



# ECO

A Covenant Order  
of Evangelical  
Presbyterians

UNDERSTANDING THE CONFESSIONS  
THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

# THE HEIDELBERG

A TEACHING TOOL FOR THE CHURCH  
1563



# THE HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

- In the 1520s Heidelberg University's reform-minded faculty called for church reform.
- Frederick II, Elector Palatine, embraced and endorsed this new movement
- In 1548 Emperor Charles V, enacted the Augsburg Interim: force all territories to adhere to the practices of the Holy Roman Church.
- Overturned in 1555

- 1556, Otto Henry, Elector Palatine, realized Protestant pastors were inadequately trained
- Superstitions and traditions used more than the truths of Scripture,
- Congregations were spiritually deficient.
- 1563, Frederick III and a team of 15 theologians, church superintendents, and lay leaders published the Heidelberg Catechism as a teaching tool to fix the problem

# PURPOSE OF THE HEIDELBERG

- The Heidelberg Catechism was designed to be a document for laying a Biblical foundation in the life of God's people through:
  - individual study,
  - preaching the foundations of the faith,
  - and to be a tool for devotional reading

# HEIDELBERG'S STRUCTURE

- It is comprised of 129 questions, arranged in 52 groups—one for each Sunday of the year – clarifying:
  - Our hope in Christ alone (through grace alone, by faith alone)
  - the Apostles' Creed,
  - the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper,
  - the nature of spiritual conversion,
  - a basic understanding of the Ten Commandments
  - a basic understanding of the Lord's Prayer.

# DIVISIONS OF THE HEIDELBERG

- Lord's Day 1 – Our only comfort in life and death
- Lord's Day 2-4: Man's Misery
- Lord's Day 5-8: Man's Redemption
- Lord's Day 9-10: Of God the Father
- Lord's Day 11-19: Of God the Son
- Lord's Day 20-24: Of God the Holy Spirit
  - Through its exposition of the Apostles' Creed, it addresses issues of the doctrines of:
    - the Trinity,
    - the Incarnation,
    - the Resurrection
    - The Ascension of Christ

# DIVISIONS OF THE HEIDELBERG

- Lord's Day 25: The Holy Sacraments
- Lord's Day 26-27: Holy Baptism
- Lord's Day 28-31 Holy Supper
  - The concise explanations of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper commend themselves as a basic reference to what the sacraments are all about.
- Lord's Day 32-33: Thankfulness

# DIVISIONS OF THE HEIDELBERG

- Lord's Day 34-44: The Ten Commandments
  - This section shows us the usefulness of the law and how it helps us to live our lives in obedience to God, while not being a slave to the letter of the law.
- Lord's Day 45: Introduction to Prayer
- Lord's Day 46-52: The Lord's Prayer
  - This section reminds us of the importance of prayer in our daily lives, as well as expanding on the model Christ gave us for effective personal and corporate prayer.

# REFERENCES FOR THE ESSENTIAL TENETS IN THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS

- **God is Triune, that is, one being, three persons. 4.025**
- **Creation continues to be maintained by God's sovereignty and providence. 4.027**
- **Human beings are made in God's image. 4.006**
- **Jesus Christ is truly God and truly human. 4.015–018**
- **His divine nature is not limited, impaired, or changed by assuming our human nature. 4.048**
- **Jesus is ascended in his resurrected body and remains truly human. 4.049**
- **Jesus will return visibly in the body to judge the living and the dead. 4.052**
- **Sin poisons all of human life. 4.007**
- **We are born dead in our sin; therefore, salvation must be at God's initiative. 4.008**
- **We are each deserving of eternal condemnation. 4.012**
- **Jesus offered Himself for us on the cross, saving us from sin and death by bearing our punishment and by offering God the perfect obedience due to Him. 4.001, 032, 034**
- **We are declared justified because of God's grace. 4.033, 056, 060**
- **Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father. 4.02**

# REFERENCES FOR THE ESSENTIAL TENETS IN THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS

- **God's love restores His image within us. 4.086**
- **We are called to live out our faith within the covenant community of the church. 4.054–055**
- **God's grace is extended through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the faithful practice of mutual discipline. 4.065–067**
- **In the Lord's Supper, the Spirit unites us to the ascended Christ and nourishes us with His resurrection life. 4.076**
- **Progress in holiness is an expected response of gratitude to the grace of God, made possible by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. 4.07**
- **The first response of gratitude is prayer. 4.116**
- **We are especially guided by the Ten Commandments in living grateful lives of holiness. 4.086–091**
- **We must worship God alone, renouncing idolatry and inordinate loves. 4.094–095**
- **We must worship God humbly, aware of the dangers of images and ideas of God that can become idolatrous, keeping preaching and sacraments central. 4.096–098**
- **We must eliminate from both speech and thought any blasphemy, irreverence or impurity. 4.099–102**

# REFERENCES FOR THE ESSENTIAL TENETS IN THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS

- **We must observe the Sabbath as a day of worship and rest, gathering with the people of God. 4.103**
- **We must give honor to those in authority over us and practice mutual submission within the church. 4.104**
- **We must eradicate anger, violence, bitterness, and instead cultivate gentleness; we must recognize the image of God in every human being from conception to natural death. 4.105–107**
- **We must maintain chastity in thought and deed, being faithful within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman as established by God at the creation or embracing a celibate life as established by Jesus in the new covenant. 4.108–109**
- **We must practice right stewardship of the goods we have been given, showing charity to others and giving generously to the ministry of the church. 4.110–111**
- **We must pursue and defend the truth, even when this is costly, since truth is in order to goodness. 4.112**
- **We must resist envy, greed, and acquisitiveness, instead being content with what God has given us. 4.113**
- **Jesus is the perfect exemplar of a holy life. 4.036**
- **We are only holy through His holiness. 4.060–061**

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – HOW DOES:

- the system of doctrine in the Heidelberg accurately and faithfully reflect the theological teaching of the Scriptures?
- the Heidelberg reflect the grace, love, and joy of the gospel?
- it enable the church to confess what it believes and hold the church to believe what it confesses?
- it speak in a clear, concise, accessible, and warm manner to the whole church?
- it call for both affirmation and rejection?
- it represent merely the interests of one group in the church, or does it take responsibility to speak from and to the one universal Church?
- it speak only to its own temporal context or does it speak of the eternal truths of Scripture?
- it allow the eternal truths of Scripture to speak into our context?

AND JUST FOR FUN!



Curt "Voice" Allen performs the Heidelberg Catechism Rap at the 2010 Sovereign Grace Ministries Pastor's Conference