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Abbreviations Used in the Right Margin:

Books of the Holy Bible

Biblio = See Bibliography at end

Am Ed = American Edition of Luther's Works

Apol(ogy) of the Augsburg Confession

LC = Large Catechism

LP = Lord's Prayer in LC

SC = Small Catechism

I. In order to pray well, we always need to begin with the Scriptural teaching on prayer.

1. Since this is meant to be a practical paper on prayer, the steering committee is not looking for "the entire theology of prayer." But unless God reaches into our hearts with his light and truth, we never come to his "holy hill." So the most practical incentive for renewal in prayer is to immerse ourselves continually in the doctrine: the words of Jesus are spirit and life, and his Gospel is power. Were we truly to grasp the doctrine and teach it new and fresh in each generation, we and all God's people would be panting to pray! Alas, here it holds true also, that now we "see through a glass darkly."

Ps 43,
3Joh 6,
63Ps 42,
1.21 Cor 13,
12

2. God's Word commands us to "pray continually" and promises that a believer's prayer is powerful and effective. And our Savior said, "If you ask anything in my name, I will do it." No wonder then, that the Apology of the Augsburg Confession asserts that the first fruit of repentance is prayer. Not to pray is the same as not to believe. Prayer and faith are two sides of one coin. This is what a renewing church must always be taught richly. This is what you are doing and must continue to do in sermons, Bible studies, and by example.

1 Thess
5, 17

Jas 5, 16

John 14,
14Apol XII,
174LC, LP,
58

3. But for the practical purposes of this paper we should consider the beautiful teaching of the Large Catechism. In the Introduction to the Lord's Prayer, Martin Luther sets forth the dynamic from which Christian prayer springs. It is threefold:

LP 22

command
promise
form

4. This agrees with Luther's arrangement of the Catechism itself, and it explains why he considered the Catechism to be the foundation of the devotional life, even Christian life as such:

It was not unintended in God's particular ordering of things that a lowly Christian person who might be unable to read the Bible should nevertheless be obligated to learn and know the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Indeed, the total content of Scripture and preaching and everything a Christian needs to know is quite fully and adequately comprehended in these three items.

Personal
Prayer
Book,
Am Ed
43, 13

5. What does Luther mean by this? He is saying that it is from God's command that we learn how far we have fallen, and that because of our sinful negligence in prayer we have incurred God's wrath and displeasure. But in the second instance, the promise of God (based on the works of God for us, as confessed in the Creed) proclaims to us that for Jesus' sake God is pleased to answer our prayers, and that he does not look upon our person, or any man's person, but he remembers his Word and good pleasure toward us in Christ!
- LP 9
LP 19
SC, 5th
Pet
6. And the third part, the form, is that
- in addition to this commandment and promise,
God takes the initiative and puts into our mouths
the very words we are to use.
- LP 22
- God knows what we need, and in praying the Lord's Prayer we never doubt that we have hit the mark. For here the Spirit of His Son cries in our hearts, "Abba, Father."
- LP 22.23
Gal 4,6
- In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.
- Rom 8,
26.27
7. It may astonish us that the form of prayer should have such importance. But the first disciples understood that a prophet or rabbi would share with his disciples a particular way to pray, a way which was expressive of the master's teaching and which bound the disciples together with their master and with each other. The Lord's Prayer distinguishes Jesus' disciples both from other Jewish groups (that is, the hypocrites) and from the Gentiles.
- Biblio:
NTD 3,
143.144
- And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites...that they may be seen by men...And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do...Pray, then, like this: OUR FATHER...
- Mt 6,
5.7.9.
- Furthermore, the Lord's Prayer brought the disciples along from the very threshold of the Messianic age (where they were as disciples of John the Baptist) into the prayer-practice of that Messianic age itself:
- Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.
- Lk 11,1
8. The Our Father, then, is the quintessential form of Christian prayer, permitted only to a Christian and because he is a Christian. We pray it as the Body of Christ, in the name and person of our Head: how else could we call God "our Father"? And for this reason the prime work of the Holy Spirit in every Christian is to teach him this prayer!
- Apol XII,
174
9. A week ago, at the Martin Luther Home, I was invited to visit a dying

man by his daughter. He said he had been a Lutheran but changed to the Roman church. Did he desire a priest? No. Did he wish me to pray for him? No, he had his own prayer. I asked him to pray it. And so he did: "Our Father, who art in heaven..." Believe me, the centuries fell away, and there stood that anonymous disciple who said: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

10. If you have any doubts about the centrality of the Lord's Prayer in the true devotional life, try this sometime when you are in great distress: bring your need to God in prayer, and then pray the Our Father with this need in mind. Immediately you will see that your petition is channeled into God's will and purpose for you and your need, and so you will be certain that your prayer is in accordance with God's will. Our prayers are all "baptized" in the Lord's Prayer.

LP 22.23

To this day I suckle at the Lord's Prayer like a child, and as an old man eat and drink from it and never get my fill. It is the very best prayer, even better than the Psalter, which is so very dear to me.

A Simple
Way to
Pray,
1535,
Am Ed
43,200

11. Luther's theology of prayer, then, is very practical and very baptismal. It begins with the command to pray, by which we daily die our baptismal death with Christ: the Law works contrition. Then comes God's gracious promise to restore us to our baptismal birthright: the Gospel assures us that we dare to pray as forgiven children of God, co-heirs with Christ. And finally, the renewing Spirit (given us in Holy Baptism) daily forms the very words of true prayer in our hearts and lips; for

SC,
Bapt
4thly

SC,
Address

Titus
3,5

When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...

Rom 8,
15-17

This is the doctrine which makes the devotional life inevitable, and yes, always new for the Christian.

II. From a practical standpoint it is also useful to know something about the history of God's people at prayer.

12. Everyone is familiar with the account of how Abraham interceded for Lot, and of how Jacob, at a time of crisis, wrestled with the Lord in prayer all the night through. But it is in the Law of Moses that a rich devotional life is actually prescribed:

Gn 18,
16-33;
32,22-
30

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind

Dt 6,
6-9

them on your foreheads. Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates.

13. And from the Book of Psalms we learn just how deeply entrenched the devotional life was, at least for some of the faithful: The believer meditates on God's law day and night; God's praise is continually on his lips; he calls for help by day and cries out before God in the night; he sings aloud of God's steadfast love in the morning, and by night "his song is with me." It is good
- Psalms:
1,2
34,1
88,1
59,16
42,8
92,2
- to proclaim your love in the morning
and your faithfulness every night!
14. Note that special times of the day, like sunrise and sunset, evoked prayer and praise, even for those living at the far horizons:
- Where morning dawns and evening fades,
you call forth songs of joy.
- 65,8b
- Psalms 3 and 4 seem to have been written especially for morning and evening, respectively.
- 3,5
4,8
15. But midday, too, is a time to turn one's thoughts to God:
- Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he will hear my voice.
- 55,7
- And at other times: Perhaps as David grew older and slept less soundly, heretofore unexpected opportunities for prayer arose:
- On my bed I remember you; I think of you
through the watches of the night.
- 63,6
- Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn!
- 108,2
16. Asaph, too, "stretched out untiring hands at night." But the all-time shining example of the meditative believer is the composer of Psalm 119:
- 77,2
- I remember your name in the night, O Lord.
At midnight I rise to give you thanks...
I rise before dawn and cry for help.
My eyes stay open through the watches of the
night, that I may meditate on your promises.
- Ps 119:
v.55
v.62
v.147
v.148
- And finally the rubric which will impress itself upon the Christian ages:
- Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws.
- v.164
17. During the exile the regulated life of prayer continued, even without the support of the daily round of Temple services:
- Daniel went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.
- Dan 6,1
18. We come to the example of our Lord Jesus, who as our Head dwells in us and also presents our prayers at the right hand of God together with his own. We have seen that he taught the disciples to pray in a particular way. He

also prayed his own personal prayers when they and others were present, as at his baptism, before Peter's confession, in the Garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross. At other times he dismissed his disciples and went off to pray "often in lonely places," and spent long hours of the night in prayer to God, in the desert (Mark 1,35 - or "solitary place") or in the hills (Mark 6,46). Before choosing his twelve apostles he went out to a mountain to pray, and continued all night until morning in prayer to God. We can confidently say that the Psalms were in his heart, for he uttered them from the cross. His prayers were also intercessory; $\bar{\sigma}$ for Peter and for the whole church, Luke 22,32 and John 17.

Lk 3,21
9,18
Mk 14,32
Lk 23,46
Lk 5,16
Lk 6,12
Ps 22 at
Mk 15,
34
Ps 31 at
Lk 23,
46

19. The evidence from the Book of Acts shows us that the early believers continued the practice of daily personal prayer, supported at times by the "hours" of prayer being observed at the Temple. "Hour" here means, of course, not sixty minutes but a certain time of the day. They were all

Together at the third hour (9:00) on Pentecost.
Peter at Joppa withdrew to the house-roof in order to pray at the sixth hour (noon).
Peter and John were going to the Temple for prayer at the ninth hour (3:00) when they encountered the crippled man.
Cornelius the God-fearer was praying at the ninth hour when the angel appeared to him at Caesarea.
Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns at midnight in the jail at Philippi.

Acts:
2,1.15
10,1
3,1
10,3
16,25

20. On the other hand, the believers were also taught to pray in every circumstance of life:

Is any among you suffering? Let him pray.
Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise
(Greek "psalleteo," usually = "chant a Psalm")

James
5,13

21. During the first three centuries of the Christian era, especially after the destruction of the Temple, daily prayers continued to be personal and domestic. (They did, of course, gather on the Lord's Day for Word and Sacrament, often at great risk.) An early Christian catechism, the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" (A.D. 110), directed that every believer should pray the Lord's Prayer three times a day, as well as fast on Wednesday and on Friday, the day of the Lord's death. Other leaders taught their classes to follow the apostles in observing the three "Temple" hours for prayer, at 9:00, noon, and 3:00, in addition to morning and evening prayer. In the early 3rd century, these times were connected to the events of the first Good Friday. Soon, midnight was mentioned, and sunrise, and so "watch" was to be kept, whether the Lord came back

Biblio:
Paquier
page 207
Acts 20,
7
Biblio:
Didache
8
Biblio:
Tertul-
lian25
Biblio:
Sheph-
erd 71

In the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn.

Mark 13,
35-37

22. When in the Fourth Century the church finally had peace, daily morning and evening prayer services began to be held publicly to support and nurture the prayer-life of Christians. And a late Saturday service called "Vigil" was held before Sundays and high festivals.

Biblic
Paquie
207.
208.

23. Since the church now enjoyed imperial favor, the heathen flocked to convert.

The difference between church and world began to blur, causing some earnest believers to leave society to become hermits. Needless to say, these refugees from "life" cultivated the devotional life. When they later banded together as monks and nuns, they adopted heavy communal prayer schedules, such as that of St. Benedict (529 A.D.):

1. Nocturns (Matins) began at midnight
Lauds followed immediately
2. Prime at rising
3. Terce (third hour) at 9:00 a.m.
4. Sext (sixth hour) at noon
5. None (ninth hour) at 3:00 p.m.
6. Vespers (sunset in the west) in the evening
7. Compline (day completed) at bedtime

Biblic
Davies
78

Cf. Ps
119,
164!

24. The main thrust of these "hour services" was devotional rather than instructional. The entire Psalter was prayed in the span of a week, together with brief Scripture readings, followed by canticles and prayers.

Biblic
Paquie
209

25. At some later time the parish clergy were also obliged to pray these "seven canonical hours." His pre-Reformation use of these prayers no doubt gave Martin Luther his intimate acquaintance with the Psalter. It was also a burden. If for some reason a priest did not read the prayers at the appointed time or day, he was bound morally to make it up. He might spend a whole afternoon reading last week's prayers (7 x 7), all at one sitting. This was prayer being done for the sake of the work itself, ex opere operato; and in the medieval mind it was meritorious before God, just because it was done.

Biblic
Davies
78

Public
Worsh
Am Ec
53, 11

Now that (pastors) are free from the useless, bothersome babbling of the Seven Hours, it would be fine if every morning, noon, and evening they would read, instead, at least a page or two from the Catechism, the Personal Prayer Book, the New Testament, or something else from the Bible and would pray the Lord's Prayer for themselves and their parishioners. In this way they might show honor and gratitude to the Gospel, through which they have been delivered from so many burdens and troubles, and they might feel a little shame because, like pigs and dogs, they remember no more of the Gospel than this rotten, pernicious, shameful, carnal liberty.

LC, 1s
Prefa
3

26. For the lay people, especially the educated and the nobility, simplified personal prayer books were produced, often in handy pocket-size and handsomely bound and illuminated. These were actually inferior to the regular "hour" books, because these contained fewer Psalms but more profuse prayers and religious exercises for various days, festivals, and occasions; catalogues of sins, virtues and gifts of the Spirit (!); and also prayers to the saints with guarantees attached for generous indulgences and ample protection in various life-crises.

Am Ed
43,5f1

27. When Luther came back from his seclusion at the Wartburg, he found that radical reformers were sweeping away the whole structure of worship and prayer, while the conservatives were fighting for the status quo. So he rather quickly busied himself in casting liturgy and prayer into an evangelical mode.

Concerning
the Order of
Public
Worship,
1523
Am Ed
53,11

The (daily) service now in common use everywhere goes back to genuine Christian beginnings, as does the office of preaching.

28. He suggested, therefore, that daily matins be held at 4 or 5 in the morning, vespers at 5 or 6 in the evening, and, if anyone desired it, also a prayer service after lunch. He envisioned that the whole congregation would attend on Sunday evening, and at least the priests, teachers, and pupils during the week, together with a small nucleus of members. There were to be about an hour in length.

29. These services were to be continued in Latin, as exercises for the pupils (in the hope that some would become pastors or teachers.) The Psalms were reduced in number, but now the whole Scripture should be read in the course of one year (lectio continua). Because these services were in Latin, there should always be comment and exposition, so all could benefit. Such daily services were actually begun in Wittenberg on March 23, 1523. For quite a few years the Lutheran churches continued such daily services, especially in the cities. Our Lutheran Hymnal matins and vespers approximately represent the typical public prayer services, which were provided in the various Church Orders of the provincial Lutheran churches.

Biblio
Jung-
kuntz
BNK
passi

30. In England Archbishop Cranmer provided for daily morning prayer and evening prayer. A month was given, in the Anglican prayer book, to reading through the whole Psalter. These services continue down to the present day in the Church of England, by force of law.

Biblio
Paquie
209

31. Perhaps our Reformer foresaw that no Wisconsin Synod pastor would be able to sustain daily public prayer services and still faithfully execute all mandated programs, workshops, support groups, and organizational meetings of The Compleat Pastor in the XXth Saeculum. At any rate he graciously

published "A Personal Prayer Book" in 1522. In this book he teaches Everyman how to pray personally on a daily basis. Surprisingly, it is not a collection of prayers to be read at various times and occasions! The book is rather an example of how he (Luther) uses the Commandments, Creed, and Lord's Prayer for self-examination, assurance, and confident prayer, i.e., Law, Gospel, form. To this end he also included "sermons" related to the devotional life, as well as seven penitential Psalms and, in later editions, parts of his newly-translated New Testament as well as fifty full-page woodcuts on Bible history. The "Personal Prayer Book" was an instant success among Lutherans.

Am Ed
43,3
"Gebet-
büch-
lein"

32. In 1529 Luther issued his "Small Catechism" in an illustrated booklet. He considered this his life-time achievement in the devotional field. Although it was to be used for instructing the young, it was by no means a minor dogmatics book. It contains the very substance of our living faith in a devotional style unsurpassed at any time or place. Luther himself regarded it as the foundation of the evangelical devotional life:

Many regard the Catechism as a simple, silly teaching which they can absorb and master at one reading. After reading it once they toss the book into a corner as if they are ashamed to read it again...

LC,
Larger
Pre-
face 5

As for myself, let me say that I too am a doctor and a preacher -- yes, and as learned and experienced as any of those who act so high and mighty. Yet I do as a child who is being taught the Catechism. Every morning, and whenever else I have time, I read and recite word for word the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Psalms, etc. I must still read and study the Catechism daily, yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the Catechism, and I do it gladly.

LC,
Larger
Pre-
face
7-8

33. That Luther persisted in his evaluation of the Catechism (alongside the Psalter) as the basis for personal prayer is demonstrated by a booklet he published in 1535 for his barber, Peter Beskendorf. It is entitled, A Simple Way to Pray. He writes:

Am Ed
43,
193

When I have become cool and joyless in prayer, I take my little Psalter, hurry to my room, or if it be the day and hour for it, to the church where a congregation is assembled, and, as time permits, I say quietly to myself and word-for-word the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and if I have some time, some words of Christ or Paul, or some Psalms, just as a child might do...

When your heart has been warmed by such recitation to yourself and is intent upon the matter, kneel or stand with your hands folded and your

Am Ed
43,
194

eyes toward heaven and speak or think as briefly as you can:

"O heavenly Father, I am a poor sinner...do not deserve...but your command...and promise through Christ...so I come obedient and trusting... I pray in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ and with all your saints and Christians on earth, as he has taught, Our Father etc."

Then Peter is to repeat one or several parts of the Lord's Prayer and in his own words enlarge upon it. And so with the other parts of the (memorized) Catechism. Luther gives extensive illustrations of how he himself enlarges on the phrases of the Catechism in his personal prayers to God, but warns

You should also know that I do not want you to (read and) recite all these words (of mine) in your prayer. That would make it nothing but idle chatter and prattle, read word-for-word out of a book as were the rosaries by the laity and the prayers of the priests and the monks.

Am Ed
43,
198

Along the same line Luther also warns against inattention at prayer, as in the case of the priest, who continually interrupted his "reading" of matins with extraneous remarks to his domestic servants. He who prays must be as attentive to that task ("office") as a barber must be to his shaving, lest he cut the customer's throat! Inattention at prayer, Luther also says, is nothing short of tempting God!

Am Ed
43,
198-
199

34. Luther's concept of the devotional life is by no means simplistic. It must have its roots in a living baptismal faith (contrition and repentance), and it eventuates in our own prayer in our own words. But he recognizes the importance of reading or hearing the whole Scripture, of portions or verses from it, and especially of the Book of Psalms, the Bible's own prayer book. The Psalter is to be read in the light of its fulfillment in Christ, of course. In the time of David, the enemies threatened the covenant people, the bearers of the promise. From the perspective of the New Testament, the foemen are sin, death, and the devil. To pray for the defeat of the designs of the world and our sinful flesh is not, therefore, inconsistent with the prayer to forgive our enemies. The Psalter, furthermore, is better than a thousand pages of examples.

SC,
3rd
Pet.
Amen.

The Psalter ought to be a precious and beloved book, if for no other reason than this: it promises Christ's death and resurrection so clearly-- that it might well be called a little Bible. In it is comprehended most beautifully and briefly everything that is in the entire Bible. It is really a fine enchiridion or handbook. In fact, I have a notion that the Holy Spirit wanted to take the trouble himself to compile a short Bible and book of examples of all Christendom or all saints, so that anyone who could not read the whole Bible would here have anyway almost an entire summary of it, comprised in one little book.

Pre-
faces
to the
Old T
Psalte:
Am Ed
35,
254.
257

A human heart is like a ship on a wild sea, driven by the storm winds from the four corners of the world. Here it is stuck with fear and worry about impending disaster; there comes grief and sadness because of present evil. Here breathes a breeze of hope and of anticipated happiness; there blows security and joy in present blessings. These storm winds teach us to speak with earnestness, to open the heart and pour out what lies at the bottom of it...

What is the greatest thing in the Psalter but this earnest speaking amid these storm winds of every kind? Where does one find finer words of joy than in the psalms of praise and thanksgiving? There you look into the hearts of all the saints, as into fair and pleasant gardens, yes, as into heaven itself...

...the Psalter holds you to the communion of saints and away from the sects. For it teaches you in joy, fear, hope, and sorrow to think and speak as all the saints have thought and spoken.

In a word, if you would see the holy Christian Church painted in living color and shape, comprehended in one little picture, then take up the Psalter. There you have a fine, bright, pure mirror that will show you what Christendom is. Indeed you will find in it also yourself and the true gnothi seauton ("Know thyself"), as well as God himself and all creatures.

35. We have seen how the Reformer provided (1) for daily public prayer services, which stressed the annual reading through of the Bible; and (2) for guidance in every Christian's personal, intimate, private prayer to God, basing such prayer on the Psalter and on meditation upon the (memorized) Catechism. Luther also provided for a third kind of prayer, that of the Christian household.

36. Inspiration for Household Prayer came, no doubt, from Moses' instructions to the Israelite housefather in Deuteronomy 6, quoted above in paragraph 12. Luther adapted this material from the "Roman Breviary," the personal prayer book of the clergy. The German title instructs the "housefather" to teach it to his household. A Latin school edition by Johann Saueremann varied this to read "schoolmaster" and "pupils" (Biblio: Göttingen Intro.xxx).

37. Daily Household Prayer was meant to be

**HOW THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY
Should Teach His Household to Bless
Themselves in the Morning and
in the Evening.**

Morning Prayer.

In the morning, when you rise, you shall bless yourself with the holy cross and say:

In the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. If you choose, you may, in addition, say this little prayer:

I thank Thee, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, that Thou hast kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray Thee to keep me this day also from sin and all evil, that all my doings and life may please Thee. For into Thy hands

prayed from memory. Each individual is to "bless himself" upon arising and when going to bed at night. The household is also to pray before and after meals. So depending on how many meals you have (one, two, or three), Luther is providing for from four to eight daily blessings. You will also discover that the Lord's Prayer is said each time (from four to eight times daily!) The daily Lord's Prayer did not include the Doxology in early Lutheran usage, nor is the Doxology given in Luther's Catechism.

38. The individual's morning and evening blessing is in the nature of a Remembrance of Holy Baptism (in Luther's Catechism). It was at our Baptism that the minister delivered over to us the cross-blessing: "Receive the sign of the holy cross both upon the forehead and upon the breast," and then we were baptized "in the name." Thus, following a custom that goes back to the early fathers, the privilege of blessing ourselves with the sign of the holy cross, as well as the praying of the Apostles' Creed, are considered to be (like the Lord's Prayer itself) the property of baptized believers, and only such. Notice the connection in German between "Segen" (blessing) and sigillum, or sign. The words of our Baptism are given in two forms: The usual Catechism translation is from the German edition of the Book of Concord: "In the name of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Our Sunday Liturgy begins with the Latin version of the Book of Concord (in translation): "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost (Spirit)."

39. Following the blessing through Sign and Word, the Catechism directs us to kneel or stand to repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Note that the "little prayer" (which we commonly call "Luther's Morning Prayer") is the one portion of Daily Morning and Evening Prayer which Luther considered optional. Centuries later our Synod presented us with an English edition (translated by Pastor Moussa), which omitted everything that pertains to the Remembrance of Baptism except the words of invocation; but it did include the optional prayer. The result is that it is much more difficult to understand Morning and Evening Prayer as Remembrances of Baptism. Only the German Hymnal of our Synod continued to bring the full text, as given above, for those hangers-on and "last leaves" who might still use the German.

I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the Wicked Foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go to your work with joy, singing a hymn, as the Ten Commandments, or what your devotion may suggest.

[*Oncordia Triglotta*, p. 559.]

Evening Prayer.

In the evening, when you go to bed, you shall bless yourself with the holy cross and say:

In the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. If you choose, you may, in addition, say this little prayer:

I thank Thee, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, that Thou hast graciously kept me this day, and I pray Thee to forgive me all my sins, where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Thy hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the Wicked Foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go to sleep promptly and cheerfully.

Biblio:
Gause-
witz
Cat.ed
1941

Biblio:
ELG,
563.
564.

40. Please observe the structure of the

Catechism's Table Prayers:

Psalmody (before and after the meal)
The Lord's Prayer (before and after)

Brief Blessing
(and after eating:)
Brief Thanksgiving

41. Each of these, before and after, the blessing and the grace, have their reason for being. The blessing consecrates us and the food (1 Timothy 4,4.5:

For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.)

We first ask God to bless us as his believing children, and then to bless the food as good and beneficial for us. Our Synod's new translation seems to curtail this two-fold consecration (of us spiritually and of the food physically) by paraphrasing the original with

"Bless us through these gifts."

In this translation, or rather, paraphrase, there is no mention of a spiritual blessing, but only a physical blessing on us by means of food. And the food itself is not blessed. Still, even without the express words, the food is blessed indirectly. The grace (=thanks), furthermore, acknowledges that we have indeed partaken of the gifts and been satisfied, and due thanks is returned to God for the same, as even a Samaritan would do.

42. After Luther: The subsequent history of daily prayer witnesses the eventual loss, among Lutherans, of the supportive daily public prayer services. Perhaps the fact that soon everyone had his own Bible and could read it contributed to this.

43. As for personal, private, meditative prayer, Lutherans in later centuries preferred to read the meditations of others rather than to pray in their own words. The Catechism as the basis for one's own meditation and prayer was forgotten. Johann Friedrich Stark issued his "Daily Handbook" in 1728. It has to be the "mother of all prayer books." Each devotion ran for pages. This was not, like

HOW THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY

Should Teach His Household to Ask a Blessing and Return Thanks.

[Asking a Blessing.]

The children and servants shall go to the table with folded hands and reverently, and say:

The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord; and Thou givest them their meat in due season; Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

Note.

To satisfy the desire means that all animals receive so much to eat that they are on this account joyful and of good cheer; for care and avarice hinder such satisfaction.

Then the Lord's Prayer, and the prayer here following:

Lord God, Heavenly Father, bless us and these Thy gifts, which we take from Thy bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Returning Thanks.

Likewise also after the meal they shall reverently and with folded hands say:

O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. He giveth food to all flesh; He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. He delighteth not in the strength of the horse; He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.

Then the Lord's Prayer and the prayer here following:

We thank Thee, Lord God, Father; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, for all Thy benefits, who livest and reignest forever and ever. Amen.

[Concordia Triglotta, p. 561.]

Lk 10,
11-19

Biblio:
Starck

Luther's, a manual to teach prayer: this was meant to be prayed word-for-word, and it was. There was a somewhat pietistic, self-centered spirit to it. It ran through reprints (e.g., Milwaukee, Georg Brumder Verlag) and was known and loved by my grandfather's generation. Perhaps to counter the influence of the Stark Hand-Book, the St. Louis Pastoral Conference got up the Evangelisch-Lutherischer Gebets-Schatz (Treasury of Prayer) in 1864 (large print by Concordia 1903). It contained prayers of Luther and other orthodox teachers. Its prayers were also generally lengthy and meant to be read word-for-word.

III. The desire to improve our devotional life implies that we have examined its present condition and have found a need for improvement.

44. Already Martin Luther complained that his "crazy Germans" had become secure and bored, thinking they already knew the Catechism. They were thinking of it as a childish intellectual exercise; Luther meant it to be a living guide to a lifetime of baptismal renewal. He wished that at least the pastors would care enough to "pray the Lord's Prayer for themselves and their parishioners," now that they are free from the "useless, bothersome babbling of the Seven Hours." And the people, he complained, were becoming daily more inept at praying.

LC,
Pref
5.6.

LC,
Pref
3

LC,LP
29

45. Perhaps this was an omen of things to come. In the 1960's an Anglican bishop was assigned to be a guest lecturer on missions at the (Lutheran) University of Hamburg, Germany. Living among Lutherans for a number of years he came to appreciate their scholarly diligence in every branch of theology. They were hard-working and earnest. But when it came to the life of prayer and devotion, he found himself asking whether anyone prays anymore in the Lutheran churches. He knew of very few of his colleagues and students who set apart a regular time each day for prayer and meditation. They could discuss deep concerns of theology late into the night, but either felt no need for a personal devotional life or could not find the "inner spring of self-discipline to overcome the natural human reluctance to be burdened." He adds:

Biblio:
Neill
244

I have always been thankful for the rule which requires me as an Anglican priest to say Morning and Evening Prayer according to the Prayer Book, every day wherever I am.

Neill
245

46. We can appreciate that the Prayer Book provides the Anglican Bishop Neill the kind of devotional discipline we Lutherans lack; but as Evangelical Lutherans we also have learned from the Reformer that the Law and the

Gospel working daily contrition and repentance must be the true spring-board to the Lord's Prayer and all prayer. But are we utterly devoid of the discipline that our sinful flesh needs? If so, too bad; for sinner-saints need discipline on account of the flesh:

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

1 Cor
9,
24-
27.

47. Luther cites two reasons for the neglect of the devotional life: (supposed) lofty learning and lazy bellies. Do either of these faults apply to us?

LC,
Pref
1.9.

48. I do not for one moment believe that we are devoid of a lively spirituality and much fervent personal prayer in our circles. But there is always room for improvement:

You do not have because you do not ask God.
When you ask, you do not receive, because
you ask with wrong motives.

Jas
4,2

We have considered the whole vast history of God's people at prayer. Is there anything we can learn and emulate?

49. On May 28, 1850 the ministerium of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Wisconsin met in Granville. In the afternoon session

The final matter brought up for discussion was about the neglect of home devotions by many families, and accordingly it was brought to the attention of the pastors present that they work with all diligence to have home and family altars established in our congregations.

Biblio:
WELS
Hist.
Inst.
Journal.
vol.9
#1-2,
page 5

Has the prodigious literary output of devotional material by our Synod helped us toward that goal? Does the resulting personal prayer life meet the criteria Luther gave for a genuine personal prayer life, based in our baptismal dying and rising with Christ? Is the goal reached, when we (in our personal, private meditation) read word-for-word the prayers of others? Are the meditations provided in our various published works too "cerebral"? Do they lead us and our people into the Baptismal Law-Gospel "dialectic," and do they result in the flow of personal prayer in and through Christ, our Head?

50. Again, what can we say about the texture of household prayer in our

homes and those of our members? Is it rich in Scripture, refreshing, timeless and warm? In the light of the history of household prayer, with all its wealth and depth, would it not be helpful to break away from the dominance of this one little prayer at table:

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest; and let
these (thy) gifts to us be blessed. Amen.

Can we bring the Scripture, the Psalter, the Catechism more richly into sway than allowed by the almost exclusive use of that one fine prayer?

51. Twenty or so years ago a (metro) study of Lutherans claimed that only 18% of one Lutheran group said even one table prayer. (I'm recalling this entirely from memory, which I don't doubt is faulty). Is this even approximately true in our own fellowship?

52. Can it be true that there is something to improve in our devotional life? Is the contemplative life being quenched in favor of activism (always a timely question)? When we "bring all those people in," will we have a rich life in Christ to share with them and nourish them? But surely this saying of Jesus does not apply to us:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees,
you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea
to win a single convert, and when he becomes
one, you make him twice as much a son of hell
as you are.

Mt 23,
15

IV. We ought to be aware of dangers in trying to
"improve" our prayer-life.

53. It can never hurt to feel smitten by the commandment so that we rue our shortcomings in prayer:

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to
salvation and leaves no regret.

2 Cor
7,10

The gracious promises (that are grounded in what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has done for us) will lift us up again and enable us, for they make us bold to pray as our Head taught us and as He prays in us: Our Father! This is nothing but the Christian life, and every Christian lives it, however imperfectly.

54. But in talking about this and seeking to grow in grace there are dangers, such as pride and divisiveness. Sometime back, an aged, pipe-smoking gentleman at the MLH, who looked and smelled a lot like my own father, lay a-dying; the family had gathered and I was summoned by the staff. He had, in fact, transferred to our local congregation, so I came as his very own pastor. Outside the door waited a daughter and her husband (I wondered why she stayed out there...Why wasn't she at father's side?) When I entered the room, I saw

two other daughters hovering and fussing about the bed. I identified myself and after a seemly interval finally hinted that I might pray. The two daughters were plainly reluctant but said, "It's o.k. if you want to, but we've already prayed for him in our special way." Later conversation with them answered two questions: (1) What was their special way? (Answer: giftedly Spiritual!); and (2) Why did the other daughter stay outside? (Answer: She was intimidated by the spiritual sisters, not being "in" on what "real spiritual prayer" might be.) ... My colleagues, you know that the Lutheran Church is no stranger to periodic outbursts of pietism, super-Christianity, and even neo-pentecostalism. And these morbidities are much occupied with "powerful praying." We should never forget Luther's words:

Therefore you should say: "The prayer I offer is just as precious, holy, and pleasing to God as those of St. Paul and the holiest of saints."

LP,16

55. If I may refer again to that 1850 convocation of the Wisconsin ministerium at Granville: in the minutes the secretary records that the president opened the session with a powerful prayer. The session closed with a mere prayer. The afternoon session opened and closed uneventfully, with plain prayer. But a year later, on June 16, 1851, the ministerium met, this time in Milwaukee, and there was definitely something in the air, because the president did it again: he opened the session with a powerful prayer! At this distance we certainly cannot know what the secretary really had in mind by that description, and we ought to take his words in the kindest possible way. Perhaps he meant that those two particular prayers especially moved him (the secretary) in his feelings (and one has no quarrel with that, so far as it goes.) But the important thing is that our prayers move God, not the bystander, and how could the secretary tell whether the two prayers moved God more than the others? We know what moves God in prayer! St. James assures us that a believer's prayer is powerful and effective -- and that is because of the promise laid hold on by faith in Jesus' name! So as we "talk up" the devotional life, let's not get carried away by exaggerated emotionalism.

Biblic
WEIS
Hist
Inst
Journal
vol 9
1-2
4-7

Jas 5,

56. For this reason it may be better if we do not imitate the prayer trappings of the charismatics: holding hands in a circle, raising our two arms upward, (although this has biblical precedent), pinching our eyes closed, murmuring (while another prays) "Oh, yes, Jesus, sweet Jesus," or filling our prayers with "stalls" such as "Oh, Lord just let us love you," "Just" this and "Just" that... ad nauseam.

57. As far as postures are concerned, our own Lutheran Confessional tradition

provides us all the examples we may ever desire: folding our hands, kneeling and standing, bowing the head or looking up to Heaven or at the image of Christ... Whoever finds these or other gestures in our Confessional tradition helpful in prayer, is free to avail himself of them, I suppose, without suspicion of zealotry. Postures and gestures are not a part of prayer; but current views of the "whole man" as being an intimate mix of body and mind seem to show some wisdom in the old traditions. But if your knees simply won't bend, who cares? Not God.

58. In the other direction, there is the danger that prayer become mechanical. If you have long since or now intend to "enrich" your devotional life, be careful not to misuse God's name by an inattentive ritualism.

The Lord will not hold anyone guiltless
who misuses his name.

Dt 5

Prayer as an act of faith must ever and again rise from the two-fold work of God upon us, in the Law and in the Gospel. This is the constant, clear and urgent guidance given to us in the Large Catechism!

59. This genuineness can be endangered by saying prayers just to fulfil a certain round or quota of prayer. It would make little sense for someone (following the Household Prayer of the Small Catechism) to say when he rises, "I may not have time tonight to pray the Evening Prayer, so I'll bless myself twice now, say two invocations, recite the Creed and the Lord's Prayer each twice, and say both the optional "little prayer" for morning and the optional "little prayer" for evening. Prayer does not avail ex opere operato, on the sheer basis of its being done. If, in the evening, I do not choose to thank God for the day now past, or refuse to acknowledge that I have time for it, then I should own up to that! The prayer schedule is not a matter of conscience, as such.

Where there is true prayer there must be earnestness.

LP 26

A person who wants to pray must present a petition, naming and asking for something which he desires; otherwise it cannot be called prayer.

LP 24

60. The same may be applied to the Table Prayers. In our lifetime we are seeing the quota system take hold, in a manner of speaking, in our table prayers. I think it started at a conference, then spread to various group meetings: the leader calls on the prospective diners to "ask the blessing." Well and good. But then, perhaps doubting that the eaters can take care of returning thanks on their own, he adds at once: "And at the same time let us give thanks." This noxious practice has come home: it is now being done even in some of our families as a kind of spiritual efficiency!

61. But each prayer should have its own reason, not be done to fulfil the quota. If after we eat we do not wish to return thanks for the gifts received, then let us not do it (and then may the Law make us ashamed!) Can't we trust the believers to utter thanks (silently or otherwise) after they have been satisfied?

SC:
Return
ing
Thanks

62. You may think this is a trivial, even amusing example. But it could be a symptom of the same mentality toward prayer which the monks had, who thought God cared at all -- or was even pleased -- when they bunched up a whole week of prayers, just so that the "work was done!" In principis obsta!

Cf. 25
above

V. Nevertheless we must dare, in Christ's name, always to amend our devotional life and to help the Christians in our care to do the same.

63. As a guide to our discussion of possibilities for improvement, let us take Luther's own three-pronged reformatory effort as an outline:

1. supportive (public) prayer services
emphasizing the lectio continua
2. daily household prayer
3. personal private meditation

64. We remember that the Lutheran public prayer services fostered the annual reading through of the Scriptures (the lectio continua), but they included the singing of Psalms, hymns, and canticles. Teachers in our Christian schools have the best shot here. Who knows what lasting impressions may be made on our pupils by the devotions which open and close the school day?

- a. Have you tried any adaptations of Matins and Vespers for this purpose?

The basic outline of these services is:

Psalmody
Scripture Reading
Canticle or Hymn
The Lord's Prayer

- b. Could four or five Psalms be learned and sung from memory (or portions of Psalms)? What about the Venite (TLH p.33f)
- c. Could the "lectio continua" be adapted by choosing an "inner canon" of Bible Books, and reading them year after year?
- d. Could even the youngest children learn to worship and pray using the Scriptures and the best hymns?
- e. Is anyone willing to emphasize singing a few verses of Luther's hymns?
- f. Could choir begin with a sung Psalm and end with the Magnificat or other Canticle?
- g. How much will the traffic bear?

65. The lectio continua at home. The main objective of the public prayer services will have to be carried out at home in our day. And most people will not be able to read the whole Scripture through in a year. It takes about five chapters a day, considering that one misses some days.
- a. Which Books of the Bible could we suggest that our congregation members try to read through, even if only a chapter a day?
 - b. But shouldn't some of us make it our goal to read the entire Scripture through? Is there any value in "once a year"?
 - c. To preserve the Psalms as prayers, rather than "Lessons" we could preface our Scripture reading by quietly reading through a Psalm (or Portion of Psalm 119) as a prayer. This would bring us through the Psalter several times a year.
 - d. What are the possible times of day for Scripture reading in your routine?
- There are many available Reading Schedules. For a schedule that pays some attention to the church year, see appendix A.

66. The second prong of reforming the devotional life is in Daily Household Prayer. Here "household" may mean a single person. This prayer does involve a mild form of discipline because it is done at certain set times in the day. However, the discipline arises from the very nature of our daily routine. Not everyone's will be the same, of course, but it is surprising how obviously it works out:

- I. Upon arising
- II. Before and after breakfast
- III. Before beginning our work
- IV. Before and after the midday meal
- V. After our work is done (Does this count for mothers?)
- VI. Before and after the evening meal
- VII. Before going to sleep

67. Although the time for these prayers is "set" by the routine of the day, the incentive to pray must still come from our Baptism. Here is an example of how (even unknowingly) this takes place for the Christian:

Upon awaking I realize that the Creator has given me another day of life and breath. He deserves the most spontaneous and alert response from me. What an ungrateful and sluggish creature I am to forget this or wish to put it off! Yet God has made me his dear child in Christ, forgiving me this sin also; and so I pray, remembering my baptismal birthright...

68. With a little application you can see how each element of the day's routine can call forth such faith-life resulting in true prayer. Who can begin his job without fear and trembling, or take it on without cleaving to God's promises? Or even contemplate a meal about to be relished without a sense of amazement at God's goodness 'to poor sinners?

69. Daily Household Prayer should be said from memory, without a book. Its purpose is to consecrate the daily round, and to keep the Word always before us. To achieve this goal you must begin modestly and keep building on what you (and your family) already know. It is really amazing how easily children learn to say the prayers along with you, simply through your daily repetition. As a beginning you might use Luther's Morning/Evening Blessings and Table Prayers (as given in the Book of Concord: see paragraphs 35-40 above), and then gradually add other Psalm Portions and Scripture verses you consider fitting. In most households a few brief requests and thanksgivings could be spoken freely by the head of the family and others. Over time be sure to include a wide range of concerns, now one matter and then another, on different days:

nation
church
old
young
the sick and the prisoners, etc.
the erring
your next-door neighbor

Of course, parents will always pray for their children's needs, temporal and eternal. And remember that the chief parts of Luther's Catechism were meant to be repeated often in the Household, that the whole family might learn to pray them. It goes without saying that the age of family members and the circumstances of household life are so variable that each household must follow its own pattern and quantity of prayer. But here is a full-blown example of how Daily Household Prayer might eventually run:

S A M P L E O U T L I N E

I. Upon Arising

In the name +
Apostles' Creed (or on Sunday: Mark 16,1-7)
The Lord's Prayer
Scripture Verse: "Thy mercies, O Lord, are new every morning:
great is thy faithfulness."
Luther's "Little Prayer" for Morning

Lam
3,2

(Alternate Verse for Friday: Galatians 6,14a
Saturday: Psalm 39,4
Sunday: Psalm 118,24)

II. Before Breakfast

Psalm Portion, eventually different on each day
Glory be to the Father and to the Son...

Examples: Sunday: Psalm 84,1-5.10.
Monday: Psalm 103,1-5
Tuesday: Psalm 8,1.2a.3-5.9.
Wednesday: Psalm 46,1-2.7.10.11.
Thursday: Psalm 92,1-4.
Friday: Psalm 51,1-3.9.14.1.
Saturday: Psalm 27,1.4.

After Breakfast

Portion of Luther's Catechism (Sunday: Acts 2,42)
Brief Ex Corde Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

III. Before Beginning Our Work

God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us; that we may know his ways upon earth. God, even our own God bless us; bless us, O God, and grant us thy peace. Amen.

Or, Before a Journey

God's angels are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.

Or, On the Way to Divine Service: Psalm 122,1-3.6-9.

IV. Before and After the Midday Meal

Table Prayers as given in the Book of Concord version of Catechism:

Brief Psalmody (Sunday: TLH # 36v1)

The Lord's Prayer (You will probably omit this.)

Little Prayer

V. After Our Work Is Done

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only-wise God, be honor and glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Or, On Returning from a Journey: Doxology (TLH # 644)

VI. Before the Evening Meal

Hymn Stanza, TIH # 659

Or, to the same melody, this adaptation of the ancient Hymn of Light:

Light of Joy and Holy Glory,
Blessed Jesus, Son of Mary;
Image of the Heavenly Father,
Worthy Son of God, Life-giver:
As the sun fades into darkness,
Vesper lights reflect thy brightness;
Happy voices praise thy merit,
With the Father and the Spirit. Amen.

Friday: TIH # 173v1

Saturday: TIH # 231v1

Sunday: TIH # 500v1

After the Evening Meal

Portion of Luther's Catechism (Sunday: John 1,1.14)

Brief Ex Corde Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

VII. Before Going to Sleep

In the name +

Commendation: Psalm 4,8

Friday: Psalm 139,23.24

Saturday: The Lord Almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end. Amen.

Sunday: Jesus Christ our Savior, everlasting God and Mary's Son, thee we praise evermore. Amen.

After you know Luther's Catechism from memory (the six chief parts and the Table of Duties), you can divide it over a month's time (Mondays through Saturdays) by praying one portion at breakfast and at supper. Ex corde prayer must not ramble; keep it pointed: "Let us pray that God keep our synod and congregation always faithful to God's Word; that John does well at school and enjoys it; that we all remain in true faith in Christ, who commanded us to pray, Our Father..." Finally, remember that Daily Household Prayer should not be written down and read; each family should evolve its own unwritten customs (a la The British Constitution!)

Biblio
XYZ 24
Ps.67
adapt
by Wm
Löhe

Heb 1,
7

1 Tim
1,17

Com-
pline
Early
anti-
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70. The third approach of Luther was to personal, private meditation and prayer ("When I become cool and joyless at prayer" - see section 33 above). Here we follow the example of our Lord, who spent long hours in private communing with God. Prayer such as this suggests itself also at times of **crisis** and dread in our lives, and the method of such meditation, using the Catechism and the Psalter, can be taken from Luther's letter to his barber.
71. You may have noticed that the three types of prayer (lectio continua, household prayer, and private meditation) really require no books except the Bible, and perhaps the Catechism until it is memorized. There hardly would be time, anyway, for any other books of meditation, if we used the Bible and Catechism fully!
72. Conclusion. What tremendous blessings await us and our charges, as we become more constant in prayer! Is this not the most important antidote to our frequent bouts of discouragement? Without diligent prayer, who could escape that sense of emptiness which the moderns style "burn-out"? From where do all good gifts come, but from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1,17)? Therefore let us pray, OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN...

A P P E N D I X " A "

The whole Bible in a Year: 1,089 chapters + 150 Psalms.
If you read on about 300 days of the year, read approx. 3.5 chapters a day.
Also begin with the praying of a Psalm each reading.

ADVENT, CHRISTMAS, EPIPHANY SEASONS: Isaiah, Matthew, Mark, Luke (if poss. Exodus)
LENT: Genesis (the reading will go more slowly here!)
HOLY WEEK: The Letter to the Hebrews. HOLY SATURDAY: The Book of Lamentations
EASTER SEASON TO END OF CHURCH YEAR: John and Rest of N.T.; finish Exodus and Rest of OT.

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