

The Heidelberg Catechism: Overview
The Three Forms of Unity: Session 2

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Review- Reformed and Presbyterian

Where would you begin if you were teaching the faith to a new convert?

A “Catechism” is simply a teaching tool that’s meant to be used orally.

-Aren’t we all being catechized whether we know it or not?

Consider the importance of a teaching aid during the Reformation.

Don’t we still need trustworthy aids?

Written by the Faculty of the University of Heidelberg in Germany.

Chiefly the work of Zacharias Ursinus. Published in 1563.

Eventually divided up into 52 “Lord’s Days” and preached annually.

Known for its warm, yet clear and substantial, confession of the Christian faith.

Divided into three sections: Sin, Salvation, Service or Guilt, Grace, Gratitude

Sin: Q.3-11 or LD 2-4

Salvation: Q.12-85 or LD 5-31

Service: Q.86-129 or LD 32-52

The Heidelberg Catechism is structured around the Three (or Four) Landmarks of the Faith

- I. The Apostle’s Creed (followed by the Sacraments)
- II. The Ten Commandments
- III. The Lord’s Prayer

Typical Objections:

44. Q. Why does the creed add, “He descended into hell”? A. To assure me during attacks of deepest dread and temptation that Christ my Lord, by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul, on the cross but also earlier, has delivered me from hellish anguish and torment.¹

54. Q. What do you believe concerning “the holy catholic church”? A. I believe that the Son of God through his Spirit and Word,¹ out of the entire human race,² from the beginning of the world to its end,³ gathers, protects, and preserves for himself a community chosen for eternal life⁴ and united in true faith.⁵ And of this community I am⁶ and always will be⁷ a living member.

Highlights: LD 1, Q.21

LD 10:

27. Q.What do you understand by the providence of God? A.Providence is the almighty and ever present power of God¹ by which God upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures,² and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty³—all things, in fact, come to us not by chance⁴ but by his fatherly hand.⁵

28 Q.How does the knowledge of God’s creation and providence help us? A.We can be patient in adversity,¹ thankful in prosperity,² and for the future we can have good confidence in our faithful God and Father that no creature will separate us from his love.³ For all creatures are so completely in his hand that without his will they can neither move nor be moved.⁴

60. Q.How are you righteous before God? A.Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.¹ Even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all God’s commandments, of never having kept any of them,² and of still being inclined toward all evil,³ nevertheless, without any merit of my own,⁴ out of sheer grace,⁵ God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ,⁶ as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, and as if I had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me.⁷ —if only I accept this gift with a believing heart.⁸

61. Q.Why do you say that through faith alone you are righteous? A.Not because I please God by the worthiness of my faith, for only Christ’s satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness are my righteousness before God,¹ and I can receive this righteousness and make it mine in no other way than by faith alone.²

Lord’s Day 52

127 Q.What does the sixth petition mean? A.“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” means: We are so weak that we cannot stand on our own for a moment,¹ and our sworn enemies— the devil,² the world,³ and our own flesh ⁴— never stop attacking us. And so, Lord, uphold us and make us strong by the power of your Holy Spirit, so that we may not be defeated in this spiritual fight,⁵ but may firmly resist our enemies until we finally win the complete victory.⁶

128 Q.How do you conclude this prayer? A.“For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.” This means we have made all these petitions of you because, as our all-powerful king, you are both willing and able to give us all that is good;¹ and because your holy name, and not we ourselves, should receive all the praise, forever.²

129 Q.What does that little word “Amen” express? A.“Amen” means: This shall truly and surely be! For it is much more certain that God has heard my prayer than I feel in my heart that I desire such things from him.