

REFORMATION 500 WEEK 20 JOHN CALVIN AND GENEVA

Prior to Calvin's arrival in Geneva in August 1536, "the Genevan city council had officially broken with the Roman Catholic Church, abolished the Sacrifice of the Mass, and called for the removal of all images and relics from the churches. Church properties had been converted to Protestant uses for religion, charity, and education. The council had committed the city to 'live according to God's law and God's Word and to abandon idolatry.'" (DeMar, *Reformation*, 201).

"Before the city council had disestablished Roman Catholicism, the church ruled the state through the Roman Catholic bishop. Afterwards, the state ruled the church through the council." Calvin's goal was to change "this unbiblical approach to government," and "to establish a church governmentally independent of the council while assuring that the council would not be independent of God's law as it pertained to its civil jurisdiction.... Calvin drew a clear line of distinction between the civil magistrate, whose authority was confined to civil matters, and the elders of churches, whose authority was confined to ecclesiastical matters" (Ibid., 201).

In January 1537, when Calvin and Farel began their work of reform, the Genevan city authorities "were not sure what path to take, and they were certainly not sure about putting their collective futures in the hands of 'that Frenchman,' as they liked to call Calvin" (Nichols, *Reformation*, 75).

Calvin "was offered the position of 'Professor of Sacred Scripture' by the council. He accepted the position and began a series of reform efforts. As part of his duties, he prepared a confession of faith to be accepted by everyone who wished to be a citizen of Geneva; he planned an educational program for the populace; and he insisted on the biblical doctrine of excommunication for those who broke God's law and refused to repent.

"It was over the issues of a strict moral code and church discipline that Calvin's efforts were opposed. The council believed that it, not the church, should have the authority and power to set the moral agenda and exercise discipline in the church. Calvin maintained that only the church and its government are given the authority to discipline church members" (DeMar, 203).

In 1538, new officials (*Libertines*, as Calvin described them) were elected to the city council, and they "decided to bring matters to a head. The form of worship in the neighboring city of Bern differed somewhat from that in use in Geneva. For some time, Bern had wished to have it adopted in Geneva. Now the city council insisted on introducing this form of worship. Calvin and Farel did not think that the differences were very important. But they refused to introduce the liturgy of Bern, because it was being imposed upon the Geneva church by the civil government without consultation with the church officers." Consequently, Calvin and Farel were banished from Geneva on April 23, 1538. Farel went to Neuchatel, where he remained until his death in 1565. "Martin Bucer, who had been won for the Reformation by Luther during the great Leipzig Debate, invited Calvin to Strasbourg. Calvin gladly accepted this invitation. It had brought him to the city where he had been so eager to go in the first place" (Kuiper, *Church in History*, 195). Surprisingly, he would soon return to Geneva.

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REFORMATION 500 WEEK 20: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM QA'S 53

Question 53: WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT? **First, that He is co-eternal God with the Father and the Son. Second, that He is also given unto me: by true faith makes me a partaker of Christ and all His benefits, comforts me, and shall abide with me forever.**

Article 8 of the Apostle's Creed, "I believe in the Holy Spirit," is the beginning of the third part of the Creed, which deals with the Holy Spirit and our Sanctification (see again Question 24).

The first thing we need to know about the Holy Spirit is that He is co-eternal God with the Father and the Son. *Co*-eternal means *also*-eternal. He is "the *eternal* Spirit" (Heb. 9:4). From Questions 24-25 we learned that the three distinct divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are indivisibly One God, having in common all the divine perfections and qualities. All the attributes of the divine essence are attributed to the Holy Spirit (e.g. Gen. 1:2; Psalm 33:6; 1 Cor. 2:10-12).

The Holy Spirit is clearly declared to be God (Acts 5:3-4) and also to be distinct from the Father and the Son (cf. Luke 12:10). "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:16); "when the Helper comes, whom I shall to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me" (John 15:26). "He is said to be sent by the Father and the Son, and must, therefore, be another person; for no one is sent of himself. A person may, indeed, come of his own accord, and of himself; but no one can send himself" (Ursinus, 273).

The Holy Spirit is that Person of the Trinity who has been given to us believers to live in us. By working true faith in our hearts, He has united us to the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, so that we receive all the benefits of Christ's death, namely, justification, adoption, sanctification, and ultimately glorification. "God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?" (1 Cor. 6:19). The Holy Spirit sanctifies us by causing us to obey God's command, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16). "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24).

The Holy Spirit dwells in us to comfort us (Acts 9:31), especially in times of sorrow: "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:5). "God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us" (2 Cor. 7:10). "The Holy Spirit strengthens and establishes us when weak and wavering in our faith, and assures us of our salvation [Rom. 8:15-16, 26-27]" (Ursinus, 278).

The Holy Spirit will abide with us forever (John 14:16). "For He Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). True believers "are sometimes for a season deserted by God [2 Chron. 32:31], either for the purpose of testing, or chastising, or humbling them [Heb. 12:3-11]; yet they are nevertheless brought to repentance, so as not to perish" (Ursinus, 474). David in his fall, lost the joy which he had felt in his soul, the purity of his conscience, and many other gifts, which he earnestly prayed might be restored to him; but he had not wholly lost the Holy Spirit, or else he would not have said, 'Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me' [Ps. 51:11], from which it is plain that he had not wholly lost the Spirit of God" (Ursinus, 284).

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