

HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

450th Anniversary Edition

HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

450th Anniversary Edition



Grand Rapids, Michigan

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations in this resource are from the Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version, © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The Heidelberg Catechism: 450th Anniversary Edition, © 2013, Faith Alive Christian Resources. Featuring the Heidelberg Catechism © 2011, Faith Alive Christian Resources. All rights reserved. Except for study, education, and review purposes, no part of this resource may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the publisher. For information about use of copyrighted material, contact Permissions, Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560; phone: 1-800-333-8300; fax: 616-726-1164; email: permissions@faithaliveresources.org. Printed in the United States of America.

We welcome your comments. Call us at 1-800-333-8300 or e-mail us at editors@faithaliveresources.org.

ISBN 978-1-59255-787-5

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Preface to the 450th Anniversary Edition | 5 |
| Introduction | 7 |
| The Heidelberg Catechism | |
| Comfort (Q&A 1-2) | 8 |
| Part I: Misery (Q&A 3-11) | 9 |
| Part II: Deliverance (Q&A 12-85) | 12 |
| God the Father (Q&A 26-28) | 18 |
| God the Son (Q&A 29-52) | 20 |
| God the Holy Spirit (Q&A 53-64) | 31 |
| The Holy Sacraments (Q&A 65-85) | 38 |
| Holy Baptism (Q&A 69-74) | 40 |
| The Holy Supper of Jesus Christ (Q&A 75-85) | 43 |
| Part III: Gratitude (Q&A 86-129) | 51 |
| The Ten Commandments (Q&A 92-115) | 53 |
| The Lord's Prayer (Q&A 116-129) | 67 |

Preface

to the 450th Anniversary Edition

Perhaps the most well-known and widely used of the Reformation catechisms, the Heidelberg Catechism has been admired for its clarity as an expression of the Reformed Christian faith as well as for its warm and personal tone. Many of its questions and answers—especially Q&A 1—have been memorized by thousands and have become an anchor for faith. In 2013 we celebrate the 450th anniversary of this classic and beloved catechism.

This 450th Anniversary Edition of the Heidelberg Catechism is a fresh and accurate translation (completed in 2011) from the 1563 German and Latin texts, using the 1988 translation by the Christian Reformed Church in North America as an English-language base. This edition is also an ecumenical effort in that it is now the officially recognized translation for use in the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Reformed Church in America (RCA). This development fits the Heidelberg Catechism's original purpose, which was not only to teach the faith but also to unite various church factions in the sixteenth-century German Palatinate by means of a common confession.

We thank the following for their important and faithful work on the joint translation committee:

- Lyle Bierma (CRC, Calvin Theological Seminary)
- J. Todd Billings (RCA, Western Theological Seminary)
- Eugene Heideman (RCA, Western Theological Seminary, emeritus)
- Charles White (RCA staff)
- Leonard J. Vander Zee (CRC staff)
- Dawn Devries (Union Presbyterian Seminary)
- David Stubbs (Western Theological Seminary)

It is our prayer that this book will deepen the faith of our churches, further unite us in our common confessions, and serve as a testimony to the historic Reformed faith as a gift to the whole church.

—Leonard J. Vander Zee, Theological Editor,
Faith Alive Christian Resources

The Heidelberg Catechism

Introduction

The Heidelberg Catechism (1563) was composed in the city of Heidelberg, Germany, at the request of Elector Frederick III, who ruled the province of the Palatinate from 1559 to 1576. The new catechism was intended as a tool for teaching young people, a guide for preaching in the provincial churches, and a form of confessional unity among the several Protestant factions in the Palatinate. An old tradition credits Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus with being the coauthors of the catechism, but the project was actually the work of a team of ministers and university theologians under the watchful eye of Frederick himself. Ursinus probably served as the primary writer on the team, and Olevianus had a lesser role. The catechism was approved by a synod in Heidelberg in January 1563. A second and third German edition, each with small additions, as well as a Latin translation were published the same year in Heidelberg. The third edition was included in the Palatinate Church Order of November 15, 1563, at which time the catechism was divided into fifty-two sections or Lord's Days, so that one Lord's Day could be explained in an afternoon worship service each Sunday of the year.

The Synod of Dort approved the Heidelberg Catechism in 1619, and it soon became the most ecumenical of the Reformed catechisms and confessions. It has been translated into many European, Asian, and African languages and is still the most widely used and warmly praised catechism of the Reformation period.

Most of the footnoted biblical references in this translation of the catechism were included in the early German and Latin editions, but the precise selection was approved by Synod 1975 of the Christian Reformed Church.

LORD'S DAY 1

1 Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I am not my own,¹
but belong—
body and soul,
in life and in death—²
to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.³

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,⁴
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.⁵
He also watches over me in such a way⁶
that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven;⁷
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.⁸

Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life⁹
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for him.¹⁰

¹ 1 Cor. 6:19-20

² Rom. 14:7-9

³ 1 Cor. 3:23; Titus 2:14

⁴ 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:2

⁵ John 8:34-36; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:1-11

⁶ John 6:39-40; 10:27-30; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:5

⁷ Matt. 10:29-31; Luke 21:16-18

⁸ Rom. 8:28

⁹ Rom. 8:15-16; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14

¹⁰ Rom. 8:1-17

2 Q. What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

A. Three things:
first, how great my sin and misery are;¹
second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;²
third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.³

¹ Rom. 3:9-10; 1 John 1:10

² John 17:3; Acts 4:12; 10:43

³ Matt. 5:16; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 5:8-10; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 2:9-10

Part I: Misery

LORD'S DAY 2

3 Q. How do you come to know your misery?

A. The law of God tells me.¹

¹ Rom. 3:20; 7:7-25

4 Q. What does God's law require of us?

A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22:37-40:

“You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart,
and with all your soul,
and with all your mind.”¹
This is the greatest and first commandment.

“And a second is like it:
‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’²

“On these two commandments hang
all the law and the prophets.”

¹ Deut. 6:5

² Lev. 19:18

5 Q. Can you live up to all this perfectly?

A. No.¹

I have a natural tendency
to hate God and my neighbor.²

¹ Rom. 3:9-20, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10

² Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 7:23-24; 8:7; Eph. 2:1-3; Titus 3:3

LORD'S DAY 3

**6 Q. Did God create people
so wicked and perverse?**

A. No.

God created them good¹ and in his own image,²
that is, in true righteousness and holiness,³
so that they might
truly know God their creator,⁴
love him with all their heart,
and live with God in eternal happiness,
to praise and glorify him.⁵

¹ Gen. 1:31

² Gen. 1:26-27

³ Eph. 4:24

⁴ Col. 3:10

⁵ Ps. 8

7 Q. Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?

**A. The fall and disobedience of our first parents,
Adam and Eve, in Paradise.¹**

This fall has so poisoned our nature²
that we are all conceived and born
in a sinful condition.³

¹ Gen. 3

² Rom. 5:12, 18-19

³ Ps. 51:5

**8 Q. But are we so corrupt
that we are totally unable to do any good
and inclined toward all evil?**

**A. Yes,¹ unless we are born again
by the Spirit of God.²**

¹ Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Job 14:4; Isa. 53:6

² John 3:3-5

LORD'S DAY 4

**9 Q. But doesn't God do us an injustice
by requiring in his law
what we are unable to do?**

A. No, God created human beings with the ability to keep the law.¹
They, however, provoked by the devil,²
in willful disobedience,³
robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.⁴

¹ Gen. 1:31; Eph. 4:24

² Gen. 3:13; John 8:44

³ Gen. 3:6

⁴ Rom. 5:12, 18, 19

**10 Q. Does God permit
such disobedience and rebellion
to go unpunished?**

A. Certainly not.
God is terribly angry
with the sin we are born with
as well as the sins we personally commit.

As a just judge,
God will punish them both now and in eternity,¹
having declared:
"Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey
all the things written in the book of the law."²

¹ Ex. 34:7; Ps. 5:4-6; Nah. 1:2; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6; Heb. 9:27

² Gal. 3:10; Deut. 27:26

11 Q. But isn't God also merciful?

A. God is certainly merciful,¹
but also just.²
God's justice demands
that sin, committed against his supreme majesty,
be punished with the supreme penalty—
eternal punishment of body and soul.³

¹ Ex. 34:6-7; Ps. 103:8-9

² Ex. 34:7; Deut. 7:9-11; Ps. 5:4-6; Heb. 10:30-31

³ Matt. 25:35-46

The Heidelberg Catechism has been admired for its clarity as an expression of the Reformed Christian faith as well as for its warm, personal tone. Many of its questions and answers—especially Q&A 1—have been memorized by thousands and have become an anchor for faith.

This 450th Anniversary Edition of the Heidelberg Catechism is a fresh and accurate translation from the 1563 German and Latin texts. It is also an ecumenical effort in that it is recommended for use in Reformed and Presbyterian churches today. This development fits the catechism's original purpose for not only teaching the faith but also uniting various churches by means of a common confession.


FAITH
ALIVE®
Christian Resources

RELIGION / Christianity / Catechisms

ISBN 978-1-59255-787-5

90000



9 781592 557875

155293