worldview questions in a manner markedly different than those offered by secularity and MTD.

Who am I? According to Luther, human beings are first and foremost creatures of God. In the explanation to the first article he writes, “I believe that God has made me and all creatures.”³⁰ Existence is therefore purposeful and not incidental. Human beings are also unique—they possess from God’s hand “body and soul, eyes,

²⁸Marty, “The Future of the Catechism,” 326.

²⁹Arand summarizes about the focus of the Catechism: “Like a lighthouse beacon, the central theme of ‘faith’ illuminates each area of the Christian life; each part highlights a different facet of faith.” Charles Arand, “Meeting the Challenge for Tomorrow: Formation Through Catechesis” (paper presented at seventh annual Theological Symposium at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, May 7, 1997), 49.

³⁰LSC, 16.

ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses.”³¹ All of these unique elements contribute to the following question of purpose.

Why am I here? Human beings are not independent. Rather, as the first commandment makes clear, their relationship to God is central. “You shall have no others gods” means “we should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.”³² Thus, humanity’s vertical relationship to God is one of utter trust and commitment. This is what it means to be a human creature. As Luther explains in the first article of the Creed, “It is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.”³³ The intimate connection between Creator and creature extends even beyond temporal existence. The ultimate goal of the human person is “that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom.”³⁴

What went wrong? The Catechism never talks directly about humanity’s fall into sin. However, Luther places the Ten Commandments first in his catechism with the purpose of exposing human rebellion and the state of all people as “lost and condemned persons.”³⁵ In short, the human problem is idolatry. As Luther explains further in his

³¹LSC, 16.

³²LSC, 13.

³³LSC, 16.

³⁴LSC, 16. The Catechism also responds to questions of identity and purpose at the horizontal level of human relationships. God has created people for community rather than isolation. Robert Kolb notes, “He has not only created me. He has created me in the context of human community.” Kolb further discusses this element of the Catechism in stark contrast to “a society bent (out of shape) on asserting individualism—and inevitably reaping estrangement and alienation in the process.” Robert Kolb, “That I May Be His Own: The Anthropology of Luther’s Explanation of the Creed,” *Concordia Journal* 21, no. 1 (January 1995): 33.

³⁵LSC, 17. As Kolb writes, “The Decalogue does no more than pose the question, ‘Why do I feel uncomfortable in my own skin? What is this pressure that makes me dissatisfied with life as I experience it? Where does it come from? Who or what has put the squeeze on me?’” Kolb, “That I May Be His Own,” 31.

Large Catechism, everyone has a god, for “anything on which your heart relies and depends . . . that is really your God.”³⁶

What’s the solution? The solution at the center of Luther’s Catechism is Jesus Christ, who is “true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary.”³⁷ The incarnate Christ has “redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.”³⁸ The application of this redemption is through the work of the Holy Spirit, who gives the gift of faith through word and sacrament in spite of human reason or strength.³⁹ Overall, the Catechism expresses humanity’s solution in the language of unmerited intervention by God—an intervention that begins with spiritual new birth and culminates in the resurrection of the body.⁴⁰

A Coherent and Consistent Worldview

The worldview espoused by Luther’s Small Catechism does not answer modern skepticism with empirical evidences or rational arguments. Nevertheless, its worldview is coherent and consistent.⁴¹ From the perspective of presuppositional apologetics, this coherent and consistent worldview naturally offers better answers to

³⁶KW, 386.

³⁷LSC, 17.

³⁸LSC, 17.

³⁹LSC, 17-18, 24-31.

⁴⁰LSC, 18.

⁴¹Evidences aside, the biblical worldview contained within the Catechism is internally consistent. It provides ethics rooted in the reality of a God who created the world and human beings for a specific purpose, thus making the intersection between ontology and ethics complementary rather than contradictory or unsubstantiated. To use the distinction made by Nancy Pearcey, Luther’s Small Catechism does not contain a two-tier view of reality in which fact and value contradict one another. See Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 97-121.

worldview questions than its competitors—secularity and MTD. As previously noted in chapter 2, Cornelius Van Til has defined apologetics as “the vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophy of life.”⁴² Luther’s Small Catechism is a brief expression of the Christian philosophy of life.⁴³ Secularity and MTD represent the most common “non-Christian philosophies of life” facing young people today. The following section will outline the first strategy of apologetic catechesis—vindicating the Christian worldview against its challengers.

The Small Catechism Contra Secularity

The Small Catechism assumes the existence of God. Secularity does not. Therefore, the apologetic point of tension between these two worldviews is located in the ground level of human experience.⁴⁴ In other words, which worldview makes the best sense of the worth, purpose, struggle, and ultimate destiny of the human race? The responsibility of apologetic catechesis is to demonstrate the Christian worldview expressed in the Catechism as superior to secularity on two levels: First, it must present a view of humanity that rests upon objective reality rather than subjective opinion.⁴⁵

⁴²Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 17.

⁴³Arand explains that the content of the Catechism teaches Christians to, in the words of Robert Rosin, “look at life and live not from our perspective (—that’s philosophy) but from God’s (—that’s theology)” and, in the words of Martin Marty, provides “the Christian with an organic grasp of the universe.” Arand, “Does Catechesis in the LCMS Aim for the *Ars Vivedni Fide?*,” 58-59.

⁴⁴Discovering a point of tension in an opposing worldview is what apologist Francis Schaeffer called “taking the roof off.” Commenting on this tactic, Boa and Bowman explain, “In order to enable the non-Christian to see the point of tension, we must help him realize the logical implications of his presuppositions. This means we should not start out by trying to change his mind about his presuppositions, but rather to think more deeply about them.” Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 139-218, 451. Applying this principle to the secular worldview, Mattes points out, “We are to raise hard questions: Is your secularism really consistent with reality as you believe it to be?” Mattes, “A Lutheran Case for Apologetics,” 28.

⁴⁵Nancy Pearcey notes that the secular worldview often prides itself in possessing facts. In the sciences one can find all the riches of knowledge and wisdom about what is real. As a result, other bodies of knowledge—such as religion and the humanities—are quarantined off into the inferior category of values. Science deals with facts and therefore qualifies as public knowledge. Religion and morality deal

Second, it must demonstrate that the Christian worldview makes better sense of human experience, whereas the secular worldview is existentially obtuse in comparison. A comparison between secularity and Luther's Small Catechism according to the four main worldview questions will demonstrate these two points.

Who am I? In response to the worldview question, "who am I?" secularity gives an answer that goes against human intuition. Human beings are not special, unique, or valuable beyond their own self-assessment. Rather, human beings are the product of blind chance, thrown into the cold competition of survival, which also accounts for their moral instincts.⁴⁶ The Catechism, on the other hand, presents a beautiful world created by

with opinions, and are therefore privately held values. Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 31-63. The Catechism and secularity both deal with what each considers facts and values. However, the worldview of the Catechism prevails as superior in that it requires no two-tier view of reality. When the Catechism affirms human dignity and morality as values, it does so on the basis of facts. Realities such as creation and the dignity breathed into human beings by their Creator make values factual rather than fictional. This key distinction between worldviews does not in itself "prove" the Christian worldview to be true and the secular worldview false. However, it does highlight the relationship between "facts" and moral assertions, as well as accent the tension that exists in secularity between facts and values.

⁴⁶These evolutionary "facts" often force the values of secularity into an uncomfortable, contradictory position. For example, according to atheist biologist Richard Dawkins' book *The Selfish Gene*, the cold, hard facts of human existence are natural selection, competition, and self-preservation. He writes, "Like successful Chicago gangsters, our genes have survived, in some cases for millions of years, in a highly competitive world A predominant quality to be expected in a successful gene is ruthless selfishness Much as we might want to believe otherwise, universal love and the welfare of the species as a whole are concepts that simply do not make evolutionary sense." Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 2. Despite such "facts," secularity often speaks about human dignity—perhaps even with more urgency than some Christians—however, it does so without a basis in fact. In the absence of a deity who assesses worth to his creation, homo sapiens are forced, as blind products of time, chance, and merciless natural selection, to assess value upon their own race without any objective foundation. Thus, in the absence of fact-based human worth, secular affirmations of "human rights" are ultimately value statements, which are shorthand for treasured fictions that have no objective grounding in reality. As a result, secular "facts" often collide with treasured secular values. For example, Nancy Pearcey cites the example of two scientists who insisted on National Public Radio—much to the ire of feminists—that rape is a human behavior that offered an evolutionary advantage for humans, much like a zebra's stripes or a panda's thumb. The fact that many of the feminists who were outraged by these claims also shared the scientists' secular worldview creates an uncomfortable intellectual conundrum. Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 210-212. Mattes states the conundrum succinctly: "Modern people treasure things like freedom, equality, justice, fairness, and impartiality. But apart from some vision of goodness as such, those words are just fancy abstractions." Mattes, "A Lutheran Case for Apologetics," 28. Mattes goes on to quote critic Stanley Fish, who notes that "freedom and equality—and we might add justice, fairness and impartiality—are empty abstractions. Nothing follows from them until we have answered questions like "fairness in relation to what standard?" or "equality with respect to what measures?"—for only then will they have content enough to guide deliberation." Stanley Fish, "Are There Secular Reasons?," *New York Times*, February 22, 2010, accessed June 7, 2017, https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/22/are-there-secular-reasons/?_r=0. The Catechism, on the other hand, affirms human dignity without a contradiction between fact and value. Its narrative of creation, its commands that preserve life, relationship, and reputation, its drama of sin, incarnation, and redemption, and its ultimate goal of a restored humanity, all testify clearly that humanity possesses innate value. This

God, with human beings as the pinnacle of his creation. These creatures possess innate dignity that is based upon God’s authority rather than human opinion, and therefore human beings possess moral instincts directly related to the preservation of human dignity.

Why am I here? Once again, the Catechism offers answers that are consistent with human experience. As previously stated, the Catechism affirms that human beings exist to “fear, love, and trust in God above all things,” and ultimately to belong to Jesus Christ, who has redeemed them that they “may be his own and live under him in his kingdom.”⁴⁷ These answers satisfy the human desire for meaning and purpose in an ultimate and everlasting way that secularity does not. Put another way, the human longing for meaning and spirituality are in reference to something real rather than the echo of an adaptive trait that exists in reference to nothing—like a phantom limb.⁴⁸

As far as human purpose goes, the answers offered by secularity are far less satisfactory. In the absence of transcendent meaning, the individual must construct her own meaning, or live under the umbrella of cultural assumptions that are seldom subjected to the question *why*? For example, American secular culture affirms success in the forms of education, career, compensation, and pleasure. But does secular culture possess the intellectual resources to establish a reason for pursuing these achievements and experiences beyond themselves? The Catechism certainly does. Luther teaches that

value is not contrived—it is authoritatively given by God. As Kolb summarizes about the Catechism, “By virtue of His creation this Creator has pledged that I am His and He is mine.” Kolb, “That I May Be His Own,” 31. No contradiction exists between what is assumed about humanity and what is factually true about humanity.

⁴⁷LSC, 13, 18.

⁴⁸One aspect of human existence that the secular worldview struggles to account for is the widespread presence of religion and belief in God among almost all cultures throughout history.

the commandments and human vocations serve the glory of God and the good of others. Secularity, on the other hand, embodies what Joel Okamoto has called “normal nihilism,” in which “the highest values devalue themselves.”⁴⁹

What went wrong? The Catechism’s answer to the human condition is simple—human idolatry. Although human beings were created to “fear, love, and trust in God above all things,” their fall into sin and further fall into the worship of created things rather than the Creator have led to the status of each individual as “a lost and condemned person.”⁵⁰ As Luther makes clear in his Large Catechism, the transgression of the first commandment leads to the breaking of the other nine.⁵¹ When God’s commandments are broken, the image of God is tarnished and human dignity is violated. Human beings, created to know God and serve others, now live estranged from God and one another, and are in desperate need of redemption.

The secular worldview deals with the human predicament at a surface level in terms of symptoms. Homo sapiens suffer from ignorance, limitation, disease, pain, conflict, and ultimately death. However, a secular exploration of the human condition that goes beyond symptoms to underlying causes casts a dark shadow on human dignity. If humans are the product of blind chance in a world that is naturally “red in tooth and claw,” and if the struggle for survival lies behind all of our instincts, then the human

⁴⁹Joel Okamoto, “Evangelism in an Age of Normal Nihilism,” *Missio Apostolica* 22, no. 1 (May 2014): 33. “Questions like, ‘Why do I work, why do I play, why do I even exist?’ receive Nietzsche’s cold response—‘The aim is lacking; ‘why’ finds no answer.’” Okamoto, 33-35.

⁵⁰LSC, 18.

⁵¹Luther writes about the first commandment in his Large Catechism, “We have had to explain it at great length, for it is the most important. As I said before, if the heart is right with God and we keep this commandment, all the rest will follow on their own.” KW, 392.

tendency toward selfishness and violence is inherent to what it means to be human.⁵² In other words, the secular worldview cannot speak about the human condition in objective terms without making selfishness, violence, disease, and death all part of the answer to the question *who am I?* The “facts” end up doing violence to human dignity, leaving only opinions and power claims to fill in the void.

What’s the solution? The Catechism offers a solution that affirms human dignity and the human desire for purpose in a very final sense. God’s solution also rests upon his initiative from beginning to end. God affirms human dignity through the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ. At God’s initiative, he enters into the pain and perplexity of the human experience to redeem humanity “not with silver and gold, but with His holy, precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and death.”⁵³ In spite of human ignorance and weakness, the Holy Spirit applies Christ’s redemptive work to sinners solely on the basis of his grace. Ultimately, God affirms the goodness of being human temporally as he conforms believers to the image of Christ, and eternally when, on the last day, he “raises all the dead and gives eternal life to all believers in Christ.”⁵⁴

In contrast, the secular worldview offers solutions to the human condition that are temporary and based upon human initiative and ability. Solutions to these symptoms come in various human achievements: education, technology, medicine, and politics. In a world without God, some individuals will fare better on the basis of their genes and

⁵²Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 2.

⁵³LSC, 17.

⁵⁴LSC, 17.

circumstances, while others will fare worse. Nevertheless, in the end, all will die—a predicament to which the secular worldview offers no resolution, thus making the pains and joys of this life ultimately meaningless. All cries of pain echo out into a meaningless universe, and all acts of injustice will have the final word. If the Christian worldview is a bright light, then the secular worldview is dismal and gloomy in comparison.

In short, a child who knows the Catechism possesses superior intellectual resources to defend human dignity and morality than a Harvard philosopher lacking the same. One derives truth about human existence from the truth of God, whereas the other bends over backwards to assert a very qualified, nuanced definition of human dignity and morality on the vacuous foundation of a meaningless universe. One can argue whether Christianity is true on the basis of evidences, however, evidences aside, one must at least feel substantial pressure to admit that the worldview of the Small Catechism is internally consistent and coherent. This point of tension, properly and consistently applied, has the power to undermine the secular mindset in preparation for the gospel.

The Small Catechism Contra Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

Unlike secularity, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism *does* assume the existence of God. However, its understanding of God and his relationship to creation stands out as irreconcilable with the worldview of the Catechism. Therefore, the point of tension between Luther's Small Catechism and MTD is located in the opposing ways each speaks about God.⁵⁵

⁵⁵Given that MTD is by nature more emotive and eclectic than secularity, the following exercise may be likened to taking up arms against a gelatinous mass of inconsistency. Nevertheless, the exercise is justified by the fact that this parasitic pseudo faith is consuming the hearts and minds of Christian youth at an alarming rate.

As with secularity, the burden of apologetic catechesis is to point out the inconsistency of MTD as a worldview, as well as demonstrate the superiority of the Christian worldview. MTD can be difficult to spot, especially since it often attaches itself to the language of biblical themes—namely creation, sin, and redemption. It may employ Bible verses or valid aspects of Christian doctrine in its service. However, when each worldview is examined according to the four worldview questions, the difference between the two becomes clear, as well as the inferiority of MTD in comparison to biblical Christianity.

Who am I? MTD affirms that people are created by a God who “watches over human life on earth.”⁵⁶ On this point, the chief contrast between the two worldviews rests in what it means to be human in relation to God. The Small Catechism assumes God as the center of the universe, with human beings taking a posture of humility and praise toward their Creator. MTD, on the other hand, tends to switch roles between the Creator and the created, so that God exists for the interests of human beings. God is typically perceived as an optional, on-call deity who intervenes when circumstances block the goal of being “happy” and “feeling good about oneself.”⁵⁷

Why am I here? This is where the two worldviews clearly demonstrate their incompatibility. For MTD, the chief end of man is to “be happy and feel good about

⁵⁶All of the following affirmations of MTD can be found in Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 162-63.

⁵⁷“This God is not demanding. He actually can’t be, because his job is to solve our problems and make people feel good. In short, God is something like a combination of Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist: he is always on call, takes care of any problems that arise, professionally helps his people to feel better about themselves, and does not become too personally involved in the process.” Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 165.

oneself.” In opposite fashion, the first commandment locates the purpose of humanity in relation to its Creator—“We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things,” and ultimately, “that I may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.”⁵⁸ If secularity tends toward devaluing its highest values, MTD engenders a form of religious nihilism, in which the highest religious values devalue themselves.⁵⁹ God becomes “useful” instead of necessary. In summary, the contrast between the Small Catechism and MTD is that the former is oriented around God and his glory, whereas the latter is turned inward, making God a projection of its own projects.

What went wrong? While the Small Catechism locates humanity’s problems in disobedience and idolatry, MTD takes a more watered-down approach. For one, it fails to recognize that sin is much more than simply failing to be “nice and fair to each other.” Furthermore, MTD speaks of the human condition in terms of “problems” that require God’s intervention—presumably problems related to any hindrance to self-actualization—namely, “to be happy and feel good about oneself.” Contrary to the Catechism, which is very conversant in God’s wrath, MTD is not characterized by any recognition of the holiness of God, and the very real predicament it creates for sinful human beings.

⁵⁸LSC, 13-17.

⁵⁹In his diagnosis of our culture as one of “normal nihilism,” Okamoto observes, “It is no different in our churches and other religious institutions. Here, too, nihilism is a normal condition.” He goes on to cite the work of Smith and Denton, pointing out that Moralistic Therapeutic Deism reflects our tendency to devalue God according to what we find “useful.” Okamoto, “Evangelism,” 36-38.

What's the solution? Since the Catechism and MTD are on different trajectories concerning humanity's purpose and plight, each seeks a solution to different problems. The Small Catechism centers upon the redemption of humanity in accordance with God's original purpose for humanity—namely that human beings would be rescued from the status of “lost and condemned” and reclaimed as “His own” so that they might “live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him.”⁶⁰ The solution proposed by MTD stands in direct opposition to the Christian worldview in that it invokes God to bless human happiness and self-actualization in the absence of God's deeper purposes for humanity. Additionally, the Catechism fully affirms creation and human dignity by pointing toward the resurrection of the body. MTD, on the other hand, has more in common with Gnosticism when it points toward the nebulous state called “heaven”—a destination that, in its popular definition, is typically at odds with the biblical doctrine of resurrection. Finally, MTD assumes that good people achieve eschatological bliss, whereas the Catechism clearly locates redemption and conversion as a work of God freely given to “lost and condemned persons” rather than “good people.”

Overall, MTD fails to offer a coherent understanding of God and humanity's relationship to him. For one, MTD trivializes the nature of God. What kind of God possesses the power to create the universe, and then delights in serving as a cosmic therapist or divine butler, subject to the self-defined demands of his creation? This deity is in no way the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who brought Isaiah to his knees in humility. Rather, this deity is the projection of human ambitions, dressed in orthodox garb.

⁶⁰LSC, 17.

Additionally, MTD makes no sense of human morality or purpose. While the Small Catechism roots these categories in the reality of God, his creation, and his ultimate purposes, MTD defines morality and purpose on the basis of human goals. Thus, any language MTD speaks about morality and purpose will be thin and subjective at best, and upon closer examination, incoherent and inconsistent with God’s nature and his purposes for humanity.

In summary, a careful comparison between the worldview of Luther’s Small Catechism and other worldviews affords an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the consistency of the Christian worldview in comparison with the inconsistency of others. Young people may assume that the assertions made by non-Christian worldviews are true without critically examining their claims in comparison with the Christian faith. However, catechesis that critically compares non-Christian worldview claims with the truth of the Small Catechism’s worldview claims fosters a thinking environment in which students can experience for themselves “the vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophy of life.”⁶¹

A Worldview Rooted in Reality: Applying the Evidential Method

Up to this point the application of Luther’s Small Catechism as an apologetic tool has utilized the presuppositional method. Does this mean that the Catechism is incompatible with other apologetic methods—specifically the evidential method? While

⁶¹Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, 19.

some would advocate one method at the expense of another, Luther's Catechism, as well as Lutheran theology, do not prohibit an integrated approach to apologetics.⁶²

Generally speaking, the content of the Catechism pairs well with the presuppositional method because it rests more on the substance of the Christian worldview rather than on empirical evidences, thus affording the opportunity for conversation between worldviews and their points of tension. However, having exposed points of tension in competing worldviews, as well as having demonstrated the internal consistency of the Catechism's worldview, evidences are often a welcome strategy to draw connections between worldviews and reality.⁶³

The central part of the Catechism that invites the use of the evidential method is the Apostles' Creed. This makes sense given the historical nature of the Creed as it narrates the progression from creation to redemption, conversion, and eschatological future. The first article of the Creed allows pastors, teachers, and parents to present recent scientific discoveries that strongly point to a Creator, as well as point out the difficulties faced by secular theories of cosmological and biological origins. Since the second article

⁶²See note 8 of this chapter. See also the persuasive argument of Boa and Bowman for an integrated approach to apologetics in *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 501-23. To put the matter in the language of the Catechism itself, the presuppositional method addresses the fact that "I cannot by my own reason believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him," whereas the evidential method recognizes that God has given me "my reason, and all my senses, and still takes care of them." LSC, 16-17.

⁶³Writing about the historical evidence for the resurrection, New Testament scholar N. T. Wright explains, "Historical argument alone cannot force anyone to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead; but historical argument is remarkably good at clearing away the undergrowth behind which scepticisms of various sorts have been hiding. The proposal that Jesus was bodily raised from the dead possesses unrivalled power to explain the historical data at the heart of Christianity." N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 718. Van Til expresses a similar thought from his presuppositional perspective. After he argues, "To interpret a fact of history involves a philosophy of history," he also qualifies this statement so as not to exclude evidences altogether. He writes, "In apologetics we shoot the big guns under the protection of which the definite advances in the historical field must be made. In short, there is a historical and there is a philosophical aspect to the defense of Christian theism. Evidences deals largely with the historical while apologetics deals largely with the philosophical aspect. Each has its own work to do but they should constantly be in touch with one another." Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, 19.

exposits the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, any discussion of these historical events should also center on the historical evidence for Jesus and his resurrection from the dead. Finally, the work of the Spirit in the third article invites teaching about the reliability of the New Testament Scriptures, as well as the inconceivable likelihood of the church arising and spreading due to religious and cultural reasons alone.

The Challenge of Apathy

One of the goals of this project was to increase apologetic knowledge and skills. However, this goal assumes interest in apologetic questions among participants, as well as interest among those with whom participants will ideally engage in apologetic conversations. This poses a valid question: What about those who are too resigned in their unbelief to make an honest effort to ask the reason for the hope living inside the students trained through this project? And what if some of the students to whom this project is addressed harbor the same apathy? This challenge deserves attention. Regardless of how well Luther's Small Catechism serves as an apologetic tool, its effectiveness rests upon the assumption that the methods prescribed above will find interest among participants and beyond.

In his recent book *Urban Apologetics*, apologist Christopher Brooks poses an uncomfortable question for those who view apologetics as a vital tool for the church's public witness. Citing the spiritual apathy of Americans evident in recent polls, he wrestles with a potentially new worldview category suggested by some sociologists—"apatheism."⁶⁴ According to Jonathan Rauch—himself an avowed apatheist—apatheism

⁶⁴Christopher W. Brooks, *Urban Apologetics: How the Gospel is Good News for the City*

is “a disinclination to care all that much about one’s own religion, and an even stronger disinclination to care about other people’s.”⁶⁵ Brooks goes on to lament the implications apatheism has for apologetics:

How do you even begin a conversation about the need for salvation when the person you are talking to doesn’t even care about heaven or hell? How do you engage a person around the meaning and fulfillment that Christ can bring to their lives when they could care less about the concepts of meaning and purpose? This is a daunting task to say the least.⁶⁶

The apatheism that Brooks describes applies to both non-Christian worldviews addressed in this project. Whereas secularity is potentially apathetic to the question of whether God exists (yet at other times abjectly hostile), Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is characterized by a default apathy regarding the true nature of God and what it means to be in relationship with him.⁶⁷ Interestingly enough, the curriculum prescribed in this

(Grand Rapids: Kregel Productions, 2014), 27-28. According to Brooks, “The 2011 Baylor University Religion Survey revealed that 44 percent of those questioned spent no time seeking ‘eternal wisdom’ and 19 percent said, ‘It’s useless to search for meaning.’ Similarly, in 2011 the Nashville-based evangelical research agency Life Way Research found that 46 percent of those asked told pollsters that they ‘never wonder whether they will go to heaven.’”

⁶⁵Jonathan Rauch, “Let It Be,” *The Atlantic*, May 2003, accessed June 26, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2003/05/let-it-be/302726/>. While some would argue that apatheism is more of an attitude than a worldview, Brooks summarizes the following: “Whether or not one believes that apatheism is a philosophical category akin to atheism or simply a psychological state, what is clear is that there are individuals who just don’t care about the whole God conversation and are therefore resistant to the Christian worldview. This group finds religious discussion so irrelevant that they aren’t even moved enough to declare themselves atheists because this would require too much thought and conviction about the matter.” Brooks, *Urban Apologetics*, 28.

⁶⁶Brooks, *Urban Apologetics*, 28.

⁶⁷Rauch’s description of apatheism sounds very similar to Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. He writes, “Many apatheists are believers . . . Most of these people believe in God (professed atheists are very rare in the United States); they just don’t care much about him. They do care a bit; but apatheism is an attitude, not a belief system, and the over-riding fact is that these people are relaxed about religion. Concerning secularity he remarks, “Atheism, for instance, is not at all like apatheism; the hot-blooded atheist cares as much about religion as does the evangelical Christian, but in the opposite direction. ‘Secularism’ can refer to a simple absence of devoutness, but it more accurately refers to an ACLU-style disapproval of any profession of religion in public life—a disapproval that seems puritanical and quaint to apatheists.” Rauch, “Let It Be.”

project may find greater results among those defiantly opposed to God than among those entangled in the pseudo-religion of MTD. What is unsettling is that MTD may reside in the hearts of those who are taught the proposed apologetics curriculum in this project. Since apatheism is likely to some degree the disposition of some of those who will be taught the curriculum or those with whom participants will engage in apologetic discussions, two strategies are proposed.

First, those using Luther's Small Catechism to teach apologetics must come to terms with the possibility that some of the participants they teach are still living in unbelief or immaturity because of an unexamined assent to the tenets of MTD. The root cause of this unbelief or immaturity may be a lack of catechetical formation during earlier formative years, ignorance about the Christian worldview and the evidence for it, or perhaps even the aforementioned apatheism as the result of multiple cultural factors. Regardless of the cause(s), the apologetic catechist must work to press the points of tension exposed in secularity and MTD. No one is apathetic about everything. Therefore, it is necessary to discover the areas of life where students have some degree of interest or opinion, and begin to question why these are important, and furthermore, question why the particulars of the Christian faith are not important.

Second, students trained in apologetics should also be trained to question their peers gently with the goal of rousing them out of apathy and into deeper conversation. At times these questions may sound absurd, but when taken honestly they have the weight of what Francis Schaeffer called "taking off the roof."⁶⁸ For example, basic questions about human worth and the foundations of morality related to human worth often evoke an

⁶⁸Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reason*, 451. See also note 8 of this chapter.

impassioned response from those who are apathetic about the question of God. In other words, deeper discussion concerning the aspects of life about which unbelievers do not feel apathy may serve as entry points to discuss and defend the faith. As young apologists learn to ask “why” and “why not?” about the most basic assumptions of human life shared by their peers, these questions may gradually “steal past the watchful dragons” of apatheism.⁶⁹

Conclusion

The repeated question in Luther’s Small Catechism is, “What does this mean?” The question anticipates a response of faith. However, more and more the question posed by those inside and outside of the faith is not “What does this mean?” but rather, “Why?” The catechists of the twenty first century must also be apologists who give an answer to such questions. Although catechesis has often lacked an apologetic approach, the “tools for analyzing ideas” and resources to “defend Christianity against competing ‘isms’” reside within the structure and language of Luther’s Small Catechism.⁷⁰ The problem rests not in the Catechism, but rather in the lack of apologetic emphasis applied to it. To quote a recent essay by Harold Senkbeil, “Do you see the possibilities? What would happen if we used the Catechism and the Creed not just to prepare people for communion, but also to train young and old for lifelong baptismal living, to give them words to confess the faith to those who ask the reason for the hope that is in them?”⁷¹ The

⁶⁹Bruce L. Edwards, ed., *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy* (Westport, CT: Praeger Perspectives, 2007), 4:261.

⁷⁰Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 134.

⁷¹Senkbeil, “Engaging Our Culture Faithfully,” 310.

possibilities imagined by Senkbeil are also the aim of this project—that the rich catechetical resources of Luther’s Small Catechism would provide the structure and language needed for teaching apologetics to the next generation of believers.

CHAPTER 4
ELEMENTS OF THE MINISTRY
PROJECT

Introduction

In this chapter, I will briefly describe the steps I followed to implement the ministry project at Our Savior Lutheran Church. Ideally, the description of this process will serve as a general model for implementation at other congregations.¹ Each of the steps that I followed served to fulfill the previously outlined goals. These goals are (1) to assess the current level of apologetics knowledge and skills among a minimum of 10 post-confirmation youth at OSLC; (2) to develop a 6-week curriculum that uses the structure and language of Luther's Small Catechism to teach presuppositional and evidential apologetics; (3) to increase apologetics knowledge and skills among the post-confirmation youth of OSLC through the teaching of the aforementioned curriculum; (4) to develop a discipleship plan which will include formal apologetic training based on Luther's Small Catechism as a part of the expected faith formation of post-confirmation youth at OSLC.

¹While this project may seem limited to churches that use Luther's Small Catechism for instruction, its focus on the core triad of traditional catechesis makes it easily adaptable to other catechisms that share a similar structure or content (for example, The Heidelberg Catechism).

Preparation for the Project

In mid-July I began preparing outlines and rough drafts of the six teaching sessions. In late August I sent these drafts to the expert panel for review, and on the basis of their comments, I reworked the drafts into final copies, as well as accompanying study guides and Power Point™ presentations. The sessions all met or exceeded the rubric criteria of 90 percent, however, on the basis of the rubric comments I incorporated more elements of active learning.²

At this time, I also began announcing the project to the congregation through oral and visual announcements before and after the worship services. I also wrote a newsletter article that gave an overview of the project and invited members to participate. In late September, I emailed high school students inviting them to participate. I also emailed their parents, encouraging them to have their children attend the classes.

The Pre-Assessment

In mid-September I sent participants an invitation to complete the AKSA. Since completion of the surveys in person would have taken multiple Sundays to accomplish, I used the online survey company Survey Monkey™. The settings provided by this company allowed me to acquire survey data from participants anonymously by using a four-digit code for each individual. In order to ensure that the pre and post codes remained the same, I asked participants to email their codes to the church secretary. This allowed the survey results to remain anonymous, but also provided a way to ensure that

²Following Kelley's attribution theory of covariance, I required a minimum of 90 percent for the indicators in order to ensure high consensus due to the quality of the curriculum and not to other independent factors among the panel. H. H. Kelley and J. L. Michela, "Attribution Theory and Research," *Annual Review of Psychology* 31 (1980): 457-501. For a summary of the scores for the rubric criteria see table A5 in appendix 7.

data would not be compromised in the event that participants forgot their numbers. Overall, a total of 16 high school students completed the AKSA.

The survey consisted of 40 questions. The first 20 questions focused on apologetics knowledge, whereas the second 20 questions focused on confidence in apologetics skills. In order to avoid the suggestion of desirable answers, the first set of 20 questions occasionally employed a reverse scoring method (questions 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19). The questions encompassed four general areas of apologetics; morality, science, history, and worldviews. The questions were assessed on the basis of a 6-point Likert scale.³

The Teaching Sessions

In order to ensure maximum participation among the participants, classes were offered at two times each week—Sunday mornings at the regularly scheduled high school Bible study, and Wednesday evenings. While the project focused on post-confirmation high school students, college students and adults were also invited to attend the classes. With the exception of youth leaders and a member who recorded the sessions, only high school and college students were allowed to participate on Sunday mornings. These limitations allowed students the freedom to express their thoughts honestly, as well as prevented adults from directing the conversations. Wednesday evening classes were attended by mostly adults, with a mix of college and high school students who were unable to attend on Sunday.

In order to make the classes accessible to participants who were unable to attend all the sessions during the project, and so that sessions missed during the week

³See appendix 1 for a copy of the AKSA.

could be made up, sessions were recorded and posted on YouTube™. I kept a record of attendance, and sent video links and study guides to participants who were not able to attend. Due to a schedule conflict with another church event, the class took a week off between sessions four and five. This break allowed participants to catch up on any sessions they had missed.

Each class lasted from between forty-five minutes to an hour. The teaching sessions each consisted of a lecture, some type of media (either music or video), and an activity that helped put into practice the content participants had learned. Each session also included a Power Point™ and a study guide. After each session, I also emailed students links to two optional articles or blog posts that allowed them to further process the material. Below is a brief synopsis of each teaching session.

Session 1: “What’s a Worldview?”

The first class focused on the concept of worldview.⁴ Participants were introduced to three main worldviews: The Christian worldview as expressed in the structure and language of Luther’s Small Catechism, the secular worldview, and the Moralistic Therapeutic Deism worldview. Students learned the basic questions addressed and answered by all worldviews. They were also introduced to the skill of analyzing worldview claims, as well as the influence that worldview plays in shaping our assumptions about the world and the way we encounter evidence for the Christian faith.

⁴See appendix 8 for an outline of all six teaching sessions.

Session 2: “Looking at God through the Lens of Worldviews”

The second class built upon the concept of worldview by analyzing how different worldviews approach the question of God and our relationship to him. The first commandment and the Apostles’ Creed served as the basis for a discussion about the Christian worldview’s approach to God. The worldview of Luther’s Small Catechism also served as a contrast to the denial of God in the secular worldview and the manipulation of God in the Moralistic Therapeutic Deism worldview. The class also focused on how the Christian worldview makes the best sense of the general human tendency toward religion and transcendence.

Session 3: “Right and Wrong through the Lens of Worldviews”

The third class examined the relationship between each worldview and morality. The Ten Commandments and their explanations from Luther’s Small Catechism served as the basis for discussion about the Christian view of morality. Furthermore, this session demonstrated that the moral claims made in the Ten Commandments rest upon the solid foundation of reality—namely the doctrine of creation in the first article of the Apostles’ Creed. Whereas the Christian worldview bases its moral claims in the reality of God’s word and his creation, students were invited to assess whether the claims made by secularity and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism have any grounding in reality.

Session 4: “Worldviews and Reality: Creation”

The fourth class employed the evidential method of apologetics by focusing on the scientific evidences for the affirmation of the first article of the Apostles’ Creed—“I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.” This session also pointed out the limits of scientific knowledge, and focused on three difficult questions that the secular worldview does not easily resolve: the origin of the universe, the origin of life, and the origin and nature of human consciousness. Attention was also devoted in this session to the role that worldview plays in how one interprets the scientific evidence that points toward the creation of the universe.

Session 5: “Worldviews and Reality: Redemption”

The fifth class focused on the claims made about Jesus Christ and his redemptive work in the second article of the Apostles’ Creed. Given the limited nature of the sessions, attention was devoted almost exclusively to the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The session focused on “bedrock historical facts” that are generally accepted by all scholars (believers and unbelievers alike), and participants were asked to respond to secular theories commonly offered to explain the early church’s claim that Jesus was raised from the dead. This session also demonstrated the weakness of these theories, as well as demonstrated the resurrection hypothesis as the superior one on the basis of criteria used for historical research. Like the previous session, this class also pointed out the influence that worldview often plays in the way one interprets the evidence for the Christian faith.

Session 6: “Worldviews in Perspective: The Big Picture”

The final session examined worldviews as stories that answer basic questions about God, reality, and human existence. Participants were encouraged to imagine each worldview as a story about everything. After visualizing Luther’s Small Catechism as a narrative that answers basic worldview questions, learners were given the opportunity to turn the secular and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism worldviews into a poster board narrative with a worldview movie title. Participants were also invited to practice writing letters from the perspective of non-Christian worldviews to a friend who has encountered suffering or tragedy.

The Post-Assessment Survey

After participants completed all six sessions, they were invited to complete the AKSA again. This second survey consisted of the same questions as the first survey. The purpose of the post-assessment was to evaluate the impact of the apologetics teaching sessions in increasing apologetics knowledge and skills among participants. Overall, 14 of the previous 16 post-confirmation youth who completed the pre-assessment went on to complete the post-assessment. The two participants who did not complete the final post-assessment did not respond to requests to complete missed sessions.

The final results of the post-assessment scores were then carefully compared to the results of the pre-assessment scores. To assess the impact of the project, I compared the average pre-assessment score of each of the participants with the average post-assessment score according to two criteria—apologetics knowledge (AKSA questions 1-

20) and apologetics skills (AKSA questions 21-40).⁵ In order to ascertain whether the comparison between the averages indicated a statistically significant difference, I applied a t-test to the scores of each dependent sample for each of the two categories of questions. A t-test for dependent samples “involves a comparison of the means from each group of scores and focuses on the differences between the scores.”⁶ The results of the t-test were then analyzed in preparation for the discipleship plan.⁷

The Discipleship Plan

After analyzing and comparing the data of the pre and-post surveys, I developed a discipleship plan with the goal of extending the reach of the project into the future of the congregation.⁸ Since formal apologetics instruction is currently lacking for the post-confirmation youth of our congregation, it was important to make such instruction a regular part of the church’s discipleship process.

Based on the analysis of the pre and post-assessment data, I proposed that apologetics instruction be formally added to the high school teaching schedule at OSLC. Since students did not significantly increase in knowledge as a result of the teaching intervention, I also proposed that this instruction would occur periodically, but more in

⁵In order to be consistent in the pairing of the data in the t-test, I only used pre-assessment scores from participants who completed the post-assessment with the same four-digit codes. Pre-assessment data from participants who either did not complete the post-assessment or who used the same code twice was not used. See tables A1 and A2 in appendices 2 and 3 for a listing of the paired scores for each set of questions.

⁶Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 19.

⁷T-test results for the assessment data are discussed below in chapter 5. See tables A1 and A2 in appendices 2 and 3 for a list of the pre and post scores.

⁸See appendix 11 for a detailed copy of the discipleship plan.

depth. Rather than engage apologetics topics briefly in a series of six weeks, the discipleship plan engages topics twice a year for four weeks each time. For example, instead of spending only one session on a broad evidential topic like the resurrection, the plan would allow students to learn and process the evidence for the resurrection on a wider and deeper level. Furthermore, the plan proposed a schedule in which high school students would encounter a broad range of catechetical topics from an apologetics perspective between confirmation and graduation from high school, thus better equipping them for their college years and beyond.

After completing the rough draft of the discipleship plan, I emailed a copy of the plan and the assessment rubric to the selected panel in order to receive feedback about the plan's functionality, sustainability, the communication process, and the actions steps. While the discipleship plan received mostly high rubric scores and positive feedback, the panel offered constructive criticism and helpful insights that led to some important revisions.⁹

First, some on the panel responded with a concern that the plan was too dependent upon the presence of a pastor. While the plan proposed that one of the pastors would record the initial cycle of sessions and provide lesson plans so that youth leaders and parents could teach in the future, the demand for the two pastors at OSLC to teach multiple age groups on Sunday mornings makes the future availability of a pastor uncertain for even the first three-year cycle of the classes. Additionally, if one of the

⁹Following Kelley's attribution theory of covariance, I required a minimum of 90 percent for the indicators in order to ensure high consensus due to the quality of the discipleship plan and not to other independent factors among the panel. Kelley and Michela, "Attribution Theory," 457-501. For a summary of the scores for the rubric criterion before and after revisions, see table A6 in appendix 10.

pastors at OSLC takes a call to another church in the next three years, then the likelihood that the plan will succeed decreases significantly.

Second, the panel also wanted more details about the project's implementation and sustainability. For example, how will the sessions be recorded? Where will they be uploaded online? Also, how will the pastors prepare a group of parents or other members to teach the sessions, thus making the plan less dependent upon pastoral staff? One of the members of the panel also suggested that the plan intentionally gather a group of OSLC members who can shadow some of the initial sessions, as well as work with the pastors to grow in their knowledge and confidence about apologetics topics.

In response to the insights of the panel, I made the following adjustments to the discipleship plan. First, I added more published curriculum resources to the schedule of future teaching topics. This allows lay teachers at OSLC to do self-study before the sessions, as well as receive guidance in both teaching content and teaching method when they lead the sessions. This addition also lessens my own amount of curriculum preparation and writing.

Second, I included steps within the plan to prepare lesson plans and videos in advance of the initial series of teaching sessions within the cycle. I also included within the steps the selection of individuals who will receive training in apologetics so that they will be better equipped to teach them in the future. Since I taught the previous series of six sessions to numerous college students and adults alongside the high school students, a number of these participants will be able to expand on their knowledge and grow in their ability to teach apologetics. Finally, I added details about how the class videos will be

recorded, where they will be uploaded online, and how they will be made accessible to teachers.

After making these adjustments to the discipleship plan, I emailed the plan and the rubric to the panel for a final evaluation. The plan met or exceeded the benchmark score of 90 percent for each of the indicators. I then submitted the revised discipleship plan and completed rubrics to the OSLC Executive Team for final approval. The team unanimously approved the implementation of the discipleship plan at OSLC, and it is projected to begin in the fall of 2018.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

Introduction

In this chapter, I will offer a comprehensive evaluation of the research ministry project I conducted at Our Savior Lutheran Church. Attention will be devoted to the evaluation of the project's purpose, as well as the success of each goal according to the benchmarks outlined in chapter one. I will examine the strengths and weaknesses of the project, comment on aspects that I would change in the future, and also offer some theological and personal reflections about the process and results of the project.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to use Luther's Small Catechism as a framework for teaching apologetics to the post-confirmation youth of Our Savior Lutheran Church. Overall, I believe this purpose was carried out successfully in both the research and the implementation of the project. The urgent need for teaching that combines catechesis and apologetics was demonstrated in the research of chapters two and three, and then applied in the six teaching sessions. These sessions used the structure and language of Luther's Small Catechism to teach both presuppositional and evidential apologetics. While I believe that the purpose of the project was adequately fulfilled, there was still much room for improvement. These improvements will be discussed below.

Evaluation of the First Goal

The first goal of the project was to assess the current level of apologetics knowledge and skills among a minimum of 10 post-confirmation youth at OSLC. Overall, this goal was a success, but not without complications. By using an online survey website, I was able to store all the assessment data in an online database. The data was also downloaded easily into PDF and Excel™ formats for later analysis. The online survey also allowed me to access assessment data from high school youth who were busy and difficult to meet with for an in-person assessment. As a result, the total number of assessment filled out was 16—6 above the minimum number of assessments in the goal. Nevertheless, I learned that high school youth do not frequently check email, let alone respond in a timely manner. With some participants, I had to follow up numerous times, and eventually reach out to parents to assist with the completion of the assessment in a timely manner.

I was mostly pleased with the results of the pre-assessment. In general, the assessment revealed that the post-confirmation youth at OSLC possessed a positive level of apologetics knowledge and skills. Out of a possible maximum of 120 points for apologetics knowledge, participants scored an average of 84 points (70 percent competency), and out of a possible maximum of 120 points for apologetics skills, participants scored an average of 99 points (83 percent competency).¹ While it cannot be said with certainty, it appears that the occasional use of apologetics in previous sermons

¹For a summary of each participant's cumulative pre and post scores, see tables A1 and A2 in appendices 2 and 3. For a summary of the averages for each question, see tables A3 and A4 in appendices 4 and 5.

and confirmation instruction has had a positive impact on the post-confirmation youth of OSLC.

Evaluation of the Second Goal

The second goal of the project was to develop a 6-week curriculum that uses the structure and language of Luther's Small Catechism to teach presuppositional and evidential apologetics. Based on the rubrics filled out by the expert panel of three Lutheran pastors and a lay member of the congregation, this goal was successful. All of the four rubrics were returned with criteria scores above the benchmark of 90 percent.² Based on the suggestions of the panel, I adjusted some of the teaching sessions to incorporate more elements of active learning. One member of the panel also recommended extending the discussion of worldviews in session one to include Islam and Eastern religions like Buddhism and Hinduism, however, this was not possible due to the limited timespan on the project.

Evaluation of the Third Goal

The third goal of the project was to increase apologetics knowledge and skills among the youth of OSLC through the teaching of the aforementioned curriculum to a minimum of 10 post-confirmation youth. The teaching of the sessions was successful. The sessions were well attended during the Sunday morning and Wednesday evening times each week. I carefully recorded which participants were not present at each of the sessions, and immediately afterward I sent them an email that consisted of a link to the recorded session online, a copy of the study guide, and a copy of the Power Point™

²See table A5 in appendix 7 for a summary of the average rubric scores for each of the criteria.

slides. Before sending out the post-assessment, I contacted any students who had missed sessions to ensure that they had completed all six of the classes. Overall, a total of 16 post-confirmation youth participated in the sessions.

While the teaching of the sessions was successful, the collection of the post-assessment data was complicated, and negatively impacted the full potential of the data analysis. First, it was difficult to collect survey data in an online format from some of the participants. While some filled out the survey in a timely manner, others did not. This caused the analysis of the post-assessment data to take longer than expected. In fact, two of the participants never responded to repeated requests to complete the post-assessment. Furthermore, in the comparison of the pre and post-assessments, one of the four-digit codes was used twice in both of the assessments. It appears that one of the participants accidentally took the pre and post-assessments twice, or that two of the participants chose the same four-digit code. As a result, only 14 post-assessments were completed in comparison to the 16 pre-assessments completed, and due to the inability to pair the pre and post-data of the repeated codes of two participants, only a total of 12 of the pre and post-assessments were compared in the final paired t-test.³ While this final number was slightly above the goal's minimum, it was disappointing to not be able to use the full potential of the participants in the final analysis.

A comparison of the data from the 12 paired pre and post-assessments yielded mixed results. On the one hand, the average post-assessment score revealed a slight increase in apologetics knowledge for questions 1-20 (from an average of 84 to 88 points

³As noted in the previous chapter, the four pre-assessments of the participants who either did not complete the post-assessment or who used the same code twice were not used for the t-test.

out of a possible 120—a 3 percent increase). Nevertheless, a comparison of the 12 pre and post score averages in a t-test showed that this slight increase in apologetics knowledge may be due to chance alone and not as a result of the teaching intervention. The teaching intervention with the select group of post-confirmation youth did not make a statistically significant difference in the increase of their apologetics knowledge ($t_{(24)} = .29, p < .05$)⁴

The data from the second set of questions, on the other hand, did reveal a significant increase in apologetics skills. A comparison of the pre and post-assessment scores averages for questions 21-40 showed an overall average increase in apologetics skills from 99 points to 108 points out of a possible 120 (a 7 percent increase). The same paired t-test shows that the teaching intervention with the select group of post-confirmation youth did make a statistically significant difference in the increase of their apologetics skills ($t_{(24)} = .003, p < .05$)⁵

In summary, the final analysis of the pre and post-assessment data yielded mixed results. While a slight increase in apologetics knowledge is obviously preferable to a decrease, I had hoped that the teaching intervention would have made a more significant impact on the participants. Although the initial pre-assessments were more

⁴See table A1 in appendix 2 for a summary of the cumulative average scores of each participant in the pre and post-assessments for the apologetics knowledge questions (1-20). I applied a two-tailed t-test since I could not anticipate either an increase or decrease in apologetics knowledge. I also chose a paired t-test since the four-digit codes of the participants used in the pre and post-assessments allowed me to pair the results of each anonymously. I am thankful for SBTS professor Danny Bowen for his assistance in the analysis of the data in tables A1 and A2.

⁵See table A2 in appendix 3 for a summary of the cumulative average scores of each participant in the pre and post-assessments for the apologetics skills questions (21-40). As with apologetics knowledge, I applied a two-tailed t-test since I could not anticipate either an increase or decrease in apologetics skills. I also chose a paired t-test since the four-digit codes of the participants used in the pre and post-assessments allowed me to pair the results of each anonymously.

positive than negative, there was still room for significant improvement. Furthermore, at first glance it seems odd that a slight increase in apologetics knowledge would occur alongside a significant increase in apologetics skills. One would think that a significant increase in knowledge would be parallel to a significant increase in skills.

However, this may not be the case. While it cannot be stated with certainty, apologetics skills may have only slightly increased because the limited amount of sessions in the teaching intervention had the effect of either introducing new material that participants were not familiar with and did not have adequate time to process, or because participants realized that they did not know as much about apologetics as they previously estimated. One of these scenarios, or a mixture of both, may account for the statistically null increase in apologetics knowledge.

Still, the question remains: Why was there a significant increase in apologetics skills alongside an insignificant increase in apologetics knowledge. Once again, while it cannot be stated with certainty, it may be that as a result of the teaching sessions, participants were able to integrate previous apologetics knowledge into confidence in apologetics skills. Overall, the third goal of the project was only successful with regard to apologetics skills.

Evaluation of the Fourth Goal

The fourth goal of the project was to develop a discipleship plan which includes formal apologetic training based on Luther's Small Catechism as a part of the expected faith formation of post-confirmation youth at OSLC. This goal was carried out successfully. After analyzing the results of the teaching sessions, I submitted a discipleship plan to a panel at OSLC consisting of the senior pastor, the president and

vice president of the congregation, the youth leader, and one confirmation parent. In the discipleship plan I proposed a three-year cycle of periodic apologetic instruction on the basis of Luther's Small Catechism during the Sunday morning high school Bible study. The schedule of teaching sessions breaks up the six sessions from the project into a series of six more in-depth studies with the intention of allowing post-confirmation youth to go deeper into each of the topics.

As noted above in chapter four, the panel responded to the proposed discipleship plan positively, and based on the panel's suggestions, I made some adjustments to improve communication and the likelihood that the plan will be sustainable in the future. After I completed these adjustments and returned the discipleship plan to the panel for a final review, the panel returned the rubrics with scores that met or exceeded the benchmark of 90 percent for the criteria.⁶ Finally, after sending the final copy of the plan to the OSLC Executive Team, it received unanimous approval. The first series of apologetics sessions is scheduled for the fall of 2018.⁷

Strengths of the Project

While many aspects of the project could certainly be improved, I considered the ministry project to be strong on many levels. With regard to communication, I clearly communicated the purpose, duration, and details of the program in advance of the teaching sessions as well as during the teaching intervention. Starting with a congregation-wide meeting in late July, I began detailing the project and inviting

⁶See chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of the rubrics. See table A6 in appendix 10 for a summary of the rubric scores for the discipleship plan before and after revisions.

⁷See appendix 11 for a detailed overview of the discipleship plan. See also appendix 6 for the rubric used by the panel to assess the discipleship plan.

participants through verbal announcements, newsletter articles, and email invitations. This was a positive aspect of the project given my tendency to communicate upcoming events either last minute, inadequately, or both.

Furthermore, I consider the organization and planning of the project to be a strength for our congregation. Given our limited number of volunteers and the overall culture of busyness in New England, we often struggle to plan carefully and carry out consistent teaching sessions at our Sunday morning high school Bible study. In fact, we often move haphazardly from one topic to another, and the number of youth who attend often dwindles as the year carries on. However, the careful planning, communication, and creative teaching of the sessions gave structure and purpose to the high school Sunday morning Bible study hour. Sessions were well attended, and our youth leader was able to follow the project with an in-depth DVD series about the textual history of the Bible.

As far as the teaching sessions are concerned, I believe I made good use of active learning as opposed to communicating the material only through lectures. The carefully planned timeline of the project, as well as the accountability of the expert panel encouraged me to work hard to plan sessions that engaged multiple styles of learning. For example, in sessions one and two I used music from popular culture to help participants grasp various worldview concepts. In sessions three through six I used brief videos to help participants visualize the ideas and concepts I had taught. I also allowed students to put apologetics knowledge into practice through active dialogue and role-playing. I believe that all of these elements contributed to teaching sessions that were interesting and engaging for participants.

Finally, I consider the connection between catechesis and apologetics to be the greatest strength of this project. Within the LCMS there is a renewed interest in catechesis and Luther's Small Catechism. Alongside this revival of catechesis there is also a renewed interest in apologetics. However, I have seldom seen these two interests intersect in a meaningful way. This project took a familiar aspect of our discipleship (catechesis from Luther's Small Catechism) and built upon this foundation with something less familiar (apologetics), thus using language and concepts that are familiar to the youth of OSLC to give expression to something less familiar.

Weaknesses of the Project

Despite the strengths of the project, there were also some weaknesses regarding both its preparation and implementation. For one, while collecting surveys in an online format was convenient, it also resulted in some unforeseen problems. For example, students were often slow to reply or even inaccessible through email. Furthermore, allowing participants to choose their own four-digit code created the possibility that the same number would be chosen by two or more participants. Finally, by choosing a four-digit code online rather than in person, participants ran the risk of forgetting their numbers when it came time to take the post-assessment survey.

Second, with regard to the teaching sessions, I am convinced that the six sessions did not provide sufficient time to engage the deep conceptual issues that arise with terms such as worldview, secularity, and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Furthermore, the scientific and historical factors involved in the two sessions on evidential apologetics require far more in-depth discussion than one session each. In fact, teaching only briefly on an apologetic topic that is at odds with the widely accepted

cultural narrative about science and history may have the unintended result of confusing participants or failing to convince them. The delicate balance between providing enough sessions to do justice to the topics and keeping the duration of the sessions short enough so that everyone completes them all was particularly challenging.

Third, while I enjoyed teaching the high school youth, I believe the absence of formal parental involvement in the project was a weakness. In retrospect, I believe the project would have had a more positive impact if the classes were taught in a way that encouraged parents and children to learn together. In fact, if part of the curriculum included family discussions at home, post-confirmation youth and parents may have a less isolated experience with the content.

Finally, due to the limited number of sessions and the brief amount of time allowed for each teaching session, at times the structure and language of Luther's Small Catechism appeared to be more incidental than integral to the teaching. This was especially true with the two sessions on evidential apologetics. There were also apologetic aspects of the Catechism that I did not have time to explore. For example, the Lord's Prayer and its explanations offer a clear embodiment of the Christian worldview in contrast to both secularity and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, and yet, due to the brevity of the project, I was unable to explore the apologetic potential of this core part of the Catechism. In summary, given that the purpose of the project was to use Luther's Small Catechism to teach apologetics, I could have better utilized the structure and language of the Catechism to do so.

What I Would Do Differently

While generally speaking I was pleased with the project, in retrospect there are numerous aspects of the project that I would approach differently. In response to the weaknesses noted above, the following changes are proposed to improve the project for future use.

First, although it is often difficult to gather high school youth to take a paper pre and post-assessment, I believe this option outweighs any benefits offered by an online assessment. I would either offer the pre-assessment on Sunday mornings over a series of weeks before the first teaching session begins, or I would schedule home visits with potential participants far in advance. Home visits would most likely yield higher participation and better comprehension of the project's purpose and process among participants. Furthermore, pre and post-assessments could be completed during the visit. I would also allow each participant to choose a four-digit code from a list of codes with no repeated numbers, and then keep the numbers in an envelope with the participants' name for future use. By doing so, the assessment would be anonymous, but the risk of the data being compromised would be far less.

Second, I would add more sessions to the teaching intervention so that participants would have a better opportunity to process the difficult topics that we covered. Following the discipleship plan, in the future I plan to cover apologetics topics in greater depth one topic at a time rather than all at once. However, if I were to cover a wide range of topics again (as I did in goals two and three), I would add two more sessions (making the total number of sessions eight), and focus more on evidential apologetics than presuppositional apologetics. The role that worldview plays in

apologetics is important, but I believe I favored presuppositional apologetics in the project at expense of evidential apologetics.⁸

Third, I would revise the project to incorporate parents into the teaching sessions. In general, I believe that God intends Christian formation—both at the level of catechesis as well as apologetics—to take place primarily within the context of the family. By involving parents, the sessions would be less isolated and more open to fruitful discussions. Parents would also learn how to have apologetics discussions with their children at home on a regular basis, which would likely help to prevent high school youth from secretly nursing doubts. Additionally, if part of the curriculum was designed for use at home, this would allow for the sessions to go into more depth without extending the length of the project. Completing sessions with parents both in class and at home would also likely increase the likelihood that participants complete all the sessions.

Fourth, by adding more sessions or requiring part of the curriculum to be completed at home, I would be more deliberate about incorporating the structure and language of Luther's Small Catechism into each of the sessions. The purpose of the project was not simply to teach apologetics, but rather to use the specific structure and language of the Catechism to draw a connection between apologetics and the apologetic nature of catechesis. While the sessions did make use of the Catechism, with more sessions and more time I would go deeper into the apologetic implications of each part of

⁸For example, a comparison between the pre and post-assessment data shows that there was a decrease in apologetics knowledge for two questions related to science, which suggests that the single teaching session devoted to this topic was not adequate. See table A3 in appendix 4 for a detailed report of pre and post-assessment average scores for each question.

the Catechism. Once again, while I did do this in the sessions, I believe I could have improved on this point.

Theological Reflections

In retrospect, both the study that preceded the project as well as the process of preparing and teaching the sessions provided theological clarity for my calling as a pastor at OSLC. For one, I was reminded that while God works when and where he wills through the Holy Spirit, he does not do so immediately, but rather uses means. One of these means is the office of teaching. This office of teaching does not function immediately either; effective teaching takes place through the careful study, preparation, and planning of pastors. In an age in which ministry is often efficient at the expense of depth, I was reminded of the critical importance of applying my own careful, intentional study to the office of preaching and teaching God’s word “in season and out of season” (2 Tim 4:2) in response to “every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor 10:5).

The critical importance of apologetics stands out as well. Before I started the project, I assumed—without much reflection—that apologetics was a peripheral aspect of theology. The more I studied apologetics—especially from the presuppositional perspective—I came to realize that any aspect of Christian theology has apologetic potential when it comes into contact with the curiosity or opposition of unbelievers. From this wider view of apologetics, I now appreciate the creeds, confessions, and catechisms of the church as apologetic in nature.⁹ As we now shape our defense of the gospel in

⁹Voddie Baucham, *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 85-124.

response to post-Enlightenment skepticism, we are following the apologetic witness of the church in ages past as she also responded with apologetic arguments at whatever point the gospel was challenged.

Furthermore, within an increasingly secular culture, I have been both challenged and encouraged to approach every aspect of ministry through an apologetic lens. Given that we now live in an age of default doubt, pastors must approach preaching, teaching, catechesis, and church membership with apologetics in mind. In fact, in our speaking, writing, and conversations, we must anticipate apologetic dialogue.¹⁰

I also came to see apologetics as less of an academic discipline and more of a practice of pastoral theology. Through the teaching of the sessions and discussion with students, I became acutely aware that many of the apologetics issues I covered also intersected with the doubts and struggles of high school students. For example, the cognitive dissonance that many teens encounter as they strive to reconcile widespread skepticism with their faith is incredibly unsettling. While Luther struggled with doubts about whether he could appease a righteous God, many teens today struggle with the question of whether God even exists. When pastors use apologetics to address these doubts, they are practicing pastoral care for the souls entrusted to their care.¹¹

Finally, as a Lutheran pastor, my study of apologetics led me to a more in-depth reflection on the role apologetics plays within Lutheran theology.¹² On the one

¹⁰Baucham, *Expository Apologetics*, 85-124.

¹¹Alfonso O. Espinosa, "Apologetics as Pastoral Theology" in *Theologia et Apologia: Essays in Reformation Theology and its Defense Presented to Rod Rosenblatt*, ed. Adam S. Francisco (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Sock, 2007), 317-25.

¹²Lutherans have a complicated relationship with apologetics. For one, Luther did not focus on apologetic arguments because he was focused on other matters, such as soteriology, ecclesiology, and debates with the Reformed about the nature of the Lord's Supper (as were later Lutheran theologians).

hand, I found many aspects of the presuppositional method to fit comfortably with Lutheran theology—especially the doctrines of sin, free will, the Word of God, and monergism. However, on the other hand, by identifying with the theology behind the presuppositional method, I did not exclude the evidential method (as some presuppositionalists do).¹³ Rather, I came to appreciate the presuppositional and evidential methods as complementary aspects of the Lutheran doctrine of law and gospel.¹⁴ While the presuppositional method is useful for applying the accusatory power of the law, the evidential method offers an empirical and historical foundation for the healing power of the gospel. Overall, as a result of the project, I came to appreciate an

Furthermore, none of Luther’s opponents seriously questioned the existence of God or the resurrection of Jesus. While some Lutheran theologians did make use of rational proofs and natural theology to argue for the existence of God, later theologians—perhaps due to a suspicion of reason—were suspicious or dismissive of apologetic arguments. While this was the case among some confessional, biblical Lutherans, it has been especially the case of more liberal Lutherans whose theology is more existential than objective. For an overview of these issues, see John Warwick Montgomery, “The Apologetic Thrust of Lutheran Theology” in *Theologia et Apologia: Essays in Reformation Theology and its Defense Presented to Rod Rosenblatt*, ed. Adam S. Francisco (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Sock, 2007), 5-20.

¹³Most presuppositionalists do not entirely reject the proper use of evidences. For example, Cornelius Van Til comments, “There is a historical and there is a philosophical aspect to the defense of Christian theism. Evidences deals largely with the historical while apologetics deals largely with the philosophical aspect. Each has its own work to do but they should constantly be in touch with one another.” Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 19. However, many presuppositionalists take issue with the way in which evidences are presented to unbelievers neutrally—apart from the guiding presupposition of Christian theism. Van Til comments further, “It is impossible and useless to seek to vindicate Christianity as a historical religion by a discussion of facts alone To interpret a fact of history involves a philosophy of history. But a philosophy of history is at the same time a philosophy of reality as a whole. Thus we are driven to philosophical discussion all the time and everywhere.” Van Til, *Christian Apologetics*, 18-19. John Frame responds to evidence-based apologetic methods by arguing for the need to apply a Christian *a priori* at every turn: “We need to show that God is the very presupposition of rational meaning and that reasoning without this presupposition leads to meaninglessness.” Steven Cowan and Stanley Gundry, eds., *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 81. These concerns are noted, and hopefully evident in this project. Nevertheless, I am convinced that it is appropriate to apply evidences without adding so many intellectual caveats. The Spirit will use them as he sees fit.

¹⁴Melanchthon gives a succinct definition of law and gospel: “Generally speaking there are two parts of Scripture: Law and Gospel. The Law displays sin, the Gospel grace. The Law shows the disease, the Gospel the cure.” Philip Melanchthon, *Common Places: Loci Communes 1521*, trans. Christian Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 2014), 91. Within the context of presuppositional apologetics, the law serves as the revealer of contradictory and unreliable worldviews.

integrated view of apologetics that fits well within the paradigm of Lutheran theological distinctives.¹⁵

Personal Reflections

The ministry project afforded many opportunities for personal and professional growth. Broadly speaking, the entire process taught me the discipline of locating a need within my congregation, assessing the need objectively rather than intuitively, preparing to address the need through careful study and a planned intervention, and then the following assessment of the intervention. While I began this degree simply out of interest in apologetics, I received a benefit I did not initially anticipate—the ability to work toward the health of my congregation in a systematic manner rather than haphazardly or blindly. Often pastoral ministry takes place on the move as a series of one sermon, visit, funeral, and counseling appointment after another. Overall, the project taught me how to pastor my church more carefully and intentionally.

The project also helped me develop an area of interest and expertise that could potentially bear fruit beyond my own congregation. I believe that the renewed interest in catechesis within my own church body is important, however, I also believe that this interest often fails to integrate apologetics into catechesis. In the future, I hope to be able to contribute to this conversation in a meaningful way.

Finally, the project was intellectually fulfilling for me. While the hours spent reading and writing were often burdensome alongside full-time ministry, I also grew

¹⁵Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 501-24.

immensely and found the discipline of regular reading and writing as a vital aspect of pastoral ministry.

Conclusion

Now that I have completed this project, several questions remain about the future of catechesis and apologetics in the American church. At the level of individual churches, what would this same project look like within different contexts—perhaps at a larger church, or even at a Lutheran high school? Would the results be different? Furthermore, is there an opportunity to use other Reformation catechisms as a framework for teaching apologetics? Could a Reformed pastor use the Heidelberg Catechism in the same manner? Finally, what opportunities exist at the level of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, as well as the broader level of the Body of Christ to approach catechesis from the perspective of apologetics? I pray that in some way this project will contribute to a larger conversation about the intersection between catechesis and apologetics, all with the goal that the next generation of believers would not only know *what* they believe, but also *why*.

APPENDIX 1

APOLOGETICS KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS ASSESSMENT

The assessment you are about to complete is part of a ministry research project conducted by John W. Rasmussen. The aim of this assessment is to assess your current level of apologetics knowledge and skills. Apologetics is the defense of the Christian faith when asked to give a reason for your beliefs. After attending a series of teaching sessions on apologetics, you will be asked to complete the same survey.

In order to keep your answers confidential, you will assign yourself a number that will allow the data in this survey to be compared with the data in the later survey. Please write down your number so you can remember it for the second assessment. Your self-assigned number and name will be kept in a secured envelope in the event that you forget your number. Only you will have access to this number in the future if needed.

Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the project at any time. By completing this survey you are giving John W. Rasmussen permission to use the data associated with your self-assigned number for his ministry research project.

I agree to participate in this survey

I do NOT agree to participate in this survey

My self-assigned number (please choose 4 digits you will remember) _____

Please answer all questions as *carefully* and *honestly* as possible. The first 20 questions deal with your knowledge of apologetics. The second 20 questions deal with your confidence in defending the faith to unbelievers.

Directions: According to the following scale, respond to the following statements by circling the option that best represents your agreement with the statements:

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat,
AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

1. I am able to explain to someone the meaning of the term “apologetics.”

SD D DS AS A SA

2. I am able to explain to someone the meaning of the term “worldview.”
SD D DS AS A SA
3. I am able to explain to someone the meaning of the term “secularity.”
SD D DS AS A SA
4. I am able to explain to someone the meaning of the term “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.”
SD D DS AS A SA
5. Science explains how life began.
SD D DS AS A SA
6. Religion is a private matter and shouldn’t be discussed in public (school, work, politics).
SD D DS AS A SA
7. All people worship something.
SD D DS AS A SA
8. Apart from the existence of God, it’s obvious that human beings have rights.
SD D DS AS A SA
9. Research shows that religion is an adaptation our ancestors developed in order to survive.
SD D DS AS A SA
10. The Ten Commandments make sense.
SD D DS AS A SA
11. Scientific evidence strongly suggests the existence of a Creator.
SD D DS AS A SA
12. Above all, God wants me to be happy in this life and achieve my goals.
SD D DS AS A SA
13. There is strong historical evidence that Jesus was raised from the dead.
SD D DS AS A SA
14. The Christian faith makes the best case for human rights.
SD D DS AS A SA
15. The Christian faith offers the most satisfying solution to human suffering.
SD D DS AS A SA

16. Universal right and wrong can exist without God.
SD D DS AS A SA
17. Marriage is a lifetime commitment between any two persons who love each other.
SD D DS AS A SA
18. Science conflicts with the teachings of the Bible.
SD D DS AS A SA
19. From a historical perspective, it's very likely that the disciples of Jesus were mistaken in their belief that Jesus was raised.
SD D DS AS A SA
20. The Christian faith makes the best sense of reality.
SD D DS AS A SA
21. I am confident in my ability to defend my Christian faith when others ask me why I believe what I believe.
SD D DS AS A SA
22. I am confident in my ability to defend the Christian worldview as true in comparison with other worldviews.
SD D DS AS A SA
23. I am confident in my ability to point out the reasons why secularism (no belief in God) does not make sense.
SD D DS AS A SA
24. I am confident in my ability to defend my Christian faith in conversations with atheists.
SD D DS AS A SA
25. I am confident in my ability to point out the reasons why Moralistic Therapeutic Deism does not make sense.
SD D DS AS A SA
26. I am confident in my ability to defend my belief in God as rational (something that makes sense).
SD D DS AS A SA

27. I am confident in my ability to defend my Christian beliefs as based on facts (rather than just opinions).

SD D DS AS A SA

28. I am confident in my ability to defend my Christian faith as the best foundation for human rights.

SD D DS AS A SA

29. I am confident in my ability to defend the Ten Commandments as the best expression of right and wrong.

SD D DS AS A SA

30. I am confident in my ability to use science as evidence for God's existence.

SD D DS AS A SA

31. I am confident in my ability to defend my Christian faith as compatible with good science.

SD D DS AS A SA

32. I am confident in my ability to defend the resurrection of Jesus on the basis of historical evidence.

SD D DS AS A SA

33. I am confident in my ability to respond to secular explanations for the resurrection of Jesus.

SD D DS AS A SA

34. I am confident in my ability to defend my Christian faith as the best answer to human suffering.

SD D DS AS A SA

35. I am confident in my ability to have conversations with others about why the Christian faith makes the best sense of reality.

SD D DS AS A SA

36. I am confident in my ability to point out how secular beliefs in human rights lack a solid foundation.

SD D DS AS A SA

37. I am confident in my ability to defend universal right and wrong as dependent on the existence of God.

SD D DS AS A SA

38. I am confident in my ability to explain why marriage is a lifelong union between one man and one woman.

SD D DS AS A SA

39. I am confident in my ability to have conversations with unbelievers in a respectful manner.

SD D DS AS A SA

40. I am confident in my ability to explain to atheist friends why science cannot offer convincing explanations for the origin of the universe.

SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 2

APOLOGETICS KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT SCORES

Table A1. Apologetics knowledge assessment scores

Participant	Cumulative Pre Assessment Score	Cumulative Post Assessment Score
1	100	110
2	84	90
3	84	88
4	82	98
5	90	90
6	83	92
7	77	73
8	105	99
9	75	91
10	76	54
11	81	95
12	70	69

APPENDIX 3

APOLOGETICS SKILLS ASSESSMENT SCORES

Table A2. Apologetics skills assessment scores

Participant	Cumulative Pre Assessment Score	Cumulative Post Assessment Score
1	106	118
2	87	106
3	91	104
4	95	98
5	107	116
6	108	120
7	90	104
8	112	110
9	90	103
10	95	86
11	105	114
12	98	120

APPENDIX 4

CUMULATIVE AVERAGES FOR APOLOGETICS KNOWLEDGE
QUESTIONS

Table A3. Cumulative averages for apologetics knowledge questions

Question	Pre Score Average	Post Score Average	Score Change
1	3.92	4.75	+14%
2	4.17	4.33	-2%
3	3.33	4.08	+12%
4	2.08	4.58	+41%
5	4.67	3.33	-22%
6	5	4.92	-1%
7	4.58	4.25	-5%
8	2.75	4.17	-24%
9	5	4.75	-4%
10	5.5	3.75	-29%
11	4.75	4	-12%
12	3.5	4.25	-13%
13	5.42	4.58	+14%
14	4.67	4.17	-8%
15	4.67	4.75	+1%
16	4.58	4	-9%

Table A3—Continued

Question	Pre Score Average	Post Score Average	Score Change
17	1.08	4.33	+54%
18	4.08	4.92	+14%
19	5	5.17	+3%
20	5.17	4.33	-14%

APPENDIX 5

CUMULATIVE AVERAGES FOR APOLOGETICS SKILLS
QUESTIONS

Table A4. Cumulative averages for apologetics skills questions

Question	Pre Score Average	Post Score Average	Score Change
21	5.42	5.58	+3%
22	5.75	5.67	-1%
23	5.5	5.25	-4%
24	5.75	5.42	-6%
25	3.08	5.5	+37%
26	5.42	5.67	+5%
27	5.67	5.42	-5%
28	3.75	5.5	+29%
29	4.67	5.5	+14%
30	5.75	5.5	-4%
31	5.58	5.17	-7%
32	4.25	5.42	+19%
33	5.42	5.25	-2%
34	5.33	5.33	None
35	5.25	5.42	+2%
36	4.67	5.17	+8%
37	1.75	5.33	+60%

Table A4—Continued

Question	Pre Score Average	Post Score Average	Score Change
38	4.92	5.42	+8%
39	5.58	5.75	+3%
40	5.42	5	-7%

APPENDIX 6

CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

Apologetics Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
Lesson Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson connects the material of Luther’s Small Catechism with apologetics.					
The material is faithful to the Bible’s teaching on apologetics.					
The material is theologically sound.					
The lesson aim(s) is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson clearly support the lesson aim(s).					
The lesson engages participants with active learning.					

The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
The lesson content is accessible to high school youth.					
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.					

APPENDIX 7

CURRICULUM RUBRIC SUMMARIES

Table A5. Summary of averages for rubric criterion

Criteria	Average Score
The lesson connects the material of Luther's Small Catechism with apologetics.	97%
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on apologetics.	100%
The material is theologically sound.	100%
The lesson aim(s) is clearly stated.	99%
The points of the lesson clearly support the lesson aim(s).	97%
The lesson engages participants with active learning.	99%
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.	91%
The lesson content is accessible to high school youth.	100%

APPENDIX 8

TEACHING SESSIONS

Teaching Session 1

Title: “What’s a Worldview?”

Catechism Portion: The first commandment and explanation; the Apostles’ Creed and its explanations (LSC pages 13 and 16-17).

Focus: No one approaches God from a neutral position. We all come to questions about God, what it means to be human, our primary predicament, and the solutions we need to our problems from a previous perspective. This perspective is called a “worldview.” Our worldview includes the stories we believe about the big picture questions in life. Luther’s Small Catechism offers a brief outline of the Christian worldview and offers opportunity for comparison with other popular worldviews such as secularity and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.

Objectives: *Through the power of the Holy Spirit, learners will . . .*

- Restate the main characteristics of three major worldviews: Christianity, secularity, and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.
- Critically compare the basic presuppositions of each worldview.
- Interpret apologetics questions through the lens of worldview presuppositions.

Materials Needed:

- Study guide and writing utensil.
- Computer and screen/projector with all necessary adapters.
- 20-25 pairs of disposable IMAX movie glasses or different colored lenses.
- Speakers.
- Downloaded audio recordings of “When You Wish Upon a Star” and “Imagine” by John Lennon.

Study Outline:

Activity	Time Suggested
Opening Discussion: Is Evidence Enough?"	5 minutes
Transition: Looking at the World through Different Lenses."	5 minutes
Presentation: An Introduction to Three Worldviews.	20 minutes
Putting it to Work: Using Worldviews to Answer Big Picture Questions.	15 minutes
Processing: "What's Possible?"	10 minutes
Additional Learning Opportunity: Blog Post: "The Perks of Being an Atheist in College." http://www.thebeggarsblog.com/blog/2016/8/25/atheism-a-matter-of-the-head-or-the-heart Blog Post: "Kesha's Song 'Praying' References a God Worshipped Only by Religious 'Nones.'" http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/2017/07/06/keshas-praying-references-a-god-worshipped-only-by-religious-nones/	10-15 minutes

Introduction: Begin the class by asking what the term “apologetics” means. After allowing a few moments for discussion, define apologetics as “the defense of the Christian faith.” Then ask learners to share some examples of evidences that the Christian faith is true and reliable. Once some examples are given, ask learners if they think evidences for or against the Christian faith are all that matter when defending the Christian faith. In other words, are there other factors involved in whether someone believes that Christianity is true or false? As an example, mention two well-known and accomplished scientists—the atheist biologist Richard Dawkins, and the former head of the Human Genome Project, Francis Collins, who is also a Christian. Ask learners to grapple with the question—why do two scientists with equal education and access to the same evidence come to radically different conclusions about the existence of God? What factors other than evidence might be at play in the formation of their beliefs?

Transition: Give each learner a pair of IMAX glasses. Use the glasses to explain that just like we experience a movie differently with and without the IMAX glasses, we also experience the world differently depending on what we believe. When it comes to our beliefs, it's not as simple as, "Just look at the evidence." We will always interpret the evidence through the lens of our preexisting view of the world. This lens is called a "worldview." Briefly stated, a worldview is a comprehensive view of reality. Nancy Pearcey likens a worldview to "a mental map that tells us how to navigate the world effectively . . . a network of principles that answer the fundamental questions of life: Who are we? Where did we come from? What is the purpose of life?"¹ After defining and explaining the term "worldview," set the tone for the rest of the sessions by pointing out that many of our beliefs or even doubts about God often have less to do with evidence and more to do with how we interpret evidence (science, history, etc.) on the basis of worldview.

Presentation: Spend about five minutes briefly introducing three worldviews: Christianity, secularity, and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Note that while many other worldviews exist, the classes will focus on these three because they are the most common in American culture. If time allowed, Eastern worldviews like Hinduism and Buddhism could be covered, as well as Islam. Given that time is limited, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism functions well as an "all of the above" worldview since it often incorporates elements of multiple worldviews.

Secularity: Share with learners the three basic presuppositions of secularity: According to philosopher Mark Mattes, secularity means (1) to see life from within the immediate physical and temporal world without reference to God; (2) to establish one's own value system apart from any reference to God, who is only an "external authority"; and (3) to believe that there are no absolutes in life—that all truth is situational.² Refer to this worldview as "no God allowed," and be sure to make a connection between secularity and atheism. Ask learners to share examples of secularity from popular culture and their own experience. In order to help learners locate the key elements of the secular worldview, play the John Lennon song "Imagine." Using the lyrics printed in their study guides, encourage them to circle words and phrases that communicate the secular worldview. If time allows, offer a few moments for discussion.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism: Share with learners the basic presuppositions of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. According to sociologist Christian Smith, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism affirms that (1) a God exists who created and orders the world and watches over

¹Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 23.

²Mark Mattes, "A Lutheran Case for Apologetics," *Logia* 23, no. 4 (2015), 26.

human life on earth, (2) God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions, (3) the central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself, (4) God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem, and (5) good people go to heaven when they die.³ After defining MTD, refer to this worldview as “God lite,” noting that while MTD uses Christian language, and may even take up residence in the Christian worldview, it has a different view of God, human beings, and the world. Ask learners to share examples of MTD from popular culture and their own experience. As examples of how MTD views God, point to the genie from the Disney™ movie *Aladdin*, as well as the Fairy Godmother from *Cinderella*. In order to help learners locate the key elements of the MTD worldview, play the song “When You Wish Upon a Star.” Using the lyrics printed in their study guides, encourage learners to circle words and phrases that communicate the MTD worldview. If time allows, offer a few moments for discussion.

The Christian Worldview: Ideally, learners will be familiar with the Christian worldview from previous worship and catechesis. Have the class recite together from Luther's Small Catechism the first commandment and its meaning and the Apostles' Creed. Use these resources to briefly review the biblical narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

Practice the Teaching: Learners will have listed in their study guides the names of each worldview. Underneath each worldview is a series of “big picture questions.” In addition to these questions are a list of assertions made by each worldview. For example, the first commandment and its explanation and the Apostles' Creed and its explanations are listed in association with the Christian worldview. Learners will work as groups or individuals to use the worldview assertions to answer the questions: *Who is God? Who am I? Why am I here? What's my purpose? What's the Problem? What's the Solution?* Check in with the groups/individuals as they work, clarifying any questions they might have. After everyone has completed, spend a few minutes debriefing and reflecting.

Process the Teaching:

“What's Possible?” Ask the learners to reflect and discuss the following questions:

1. How would each worldview respond to the claim—“The historical evidence points very strongly to the conclusion that Jesus Christ was crucified, died, was buried, and then bodily raised on the third day.”

³Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford Press, 2005), 162-63.

2. How would each worldview respond to the claim—“The universe has purpose and meaning.”

3. How would each worldview respond to the claim—“There is such a thing as right and wrong.”

The aim of the exercise is to see what limits or possibilities exist in each worldview with reference to these claims. Learners will see that each worldview interprets evidence on the basis of what it already believes is possible or impossible.

Note: If time does not allow for this activity, encourage students to answer the questions outside of class.

Teaching Session 2

Title: “Looking at God through the Lens of Worldviews”

Catechism Portion: The first commandment and its explanation; The first article of the Creed and its explanation (LSC pages 13 and 16).

Focus: Our worldview “lens” affects the way we think about God. The Christian worldview embodied in the Catechism approaches God with fear, love, trust, thanksgiving, and obedience. Secularity denies God and finds a substitute in human pleasures and endeavors. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism reorients God around human goals and concerns. Once again, worldview determines how we think and act in relationship to God.

Objectives: *Through the power of the Holy Spirit, learners will . . .*

- Recognize how the presuppositions of each worldview shapes the way it understands God.
- Illustrate the different approaches each worldview takes toward God.
- Critically evaluate each worldview’s approach toward God as it relates to human experience.
- Grow in their fear, love, and trust in the one true God.

Materials Needed:

- Study guide and writing utensil.
- Computer and screen/projector with all necessary adapters.
- Audio recording of Bob Dylan’s song “Gotta Serve Somebody.”
- Speakers.
- Beach ball or large yellow ball.
- One green or blue marble, or any other small sphere.

Study Outline:

Activity	Time Suggested
Introduction: “Everybody Worships”	5-10 minutes
Presentation: “Who Do You Serve?”	10-15 minutes
Putting it to Work: “Living in Different Universes.”	10-15 minutes
Processing: “Points of Tension.	5-10 minutes

<p>Additional Learning Opportunities: Blog Post: “The Unavoidable Reality of God” http://www.thebeggarsblog.com/blog/2017/1/10/the-unavoidable-reality-of-god?rq=reality Blog Post: “The God Who Won’t Change” http://www.thebeggarsblog.com/blog/2017/1/10/the-god-who-wont-change</p>	<p>15-30 minutes</p>
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Introduction: As participants gather, have Bob Dylan’s song “Gotta Serve Somebody” playing in the background. As you gather, begin by asking the participants to respond to the following statement: “Everybody worships.” Facilitate discussion for a few minutes as participants express different levels of agreement, disagreement, or confusion. Then direct the participants to the lyrics of the Bob Dylan song. Use the song to help demonstrate what worship might look like in the lives of individual people, whether they are “religious” or not.

Presentation: Using the main beliefs of each worldview outlined in the study guide, begin a group discussion about who or what each worldview worships, and whether these objects of worship are reliable. For the Christian worldview, use the first commandment and the first article of the Creed to lead learners to the conclusion that Christians worship God first from a posture of fear, love, and trust. God is first, and everything else takes second place, as well as affords an opportunity for gratitude. For secularity, use the three-point definition provided by Mark Mattes to come to the conclusion that while secularity rejects God, it replaces him with the worship of God’s blessings in creation, as well as human pursuits and achievements.⁴ For Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, refer to Smith and Denton’s main tenets of MTD to show how this worldview reconstructs God in the image of its own goals, dreams, and desires.⁵

Putting it to Work: Invite participants to refer to the blank space provided in their study guides. Using a beach ball to represent the sun and a marble to represent the earth, give a visual of each worldview’s approach to God. Invite participants to sketch the following illustrations for each worldview:

1. The Christian worldview is like our solar system. Just as the sun is at the center, and all the planets revolve around it, our lives were designed by God to orbit around him. Like the earth needs the sun at the center for heat, light, and

⁴Mattes, “A Lutheran Case for Apologetics,” 25-26.

⁵Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 162-63.

direction, we also need God at the center if we are to have meaning, purpose, and life. When we “fear, love, and trust in God above all things,” our lives are oriented as God intended. To illustrate this point, hold the beach ball in the center and repeatedly move the marble to rotate around it.

2. The secular worldview is like the solar system without a sun—no meaning, no purpose, no direction apart from what we create ourselves. Since God is “not allowed” in this solar system, human beings are left to themselves to navigate their circumstances and problems. Gratitude for life and its blessings can extend no higher than human beings. To illustrate this point, remove the beach ball and move the marble to rotate alone.
3. The Moralistic Therapeutic Deism worldview makes the sun and the earth trade places so that the sun revolves around the earth. In the same way, MTD makes God orbit around human dreams, goals, and desires. God becomes a means to achieve human ends. To illustrate this point, place the marble in the center and make the beach ball move to revolve around it.

Process the Teaching: As the session concludes, allow some time to note the “points of tension” that exist in each worldview.

For secularity, center the discussion on whether an atheistic approach to the universe really makes the best sense of the desire for meaning and spirituality widespread among human beings. If there is no God, why do almost all people have religious instincts? Point out that despite secularity’s desire to do away with God, human beings are incurably religious—so much so that getting rid of God is like trying to keep a beach ball under water—it continually rises back to the surface! As an example, you may choose to point out how secular people often seek out some kind of spirituality or experience of the supernatural even when these contradict with the secular worldview. For example, you may note the popularity of movies with supernatural or paranormal themes, as well as the popularity of ghost hunting in secular nations like Norway.⁶

For Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, point out the absurdity of a God who exists only to serve our perceived needs, as well as the ways in which it’s obvious that the MTD version of God is a projection of our desires.

⁶Andrew Higgins, “Norway Has a New Passion: Ghost Hunting, *New York Times*, October 24, 2015, accessed September 18, 2017 <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2015/10/25/world/europe/for-many-norwegians-ghosts-fill-a-void.html>.

Teaching Session 3

Title: “Right and Wrong through the Lens of Worldview”

Catechism Portion: Fifth and sixth commandments and their explanations; the first article of the Creed and its explanation (LSC pages 12 and 16-17).

Focus: We come to conclusions about right and wrong as the result of what we believe about God, the world, and ourselves. Christian morality rests upon the foundation of God’s moral authority, his purposes for creation, and the dignity he has given to human beings. While secularity and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism may share some moral ground with the Christian worldview, their foundations are not as secure. Secularity may defend human rights, but only on the authority of human opinion. MTD may advocate being “nice and fair,” but it does so without a foundational vision of who God is and his purposes for human beings.

Objectives: *Through the power of the Holy Spirit, learners will . . .*

- Analyze the moral foundation of each worldview.
- Assess the moral foundation of each worldview in relation to moral claims.
- Evaluate moral issues on the basis of worldview foundations.
- Grow in their confidence in the moral claims of the Christian worldview.

Materials Needed:

- Study guide and writing utensil.
- Computer and screen/projector with all necessary adapters.
- Internet connection.
- Speakers.
- Bag of “worldview facts” for each group.
- Video: “If There Is No God, Murder Isn’t Wrong.”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrcQ_PTkVD4

Study Outline:

Activity	Time Suggested
Introduction: “Defending Values on the Basis of Facts.”	10 minutes
Teaching: “If There Is No God, Murder Isn’t Wrong.”	5 minutes
Practice the Teaching: “Using Worldviews to Defend Human Dignity.”	15-20 minutes

Processing the Teaching: “Building on Better Foundations.”	10-15 minutes
Additional Learning Opportunities: Blog Post: “The Worldviews Behind Pro-Choice and Pro-Life” http://www.thebeggarsblog.com/blog/2017/7/31/the-worldviews-behind-pro-choice-and-pro-life Blog Post: “How Oxford and Peter Singer drove me from atheism to Jesus.” http://www.veritas.org/oxford-atheism-to-jesus/	15-20 minutes

Introduction: “Defending Values on the Basis of Facts.” Before the class begins, prepare three groups of notecards. One group will have facts from the secular worldview listed on each notecard, such as “There is no God,” or “Life came into existence by chance.” The second group of cards will have “facts” from the Moralistic Therapeutic Deism worldview, such as “The purpose of life is to be happy and feel good about oneself,” or “God is only involved in my life when I have a problem.” The third group of cards will have facts from the Christian worldview, such as “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,” or “God created human beings in his image.”

As the class gathers, divide the participants into three groups so that each worldview is represented. Once the groups become familiar with their facts, make a series of assertions about values. For example, assert, “Human beings are valuable.” For each fact, invite the groups to make the best case they can for the value assertion on the basis of the facts provided by their worldview. Use this opening activity to introduce the relationship between facts and values in worldviews. Point out that just as every house is built upon a foundation, every belief we have about right and wrong is built upon the basic beliefs of worldviews.

Teaching: “If There Is No God, Murder Isn’t Wrong.” Have students speak together the fifth commandment and its explanation from Luther’s Small Catechism. Explain how this commandment is not just a value based on human opinion—it is a value based on the fact of God’s command and the fact that human beings have been created in the image of God. Then show the video by Dennis Prager—“If There Is No God, Murder Isn’t Wrong.” Use this video to help participants visualize the difference between how the Christian worldview and the secular worldview come to the conclusion that murder is wrong.

Practice the Teaching - “Using Worldviews to Defend Human Dignity.” Pose to the group two scenarios that would provoke moral outrage from most people, regardless of worldview—rape and infanticide. Ask participants to break into groups of three to four. As groups encounter each scenario, they will work together to argue on the basis of either the secular worldview or the Moralistic Therapeutic Deism worldview that the action or policy posed in each scenario is wrong. As each group defends their stance on the basis of their assigned worldview, play the role of the skeptic by asking how they came to their conclusions, and by pointing out inconsistencies. The goal is to press each worldview to the point of tension or inconsistency, thus allowing an opportunity to demonstrate how the Christian worldview provides a better foundation for moral claims.

Scenario #1: College campuses no longer hold men accountable for rape because biology teaches that they are hardwired for sexual aggression.

Scenario #2: The Supreme Court decides that women can have their children euthanized up to the age of two years old if the child suffers from a medical condition or is unwanted.

Process the Teaching: “Building on Better Foundations.” Using the illustrations in the Power Point™ and study guide, revisit each of the controversial moral scenarios. For each, demonstrate how the Christian worldview bases its values on what it considers facts. Also demonstrate for each how the secular worldview bases its values on human opinions. Use the illustrations to further demonstrate that popular secular beliefs about evolutionary psychology often offer theories (which are considered “facts”) that undermine moral values. For real examples, refer to Nancy Pearcey’s book *Total Truth* (she addresses evolutionary psychology explanations for both rape and infanticide, as well as the secular moral outrage that followed).⁷ Note the tension that exists even between secular people to reconcile the contradiction between “scientific fact” and desired values.

⁷Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 207-25.

Teaching Session 4

Title: “Worldviews and Reality: Creation.”

Catechism Portion: The first article of the Creed and its explanation (LSC page 16).

Focus: Secular people often pit faith and science against one another. Some may claim that science is the only valid way of arriving at truth, and even assert that science removes the need for God because science explains the mysterious elements of this universe that religion sought to explain in the past. However, a closer look reveals that these assertions have more to do with worldview presuppositions than reality. Not only does the Christian worldview provide a solid foundation for the scientific exploration of the world, it also provides better answers for the existence and order of the universe. In fact, many recent scientific discoveries pose difficult questions for the secular worldview.

Objectives: *Through the power of the Holy Spirit, learners will . . .*

- Recognize that science does not conflict with “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”
- Recognize that science is not the only reliable form of knowledge.
- Critically compare the answers given by secular and Christian worldviews to three puzzling scientific mysteries.
- Defend the Christian worldview as the best explanation for how the universe began, how life began, and the nature of human consciousness.

Materials Needed:

- Study guide and writing utensil.
- Computer and screen/projector with all necessary adapters.
- Video clip of scene from the movie *Nacho Libre*.
- Video by Eric Metaxas: “Does Science Argue For or Against God?”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjGPHF5A6Po&t=3s>
- Internet connection.
- Speakers.
- A box of Scrabble™ letters.
- Enough quarters so groups of two will each have one.
- Video clip from *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* (minutes 2:00 to 6:07)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIZtEjtlirc>

Study Outline:

Activity	Time Suggested
Introduction: “What Science Can and Can’t Do.”	10 minutes
Main Teaching #1: “Difficulties for Secularity—Where Did the Universe Come From?”	10 minutes
Main Teaching #2: “Difficulties for Secularity—How Did Life Begin?”	15 minutes
Putting it to Work: “Against the Odds Coin Toss.”	15 minutes
Processing the Teaching: “Science Through the Lens of Worldview”	10 minutes
Additional Learning Opportunities: LA Times Article: “The Myth of the Eternal War Between Religion and Science” by Bishop Robert Barron http://beta.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-1112-barron-religion-scientism-20151112-story.html Blog Post: “Difficulties for Atheism: How Did Life Begin?” http://www.thebeggarsblog.com/blog/2016/8/25/difficulties-for-atheism-how-did-life-begin	20-30 minutes

Introduction: Begin the class by showing a brief [clip from the movie *Nacho Libre*](#) in which Eskeleto tells Nacho that he “only believes in science.” Use this scene as a humorous opportunity to enter into a discussion about the limits of what science can and can’t tell us about reality. Using large note cards or Power Point™ slides, make a series of statements about what science can and can’t do. For example:

Science can prove that the Grand Canyon is beautiful.

Science can prove the date I was born.

Science can prove my parents have been married for twenty years.

Science can prove that God does not exist.

Science can prove that God does exist.

Invite participants to share why they agree or disagree with these statements. Use the discussion to challenge the idea that science is the only valid way of arriving at true knowledge about reality. Also point out the limits of what science can and can't do, especially in relation to ultimate questions. Transition to the next section by reciting together the first article of the Apostles' Creed and its explanation from Luther's Small Catechism. As a segue to the next teaching ask, "Do the words 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth' have any grounding in reality? Are these words just an opinion based on blind faith? Or is our belief in creation based on real scientific evidence?"

Main Teaching #1: "Difficulties for Secularity—Where Did the Universe Come From?" Use the Power Point™ presentation to give a brief overview of three mysteries that have so far eluded scientific explanation: the origin of the universe, the origin of life, and the origin and nature of human consciousness. During the presentation, note the difficulty the secular worldview has in offering explanations for these mysteries, as well as how the Christian worldview offers more satisfying explanations. To demonstrate how science strongly suggests creation, as well as how modern scientific discoveries challenge naturalistic explanations for the origin of the universe, show the PragerU video by Eric Metaxas titled ["Does Science Argue for or Against God?"](#)

Main Teaching #2: "Difficulties for Secularity—How Did Life Begin?" Begin this section by checking with participants to gauge their level of understanding of DNA and cell biology. The group's understanding will guide how in-depth you will take this session. Once you have established a basic understanding of DNA as the encoded information that accounts for biological diversity, ask participants how the secular worldview accounts for the origin of the first DNA strand, as well as the first cell. After hearing popular theories, point out that none of these have been confirmed. While shaking the box of Scrabble™ letters, ask participants how long it would take to spell a basic sentence in a straight line—"Life began as the result of unguided natural forces." Build upon this question by asking how long it would take to spell the entire works of Shakespeare. Use this visual example to impress that DNA is biological information, and that the only known cause of information is intelligence.⁸ From here extend the analogy by asking whether shaking the box of letters at random would eventually—given enough time—lead to the composition of the entire works of Shakespeare. Ask whether this process is even possible by natural chance alone. Close the session by pointing out how DNA is functional information, and how that information contains the building blocks for human beings, whose minds are able to discover the very existence of DNA! If time

⁸For a detailed overview of DNA as evidence for intelligent design, see Stephen C. Meyer, *The Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 324-48.

allows, share brief quotes from the Power Point™ presentation about the complexities of human consciousness.

Putting it to Work: “Against the Odds Coin Toss.” Divide participants into groups of two. Give each group a quarter. Challenge the groups to see who can consistently flip the coin heads up ten times in a row. Allow teams to try for a few minutes. Afterwards, share the mathematical odds of the universe arising by chance alone. Then share the mathematical odds for the right conditions to exist for life to form in the universe.⁹ Finally, share the mathematical odds of life arising by random, natural processes.¹⁰ Frame these examples within the previous coin toss activity, noting the difficulty to even achieve ten consistent heads up coin tosses. Then share some of the ways in which the secular worldview accounts for these insurmountable odds. First, share the theory of “multiple universes” to account for the perfect conditions of our universe. Then share the “seeding” theory of origins proposed by Francis Crick and supported by Richard Dawkins. Ask whether any of these theories are more believable than “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.”

Process the Teaching: “Science through the Lens of Worldview.” Conclude the session by digging deeper into what lies behind belief or unbelief on the basis of science. Point out that one’s worldview will color the way he or she interprets scientific evidence. As an example of how worldview colors one’s interpretation of science, share the brief video of Ben Stein interviewing Richard Dawkins in the movie *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* (minutes 2:00 to 6:07). Use this video to point out the bias Dawkins has on the basis of worldview, as well as foster discussion about how worldview beliefs influence the way we approach scientific evidence.

⁹Calculators vary. For this session I used the number from Eric Metaxas in the PragerU video—1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000.

¹⁰For a discussion of these odds, see Meyer, *Signature in the Cell*, 189-288.

Teaching Session 5

Title: “Worldviews and Reality: Redemption”

Catechism Portion: The second article of the Creed and its explanation (LSC page 17).

Focus: Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:14, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.” Without the historical reality of the resurrection, the Christian worldview is just a fancy fiction with no grounding in reality. Thankfully, historical evidence for the resurrection abounds, so much so that even secular historians struggle to offer adequate alternative explanations. This session will serve as an introduction to the evidences for the resurrection, the problems with secular explanations, and the impact of the resurrection as a historical reality. It will also address how preexisting worldviews influence how one interprets the evidence for the resurrection.

Objectives: *Through the power of the Holy Spirit, learners will...*

- Recognize the main historical evidences for the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
- Critique secular explanations for the Christian claim that Jesus was raised from the dead.
- Practice defending the resurrection of Jesus in conversation with peers.
- Recognize that worldview assumptions often shape the way we interpret the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.

Materials Needed:

- Study guide and writing utensil.
- Computer and screen/projector with all necessary adapters.
- Copy of a birth certificate and driver’s license.
- Internet access.
- Speakers.
- Video: “The Resurrection of Jesus from the Perspective of a Historian.”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXfeUqk4IeU>.

Study Outline:

Activity	Time Suggested
Introduction: “Can You Prove That You Exist?”	10 minutes
Presentation: “The Historical Evidence for	15 minutes

the Resurrection of Jesus”	
Putting it to Work: “Wrestling with Alternative Explanations.”	15 minutes
Processing the Teaching: “More than Just the Evidence’	5 minutes
Additional Learning Opportunities: Article: “Can a scientist believe in the resurrection? Three hypotheses.” http://www.veritas.org/can-scientist-believe-resurrection-three-hypotheses/ Blog Post: “Apologetics: How Do We Account for the Resurrection Stories in the Gospels?” http://www.thebeggarsblog.com/blog/2017/6/7/apologetics-how-do-we-account-for-the-resurrection-stories-in-the-gospels	20-30 minutes

Introduction: Begin the class by asking, “When you go to the DMV to get your driver’s license, how do you prove that you are old enough?” Participants will most likely respond, “You bring your birth certificate.” Begin to press the question further—“But how do you prove that you were really born on the date indicated by your birth certificate? Could your parents have made it up? Could they have lied, forged the certificate, or could there have been an error?” Once you establish that this is a possibility, ask if there’s any scientific way to prove the exact date of your birth. Once you have navigated the class toward a negative response, use this discussion to make two points. First, science is not the only way we know things. We also know facts about the past because of what other people say. Second, we typically trust what other people say about the past. In the same way, we cannot use science to prove that Jesus was raised from the dead. But we do have very strong historical evidence that he was raised from the dead. As you transition to the main teaching, read together the second article of the Apostles’ Creed and its explanation, pointing out how Christians believe that the events of the Creed and the redemption we have in Christ are rooted in reality. We believe these things because we have good evidence that they really took place in history.¹¹

Presentation: Transition to a Power Point™ presentation about the evidences for the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Use the text of 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 and the

¹¹ The idea for this opening discussion came from a lecture given by Timothy Paul Jones during an on-campus seminar.

supporting Gospel narratives (Luke 24 and John 20 in particular) to establish the following points:

1. The early Christians believed that the tomb of Jesus was empty.
2. Multiple witnesses claimed to see Jesus bodily raised at different places and times.
3. The best explanation for the birth and spread of Christianity is the double witness of the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus.¹²

Then show the video “[Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus from a Historian](#).” Use this as an opportunity to discuss some of the positive evidences for the resurrection, as well as prepare for the next discussion about secular explanations.

Putting it to Work: Once you have presented the positive evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, then pose a series of skeptical questions for participants to discuss in groups. This will allow the participants to integrate potential skeptical responses or alternative theories about the resurrection into their understanding of the previously presented positive evidence.

1. “Someone obviously stole the body—either the disciples, the religious leaders, or the Romans.”
2. “The disciples experienced hallucinations of Jesus after his death, which eventually led to the widespread belief that he was raised from the dead.”
3. “The claim that Jesus was raised from the dead developed decades after Jesus died.”

After group discussion, allow groups to share their responses, using these responses as an opportunity to help the class see the weaknesses in alternative theories, as well as renew confidence in the evidence for the resurrection. Close this section by sharing how these alternative explanations fare when subjected to the criteria of certainty in historical research.¹³

¹²This is the argument made by scholar N. T. Wright after a long discussion of the historical setting in which the church announced the resurrection. See N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 706-10.

¹³For a discussion of the criteria required for historical certainty, see Michael Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 107-29.

Process the Teaching: Conclude the class by posing the following question: “Why is it that people who are equally intelligent, possess the same academic degree, and have critically examined the same evidence, will often come to completely opposite conclusions about the resurrection of Jesus? Could it be that more is at play than just evidence?” During this discussion cite the work of historian Michael Licona, who, after careful study of the resurrection evidence has concluded, “The only legitimate reasons for rejecting the resurrection hypothesis are philosophical and theological in nature.”¹⁴ Compare Licona’s insight with the well-known quote of atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel—“I want atheism to be true . . . it isn’t just that I don’t believe in God and, naturally, hope that I’m right in my belief. It’s that I hope there is no God! I don’t want there to be a God. I don’t want the universe to be like that.”¹⁵ The purpose of this closing discussion is to drive home the point that while the evidence for the resurrection is strong, one’s worldview will determine whether the resurrection is possible or even desirable.

¹⁴Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 608.

¹⁵Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130.

Teaching Session 6

Title: “Worldviews in Perspective: The Big Picture”

Catechism Portion: The Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed and explanations, the Lord’s Prayer (LSC pages 13-22).

Focus: The final session offers participants an opportunity to assess each worldview and its relation to human experience. Since worldviews are basic stories we believe about God, ourselves, and the world, participants will work to view each worldview through the lens of a progressive narrative. Doing so will allow participants to feel the weight of each worldview, and test whether it aligns with human experience and our deepest longings. While the Christian worldview is consistent and beautiful, secularity comes off as dark, lonely, and hopeless, and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is revealed to be absurd and self-centered.

Objectives: *Through the power of the Holy Spirit, learners will . . .*

- Recognize the implications of each worldview for questions of ultimate meaning, purpose, and destiny.
- Translate the beliefs of each worldview into story formats.
- Articulate the logical responses of each worldview to real life situations.

Materials Needed:

- Study guide and writing utensil.
- Computer and screen/projector with all necessary adapters.
- Video: “A Christian theologian and a secular philosopher share their fundamental beliefs” <http://www.veritas.org/a-christian-theologian-and-a-secular-philosopher-on-what-they-most-fundamentally-believe/>
- Internet access.
- Speakers.
- Poster boards and markers.
- Blank cards suitable for thank you or sympathy notes.

Study Outline:

Activity	Time Suggested
Introduction: “What Makes for a Good Story?”	5 minutes
Presentation: “The Christian Worldview: Beauty, Meaning, and Purpose”	15 minutes

Putting it to Work: “What Kind of Movie is Your Worldview?”	15 minutes
Processing: “Worldviews Respond to Joy and Pain.”	5-10 minutes
Additional Learning Opportunities: Blog Post: “Seven of the Many Reasons I Am Not an Atheist.” http://www.thebeggarsblog.com/blog/2017/9/28/hjtlgxus7ortyjyxi4e91wx7b2w6p3 Article: “Surprised By Jesus: How He Found Me at Harvard.” http://www.veritas.org/surprised-jesus-harvard/	20-30 minutes

Introduction: Open the class with a discussion about the key elements of a good story. On a whiteboard, sketch four elements that correspond to the big picture worldview questions:

1. The characters (who am I?)
2. The purpose of the characters (why am I here?)
3. The problem they face (what’s wrong with the world?)
4. The solution they encounter (what brings us back to good?)

Have the participants practice applying these worldview questions in story format to a story they know well. For example, ask them to apply these questions to two very opposite characters in Star Wars—Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader. Ask, “How do these characters approach the world differently?”

Once participants have practiced, then apply the elements of story to the concept of worldview. Explain that worldviews are really stories that answer the big questions in life. Before transitioning to the main teaching, watch the brief video from the Veritas Forum—[“A Christian Theologian and Secular Philosopher Share Their Fundamental Beliefs.”](#)

Presentation: Briefly run through the narrative structure of Luther’s Small Catechism. Begin with the first article of the Apostles’ Creed (creation). Connect creation with the Ten Commandments, establishing God’s law as intimately tied to the structure of creation and God’s purposes for human beings. Transition to the second article of the Creed (redemption) with a discussion of our problem (sin) and God’s solution (Christ). Give fuller expression to God’s solution through the work of the Spirit in the third article of the

Creed (sanctification). Then use the third article to draw a connection with the Lord's prayer as an expression of the present struggle and future hope of God's people. Then express all of these elements in the fourfold story format. This will allow participants to visualize the Christian worldview in the catechism as a worldview narrative.

Putting it to Work: Divide the class into two groups (or more, depending on class size). One group will examine the basic beliefs of secularity to sketch out a four-part narrative on poster board. The other group will do the same for Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. As groups near the end of the exercise, ask them to choose a movie title for their worldview story that best describes the narrative. Allow a few minutes to debrief and discuss before moving on to the conclusion of the class.

Process the Teaching: Working either as groups of two or as individuals, invite participants to reflect on the narrative of each worldview. Which one offers the most hope? Which one makes the best sense of what we long for as human beings? Which one is the most consistent? As a concluding activity, ask participants to imagine writing cards from the perspective of each worldview in response to each circumstance:

1. You have experienced the birth of your first child. You are overwhelmed with joy. Who do you thank? What do you say?
2. A friend suffering from severe depression is seriously contemplating suicide. What do you say to convince her that she is valuable and that life is worth living?
3. A friend has lost his wife to cancer one year after getting married. What do you say to offer hope?

The purpose of this exercise is to show how secularity and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism do not offer satisfying responses to life's most joyful and difficult circumstances. Be sure to point out that this does not prove that the Christian faith is true. However, it does show that the Christian worldview offers joy, meaning, and hope that rest in reality. The Christian faith, unlike the other worldview options, makes the most sense of who we are as human beings

APPENDIX 9

DISCIPLESHIP PLAN ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

Discipleship Plan for Incorporating Formal Apologetic Training at OSLC:					
Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The discipleship plan is functional at OSLC.					
The discipleship plan is sustainable at OSLC.					
The communication process leading up to the implementation of the discipleship plan is clear.					
The actions steps proposed for implementing the discipleship plan are realistic.					
The duration of the curriculum is realistic for students.					
The duration of the curriculum is realistic for parent schedules.					

The content of the discipleship plan is age-appropriate for students.					
Overall, the discipleship plan is clearly stated.					

APPENDIX 10

DISCIPLESHIP PLAN RUBRIC SUMMARIES

Table A6. Summary of averages for rubric criterion with adjustments

Criterion	First Score	Post-Revision Score
The discipleship plan is functional at OSLC.	95%	95%
The discipleship plan is sustainable at OSLC.	85%	95%
The communication process leading up to the implementation of the discipleship plan is clear.	85%	100%
The actions steps proposed for implementing the discipleship plan are realistic.	85%	90%
The duration of the curriculum is realistic for students.	90%	95%
The duration of the curriculum is realistic for parent schedules.	90%	100%
The content of the discipleship plan is age-appropriate for students.	90%	95%
Overall, the discipleship plan is clearly stated.	100%	100%

APPENDIX 11

SUMMARY OF THE DISCIPLESHIP PLAN FOR INCORPORATING ONGOING APOLOGETICS INSTRUCTION

In the history of the church, catechesis has been an integral element in the transmission of the Christian faith from one generation to another. This has been particularly true of churches in the LCMS, as well as OSLC as one of its congregations. Given the recent cultural changes that have challenged the veracity of basic Christian truths, the Doctor of Ministry project carried out at OSLC aimed to bridge the gap between the historic tradition of catechesis and the current need for apologetic instruction. In a series of six teaching sessions, the structure and language of Luther’s Small Catechism was used as a framework for teaching apologetics to the post-confirmation youth of OSLC. Based on the research conducted as part of this project, the following recommendations are proposed with the goal of extending the benefit of apologetic catechetical instruction to the post-confirmation youth at OSLC in years to come. A number of observations will be shared, as well as practical recommendations and detailed plans for successfully implementing apologetics instruction into the life of the congregation.

Observation from Research	Recommended Action
<p>Overall, apologetics knowledge and skills among OSLC post-confirmation youth are above average.</p> <p><i>Out of a possible score of 120 for apologetics knowledge, the total average for participants in the pre-assessment was 84, placing the group at an average competency level of 70 percent. Out of a possible score of 120 for apologetics skills, the total average of participants in the pre-assessment was 99, placing the group at an average competency level of 83 percent. Based on this data, it appears that the occasional application of apologetics in sermons and confirmation instruction has made a positive impact.</i></p>	<p>In the future, formal apologetic instruction should be carried out among the post-confirmation youth of OSLC.</p>

Observation from Research	Recommended Action
<p>Contrary to expectation, the teaching sessions did not appear to make a significant impact on the apologetics knowledge of OSLC post-confirmation youth.</p> <p><i>While there was a small increase in apologetics knowledge (from 84 to 87, resulting in an overall increase of 3 percent), this increase was too small to be considered statistically significant. Given that confidence in apologetics skills did increase significantly (see below), at first glance the minimal increase in knowledge is perplexing. One would expect that apologetics skills would increase alongside an increase in apologetics knowledge. Although it cannot be stated with certainty, one possibility is that the brief amount of time spent on a wide range of apologetics topics had the unintended effect of creating more questions for students than they previously had about the topics discussed, or the effect of revealing that the participants did not know as much as they previously estimated in the pre-assessment. Furthermore, the growth in confidence in apologetics skills alongside the minimal increase in knowledge may be due to participants learning to use knowledge they previously had in a more confident manner.</i></p>	<p>In the future, apologetic instruction should be offered to post-confirmation youth with the goal of increasing apologetics knowledge. However, this instruction should be more in-depth than the teaching sessions in the project. Rather than trying to cover a wide range of apologetics topics in six weeks, it is proposed that each semester post-confirmation youth would be taught a series of four in-depth sessions on a single apologetic topic.</p> <p>Furthermore, it is proposed that apologetics material that was not covered due to the brevity of the project would be covered in these more in-depth sessions.</p>
<p>Confidence in apologetics skills increased among the post-confirmation youth of OSLC.</p> <p><i>Following the implementation of the 6 teaching sessions, the average post-assessment score was 108, resulting in an overall increase of 7 percent. By applying a t-test to the pre and post score averages, it was demonstrated that this increase was</i></p>	<p>In the future, students should be taught to convert their apologetics knowledge into apologetics skills. Teaching sessions designed to increase apologetics knowledge should also strive to incorporate elements that will allow students to put into practice what they learn.</p>

<p><i>not due to chance alone, therefore strongly suggesting that the increase in skills was directly related to the teaching sessions. As noted above, it seems odd that a significant increase in skills would occur alongside a nominal increase in knowledge. However, this may be due to participants growing in their ability to utilize the knowledge they already possessed.</i></p>	
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Proposal: Based on the research and conclusions of the project, it is proposed that the content of the ministry project be divided into six different four-part series of teaching sessions, thus covering a range of apologetic topics over four years. It is also proposed that these teaching sessions incorporate topics and skills that were not addressed in the project due to its brevity.

Each series of teaching sessions will last four weeks. Each series will go deeper into specific apologetic topics. Like the ministry project, the sessions will follow the language and structure of Luther’s Small Catechism as the basis for apologetics discussions and will also aim to increase apologetics knowledge and skills in the areas of presuppositional and evidential apologetics. Classes will aim to better increase apologetics knowledge by covering apologetic topics in-depth and from multiple angles and will aim to increase apologetics skills by actively applying apologetics knowledge through active participation and role-playing during classes.

These classes will be offered as part of the normally scheduled high school Bible study on Sunday mornings, and will be taught by one of the pastors at OSLC or a qualified member. In order to ensure that the plan is sustainable at OSLC, Pastor John will prepare lesson outlines for the sessions in advance of the first series of sessions, as well as create short videos that discuss the topics in each session. Furthermore, Pastor John will select a group of OSLC members who will prepare to assist in the teaching of the sessions. Each of the topics will include reading resources to assist members as they prepare to teach.

In order that post-confirmation youth at OSLC would grow deeper in their apologetics skills and knowledge, the following schedule is proposed:

Date and Series Topic	In-Depth Session Topic	Curriculum and Resources
Fall 2018 The First Article of the Creed: God and Science	The purpose, limits, and proper role of science	Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John

Date and Series Topic	In-Depth Session Topic	Curriculum and Resources
Fall 2018 The First Article of the Creed: God and Science	God, science, and the beginning of the universe	Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John Resource: Chapters 1 and 2 of Warner, Wallace J. <i>God's Crime Scene</i> . Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2015.
Fall 2018 The First Article of the Creed: God and Science	God, science, and the beginning of life	Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John Resource: Chapter 3 of Warner, Wallace J. <i>God's Crime Scene</i> . Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2015.
Fall 2018 The First Article of the Creed: God and Science	God, science, and the origin of consciousness	Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John Resource: Chapter 5 of Warner, Wallace J. <i>God's Crime Scene</i> . Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2015.
Spring 2019 The Second Article of the Creed: The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection	Common myths about the resurrection of Jesus	Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John Resource: Parts 3 and 4 of Habermas, Gary and Michael Licona. <i>The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus</i> . Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004.

Date and Series Topic	In-Depth Session Topic	Curriculum and Resources
<p>Spring 2019</p> <p>The Second Article of the Creed: The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection</p>	<p>Was the tomb really empty?</p>	<p>Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John</p> <p>Resource: Chapter 3 of Craig, William Lane. <i>The Son Rises</i>. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000.</p>
<p>Spring 2019</p> <p>The Second Article of the Creed: The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection</p>	<p>Did Jesus really appear to his disciples alive?</p>	<p>Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John</p> <p>Resource: Chapter 4 of Craig, William Lane. <i>The Son Rises</i>. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000.</p>
<p>Spring 2019</p> <p>The Second Article of the Creed: The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection</p>	<p>How do we account for the birth and growth of the early church?</p>	<p>Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John</p> <p>Resource: Chapter 5 of Craig, William Lane. <i>The Son Rises</i>. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000.</p>
<p>Fall 2019</p> <p>The Third Article of the Creed: The Reliability of the Word of God</p>	<p>The reliability of the Old Testament</p>	<p>Curriculum: “How We Got the Old Testament” from <i>How We Got the Bible</i> DVD Series by Timothy Paul Jones</p> <p>Resource: Chapters 2 and 3 of Jones, Timothy J. <i>How We Got the Bible</i>. Torrance, CA: Rose, 2015.</p>

Date and Series Topic	In-Depth Session Topic	Curriculum and Resources
<p>Fall 2019</p> <p>The Third Article of the Creed: The Reliability of the Word of God</p>	<p>The reliability of the New Testament</p>	<p>Curriculum: “How We Got the New Testament” from <i>How We Got the Bible</i> DVD Series by Timothy Paul Jones</p> <p>Resource: Chapter 4 of Jones, Timothy J. <i>How We Got the Bible</i>. Torrance, CA: Rose, 2015.</p>
<p>Fall 2019</p> <p>The Third Article of the Creed: The Reliability of the Word of God</p>	<p>The reliability of the canon</p>	<p>Curriculum: “How the Books of the New Testament Were Chosen” from <i>How We Got the Bible</i> DVD Series by Dr. Timothy Paul Jones</p> <p>Resource: Chapter 5 of Jones, Timothy J. <i>How We Got the Bible</i>. Torrance, CA: Rose, 2015.</p>
<p>Fall 2019</p> <p>The Third Article of the Creed: The Reliability of the Word of God</p>	<p>The reliability of the transmission of the text</p>	<p>Curriculum: “How the New Testament Was Copied” from <i>How We Got the Bible</i> DVD Series by Dr. Timothy Paul Jones</p> <p>Resource: Chapter 6 of Jones, Timothy J. <i>How We Got the Bible</i>. Torrance, CA: Rose, 2015.</p>
<p>Spring 2020</p> <p>The Ten Commandments: Morality in the Christian Worldview</p>	<p>The First Commandment: God at the center</p>	<p>Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John</p> <p>Resource: Chapter 2 of Kolb, Robert. <i>The Christian Faith</i>. St. Louis: Concordia, 1993.</p>

Date and Series Topic	In-Depth Session Topic	Curriculum and Resources
<p>Spring 2020</p> <p>The Ten Commandments: Morality in the Christian Worldview</p>	<p>The Second and Third Commandment: God at the center.</p>	<p>Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John</p> <p>Resource: Chapter 6 of Kolb, Robert. <i>The Christian Faith</i>. St. Louis: Concordia, 1993.</p>
<p>Spring 2020</p> <p>The Ten Commandments: Morality in the Christian Worldview</p>	<p>The Fifth Commandment: God’s gift of life.</p>	<p>Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John</p> <p>Resource: Chapter 7 of Pearcey, Nancy. <i>Total Truth</i>. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.</p>
<p>Spring 2020</p> <p>The Ten Commandments: Morality in the Christian Worldview</p>	<p>The Sixth Commandment: God’s gift of sex.</p>	<p>Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John</p> <p>Resource: Chapter 7 of Pearcey, Nancy. <i>Total Truth</i>. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.</p>
<p>Fall 2020</p> <p>The First Commandment/Creed: The Christian Worldview</p>	<p>What’s a Worldview? An overview of worldviews.</p>	<p>Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John</p> <p>Resource: Introduction and chapter 1 of Pearcey, Nancy. <i>Total Truth</i>. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.</p>

Date and Series Topic	In-Depth Session Topic	Curriculum and Resources
Fall 2020 The First Commandment/Creed: The Christian Worldview	The Christian worldview in comparison with secularity	Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John Resource: Chapter 5 of Pearcey, Nancy. <i>Total Truth</i> . Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.
Fall 2020 The First Commandment/Creed: The Christian Worldview	The Christian worldview in comparison with Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.	Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John Resource: Part 1 of Creasy-Dean, Kenda. <i>Almost Christian</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
Fall 2020 The First Commandment/Creed: The Christian Worldview	The Christian worldview in comparison with Eastern spirituality.	Curriculum: Lesson plan and video provided by Pastor John Resource: Chapter 1 of Keller, Timothy. <i>The Reason for God</i> . New York: Penguin, 2008.
Spring 2021 Putting Apologetics into Practice	Learning the “Columbo Tactic”—Part 1	Curriculum: “Getting You into the Driver’s Seat: Learning the Columbo Tactic” from the <i>Tactics</i> DVD series and study guide by Grek Koukl Resource: Part 1 of Koukl, Greg. <i>Tactics</i> . Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Date and Series Topic	In-Depth Session Topic	Curriculum and Resources
Spring 2021 Putting Apologetics into Practice	Learning the “Columbo Tactic”—Part 2	Curriculum: “Refining the Columbo Tactic” from the <i>Tactics</i> DVD series and study guide by Grek Koukl Resource: Part 1 of Koukl, Greg. <i>Tactics</i> . Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
Spring 2021 Putting Apologetics into Practice	Learning the “Columbo Tactic”—Part 3	Curriculum: “Perfecting the Columbo Tactic” from the <i>Tactics</i> DVD series and study guide by Grek Koukl Resource: Part 1 of Koukl, Greg. <i>Tactics</i> . Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
Spring 2021 Putting Apologetics into Practice	Learning to “Take-the-Roof-Off”	Curriculum: “The Taking-the-Roof-Off Tactic” from the <i>Tactics</i> DVD series and study guide by Grek Koukl Resource: Chapter 10 of Koukl, Greg. <i>Tactics</i> . Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Goal of the Plan: The overall goal of this proposed discipleship plan is that the post-confirmation youth of OSLC will continually encounter catechetical material that is integral to their Christian faith, but also in such a way that they are able to articulate and defend these basic Christian beliefs to those who are curious or hostile to the faith in their high school and college years and beyond.

Schedule of the Plan: The proposed schedule of the discipleship plan integrates apologetics topics into the language and structure of the continual catechesis that is practiced in the worship and teaching of OSLC. Offering one apologetic topic each semester allows both an in-depth examination of the topic during a timeframe of four weeks, and also allows for plenty of other important aspects of discipleship to be taught and practiced during the course of the year. This schedule also allows pastors plenty of time to plan, prepare, and communicate the classes to parents and students. Since the

classes will take place during the normal high school Bible hour, they will be accessible to high school students.

Sustainability of the Plan: Before the cycle of lessons begin in the fall of 2017, Pastor John will create lesson outlines and brief videos that discuss the session topics. These lesson outlines and videos will serve as the basis for teaching in the future, as well as the training of OSLC members to teach alongside the pastors. Shortly after the approval of the plan, Pastor John will recruit three to four qualified members of OSLC—preferably parents of confirmation or high school youth—who will undergo training to teach the sessions in the future. This will ensure that the plan is functional in the future if the pastors are unable to teach the lessons, or if one or both of the pastors no longer serve at OSLC.

Communication of the Plan: Each semester, the series topic and specific sessions will be included in the OSLC senior youth calendar of Sunday morning Bible study topics. In order to ensure maximum participation, post-confirmation youth and parents will be sent an email encouraging participation a month prior to the start of the teaching sessions, and announcements will be made Sunday morning after worship. Additionally, Facebook™, Instagram™, and text messaging will be used to communicate the sessions and encourage participation.

Action Steps to Implement the Plan: In order to successfully implement the discipleship plan, the following steps will be followed:

1. Shortly after the approval of the plan, Pastor John will recruit three to four qualified members of OSLC—preferably parents of confirmation or high school students—who will be trained to assist in teaching the future apologetics classes.
2. Shortly after the approval of the plan, Pastor John will begin writing the lesson plans for each apologetics class. The goal will be to complete these by the end of the summer of 2018.
3. Shortly after the approval of the plan, Pastor John will begin recording the short videos that reflect the content of the lesson plans for each apologetics class. The videos will be recorded on a smart phone, uploaded to YouTube™, and then made available as links on the church's website. The goal will be to complete these by the end of the summer of 2018.
4. At the beginning of each semester, the four teaching sessions for each apologetics topic will be added to the schedule of Sunday morning Bible study topics for senior youth.
5. Three months prior to the start of each series of teaching sessions, Pastor John will write the final copy of the four teaching sessions.
6. Three months prior to the start of each series of teaching sessions, Pastor John will meet with the OSLC teaching assistants to train and equip them for the upcoming classes. Depending on the schedules and preparation of the pastors and teaching assistants, dates will be assigned for leading the classes. Teaching assistants may assist with elements of the classes, or, depending on their level of confidence and preparation, may lead the classes.

7. One month prior to the start of the teaching sessions, I will communicate the sessions to parents and post-confirmation youth through an email, the newsletter schedule, and verbal announcements at Sunday worship. Announcements will also be made over social media and text messaging.
8. As each of the four sessions are taught, I will record the classes and upload them for future reference. The sessions will be recorded on a smart phone, uploaded to YouTube™, and posted on the church's website for future reference.
9. After the conclusion of each cycle of teaching, students will have the opportunity to fill out a brief anonymous survey. The survey will allow students to communicate strengths and weaknesses of the classes, as well as questions that may remain or have arisen from the sessions.
10. After each of the four sessions are taught in each cycle, I will review the lesson plans, make any needed changes on the basis of the student surveys, and then print the lessons plans for future use.

Duration of the Plan: Each apologetic topic will last four weeks. This will allow students to examine an apologetics topic in detail, but not to the point of boredom or redundancy. Furthermore, the four sessions scheduled at two times each year will allow OSLC youth to study other topics integral to their discipleship. Finally, once the six apologetics topics have been taught over the course of three years, the curriculum will repeat. This cycle of apologetic instruction repeated each three years will allow for continual apologetic catechesis among the post-confirmation youth of OSLC, thus preparing them to articulate and defend the Christian worldview in future years. The cycle allows for one year of repetition during four years of high school in order that the plan is realistic in its duration, as well as so that students can experience two of the session topics of teaching after three years of cognitive development in high school. In other words, students who experience a certain apologetic topic their freshman year of high school may interact with that topic much differently during their senior year.

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ABSTRACT

USING LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM AS A FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING APOLOGETICS TO POST-CONFIRMATION YOUTH AT OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SOUTH WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT

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The purpose of the project is to apply Luther's Small Catechism (LSC) as a framework for teaching apologetics to post-confirmation youth at Our Savior Lutheran Church (OSLC) in South Windsor, Connecticut. The application of Luther's Small Catechism as an apologetic tool involves teaching a curriculum that uses its structure and language to present presuppositional and evidential apologetics arguments.

Chapter 1 explains the secular ministry context of OSLC, as well as the rationale, purpose, goals, research methodologies, definitions, and delimitations of the project. Chapter 2 examines the apologetic purpose behind Luther's writing of the Catechism. Chapter 3 demonstrates how the structure and language of the Catechism provide a framework for teaching presuppositional and evidentialist apologetics in response to secularity and Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Chapter 4 presents the curriculum and lesson plans. Chapter 5 offers a summary of the project implementation, reflections, and suggestions for further development and study.

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