Catechisms in the Kessler Collection

Armin Sidlecki

Luther and many of his fellow reformers strongly emphasized proper theological instruction of the laity. As a result, the sixteenth century witnessed a proliferation of catechetical literature. The invention of printing a few decades earlier had enabled the publication of theological summaries of the liturgy of the mass, lists of the books of the Bible, and notes on biblical teachings, common hymns, or similar material. The Kessler Collection holds one such example of this catechism genre in the sixteenth century. As a result, the sixteenth century witnessed a proliferation of catechetical sermons by Andreas Osiander ([Catechis]mus, oder, Kinder Predig[ts]), all of which conclude with reference to Luther’s Small Catechism, as well as a catechism by Hans Gerhardt (Schone Frag vnd Antwort, Was ain warfuffer Christen der recht Glaub, und seyn Frucht...). Also noteworthy is the 1557 publication of a satirical anti-Catholic catechism by Hermann Hamsing, Der Papisten Handbuchlein fleissig zu mercken vnnd heymlich zu lesen. Though the work is polemical rather than instructive in nature, it attests to the popularity of the catechism genre in the sixteenth century.

Little Prayer Book (Eyn Bett Buchlein . . ., Wittenberg, 1522), which assembles catechetical materials and which Luther encouraged others to consult as they wrote catechisms. The publication of Luther’s Large Catechism and Small Catechism—both in 1529—was prompted directly by the reformer’s visit to the churches of Saxony and his surprise at the ignorance of both laity and clergy with regard to basic Christian teachings. The Kessler Collection holds two prints of this tract (1520 and 1521), as well as a 1520 printing of the first part (the Ten Commandments). Also in the Kessler Collection is Luther’s Heimliche zu lesen). This catechism in expressing the profound truths of the faith can be traced to the success of the Large Catechism, offering them especially for pastors and urging that they be consulted—in the case of the Large Catechism, daily—as faithful summaries of Scripture. The Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection is a repository of rare and valuable documents produced in connection with the Protestant Reformation. The collection now contains more than 2,800 pieces written by Martin Luther, his colleagues, and opponents, and printed during their lifetimes.

Supported by the vision and resources of Lutheran laypeople Richard and Martha Kessler and partners throughout the Southeast, the collection is housed in the Pitts Theology Library of Candler School of Theology. It provides a rich resource for scholars of the Reformation and for clergy and lay who seek to understand the history of the Christian faith, and the capacity of congregations to shape the lives of their youth. Benson’s presentation on the role of the catechism in contemporary religious instruction and spirituality. During the noon hour, Bishop Ronald B. Warren of the Southeastern Synod and Neva Warren, church administrator at Trinity Lutheran Church (Peachtree City, Georgia), will discuss the role of the catechism in contemporary religious instruction and spirituality. During the noon hour, Bishop Ronald B. Warren of the Southeastern Synod and Neva Warren, church administrator at Christ Our Shepherd Lutheran Church (Peachtree City, Georgia), will discuss the role of the catechism in contemporary religious instruction and spirituality.
 Seventy-six books and pamphlets have been added to the Kessler Reformation Collection during the last twelve months, with significant additions of materials by Luther, Melanchthon, Karlstadt, and Urbanus Rhegius. The total collection size is now 2,841. Recognition of its growth and of the importance of its holdings recently was indicated by the decision of the editor of VD 16 (Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts) to add the Pitts Library to its roster of institutions. A project of the Bavarian State Library, VD 16 now encompasses twenty-five large volumes and continues to grow. It aspires to list every book or pamphlet of the sixteenth-century. Each year about half of the items acquired for the Kessler Collection do not appear to be held by any other library in North America, and it now appears that some may not even be held in major European collections.

Most of the woodcuts in the Kessler Collection have been digitized and incorporated into the Digital Image Archive (accessible by clicking on the Luther Rose at www.pitts.emory.edu), which now includes more than 9,000 images. The library now regularly receives requests from publishers to use these images to illustrate the text and covers of books and journals. In addition, visitors to the Digital Image Archive now approach five hundred each day. All of these factors are strong indications of the site’s value to the church and the academy.

Finally, it should be noted that Candler School of Theology is making good progress toward a $48M building program that will provide for the renovation of two of Candler’s current structures as well as the construction of a new library. These improvements will enhance the library’s ability to care for the Kessler Collection and the other 100,000 volumes of rare books in Pitts special collections. In addition to traditional library spaces, the plans call for a grand exhibit and lecture hall, a rare-book reading room, a scanning lab for the digitization of library materials, a computer lab that supports collaborative learning and group projects, and a climate-controlled facility for shelving rare materials. The latter will improve the library’s ability to safeguard such valuable collections and make them available to students, researchers, and other visitors. Library staff give an average of one presentation, and workshops, and so we are all looking forward to a new facility in 2007.

M. Patrick Graham is Librarian and Margaret A. Pitts Professor of Theological Bibliography.

Reformation Day at Emory University

October 26, 2004

9:00–9:30 a.m.
Registration and Coffee
Brooks Commons, Cannon Chapel

9:30–10:30 a.m.
“BACH PRAYS THE CATHEISM,” TIMOTHY ALBRECHT
Sanctuary, Cannon Chapel

10:30–11:00 a.m.
Break and opportunity to view exhibit of sixteenth-century catechisms
Dudham Reading Room, Pitts Theology Library

11:00–11:50 a.m.
CHAPEL SERVICE, THE REV. ANN M. SVENNUNGSEN
President of the Fund for Theological Education, preacher
Sanctuary, Cannon Chapel

Noon–1:00 p.m.
“TIE CATHEISM IN CONTEMPORARY INSTRUCTION AND SPIRITUALITY”
BISHOP RONALD R. WARBEN AND NINA WARBEN
(includes box lunch, RSVP at 404.727.6352 or klester@emory.edu)
311 Bishops Hall

1:15–2:15 p.m.
“USES OF IMAGES IN CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION”
M. PATRICK GRAHAM AND SCOTT GHYRMAN
Dudham Reading Room, Pitts Theology Library

2:30–4:30 p.m.
“PRAYING AS A CHRISTIAN: LUTHER’S REFORMATION OF PASTORAL EDUCATION”
WILLIAM R. RUSSELL
“GROWING THRIVING AND FAITHFUL YOUTH: THE POWER OF ENGAGED CONGREGATIONS”
PETER L. RENNER
Sanctuary, Cannon Chapel

4:30–6:00 p.m.
Break or tour of Carlos Museum

8:00–9:00 p.m.
KESLER REFORMATION CONCERT
TIMOTHY ALBRECHT, ERIC NELSON, AND THE EMORY UNIVERSITY CONCERT CHOIR
Sanctuary, Cannon Chapel

Continuing Education Credit
To receive Continuing Education Credit (3 CEU is available), persons must attend all Reformation Day at Emory events and submit their name, address, and $10 payment (checks made payable to Emory University) to the Office of Church Ministries, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia 30322. A certificate of attendance will be mailed following the event.

2004 Reformation Day at Emory—continued from page 1

Catechisms) based on Martin Luther’s hymn, “These Are the Holy Ten Commandments,” and his chorale on the Apostles’ Creed, “We All Believe in One True God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.” Then Eric Nelson, Emory College associate professor of music, will lead the Emory University Concert Choir and instrumentalists in the performance of Bach’s seven-movement sacred choral cantata based on Martin Luther’s baptismal hymn, “Christ Our Lord Came for Baptism to the Jordan.”

The Kessler Reformation Concert and all other events on Tuesday, October 26, are free and open to the public.

M. Patrick Graham is Librarian and Margaret A. Pitts Professor of Theological Bibliography.

The woodcuts in this issue of Reformation Notes and more than 9,000 others are accessible by clicking on the Luther Rose at www.pitts.emory.edu.

Standing Committee for the Kessler Reformation Collection

Policy direction for the Reformation Collection is provided by a standing committee composed of representatives of Emory University and the local and national Lutheran community.

Mr. Richard C. Kesler, Chair
Mr. Roy T. Wise, Secretary
Dr. Timothy Albrecht
Mr. Mary Lou Greenwood Boise
Dr. M. Patrick Graham
Dean Russell E. Rickby
Bishop Ronald R. Warren

Emeriti Members
Dr. James B. Cranley
Dr. Channing R. Jeschke
Dr. Theoren K. Kevak-LeCraw
Bishop Harold C. Skillrud
Dr. James L. Vans

Scholars Advisory Committee
Dr. Kurt K. Hamby
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
Dr. Robin A. Lerner
Westminster Choir College, Rider University
Dr. Martin S. Wee
Director of the Lutherhalle-Wittenberg
Dr. Timothy W. Nitch
Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia

Patrons of the Kessler Reformation Collection

Emory University
Mr. and Mrs. Richard C. Kesler
The Lutheran Brotherhood

Partners of the Kessler Reformation Collection

Emory University
Mr. and Mrs. Neil M. Anderson
Mr. and Mrs. Erwin G. Baumer
Judge Dorothy T. Beasley
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Easterlin Wise
Mr. and Mrs. Russell W. Crick
Mr. and Mrs. Raymond E. Davis Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. William H. Gaik
Mr. and Mrs. William A. Hendrickson
Mr. and Mrs. Carl F. Lettow Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Larry W. Raudebaugh
Mr. and Mrs. Elizabeth Richardson
Mr. and Mrs. John C. McCance
Mr. and Mrs. Steve Morgan
Ms. and Mrs. Ivan A. Mersiowsky
Mr. and Mrs. Larry W. Raudbaugh
Ms. Velda Hendrickson Slayton
Dr. Reiner Smolinski
The Memorial Fund of St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church
Mr. and Mrs. Frances S. Smith
Ms. and Mrs. Larry W. Raudbaugh
Mr. and Mrs. Lucille W. Skagen
Mr. and Mrs. Mark H. Snider
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Estabrook Wise Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Julia Thomas Wise
Mr. and Mrs. Ralph L. Wols

Reformation Notes

Summer 2004