

## **REFORMATION 500 WEEK 47 HEIDELBERG CATECHISM**

In 1555 the Peace of Augsburg granted equal legal status in Germany to Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism. Each local ruler determined the religion of his territory; and minorities were free to relocate. But Zwinglians, Calvinists, and Anabaptists were not granted legal recognition (Bainton, *Reformation*, 155).

In 1559, Frederick III became ruler of a territory called the Palatinate. In its capital city of Heidelberg, there was great controversy over the doctrine of the Lord's Supper; one party was inclined to the Lutheran view, the other, to the Reformed view. After studying both sides, Frederick declared himself in 1560 in favor of the Reformed doctrine; he "was the first German prince who professed the Reformed Creed, as distinct from the Lutheran" (Scaff, *Creeds*, 1:532). After introducing Reformed worship throughout his country, he turned his attention to the need for a catechism to help the churches in his land to be *Reformed*.

Caspar Olevianus was born in 1536 in the ancient German City of Trier. As "a young law student he joined the underground Protestant movement in France" (Lyle Bierma, *A Firm Foundation*). In 1556, he became friends with Prince Herman, the son of Frederick III. One day when they were walking along a river they met some fellow students who were drunk, "and asked the prince and Caspar to cross the river with them in a boat." Olevianus failed to convince the prince to remain on shore. While Caspar looked on, the boat flipped upside down, and the students began to drown. "Seeing the prince in danger, Olevianus leapt into the river, in an attempt to save him." But "he failed and only endangered himself and later confessed that, out of terror, he vowed that if God should save him, he would serve the Lord as a preacher to Germans. One of the prince's servants saved him, mistaking him for the prince" (R. Scott Clark, *Caspar Olevianus and the Substance of the Covenant*, 12). After studying theology with Calvin in Geneva, he returned to his hometown of Trier in 1559. But Roman Catholic opposition frustrated his reform efforts; and he and his cohorts were thrown into prison. Through the intervention of Frederick III, whose son Olevianus had tried to save from drowning, he was released and brought to Heidelberg in 1560 where he became a theological professor and pastor of the Holy Ghost Church.

Zacharias Ursinus was born at Breslau (modern-day Poland). He had studied at Wittenberg with Melanchthon and completed his studies under Calvin in Geneva. "Calvin was deeply impressed with him and presented him a set of his books" (Masselink, *The Heidelberg Story*, 70). In 1560, Frederick called him to Heidelberg as professor of theology. In 1562, Frederick commissioned his Heidelberg theologians to prepare a catechism. Some scholars still hold the opinion "that Ursinus contributed the content and Olevianus the form" (*Essays on the Heidelberg Catechism*, 79). The Heidelberg Catechism was published in January, 1563. Frederick himself later inserted Question and Answer 80 to further condemn the Roman Catholic Mass.

Frederick faced charges of violating the Peace of Augsburg, but after a valiant defense of the biblical basis of the Catechism, he was permitted to rule his country as a Calvinist till he passed away in 1576. However, not until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 were Calvinists added to the list of tolerated religions.

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## REFORMATION 500 WEEK 47: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM QA 122

**Question 122:** WHAT IS THE FIRST PETITION? **“Hallowed be Your name;”** that is, grant us, **first**, rightly to know You, and to sanctify, magnify, and praise You in all Your works, in which Your power, goodness, justice, mercy, and truth shine forth; and **further**, that we so order our whole life, our thoughts, words, and deeds, that Your name may not be blasphemed, but honored and praised on our account.

*“Hallowed by thy name*, is placed first in order, because it comprehends the end and design of all the rest, inasmuch as the glory of God should be the end of all our affairs, actions, and prayers [1 Cor. 10:31]” (Ursinus, 629).

God’s primary name is Jehovah or Yahweh – the equivalent of **I AM** – translated LORD in our English Bibles. “I am the LORD, that is My name” (Isaiah 42:8). “The LORD *is* His name” (Ex. 15:3). God’s name is a revelation of who He is: “You shall worship no other god, for the LORD whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a Jealous God” (Ex. 34:14). “In Scripture, God calls Himself by various descriptive names and titles such as ‘Lord,’ ‘God,’ ‘Almighty,’ ‘Father,’ ‘Son,’ ‘Jesus,’ ‘Christ,’ ‘Holy Spirit,’ and many more.... Thus, God’s name stands for Himself and all that He does as He reveals Himself in His Word and in His works [Psalm 19]” (Jones, *Study Helps*, 311). To hallow God’s name is the opposite of taking His name in vain.

The word *hallow* is the same word as *sanctify*. To sanctify means either to *make* someone holy that is not holy, or to *treat* someone holy who is already holy. God “is holiness itself” (Ursinus, 630). Therefore, to sanctify God is to know and praise Him as He truly is: “HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:3). “We must know and think concerning His essence, will, works, omnipotence, goodness, wisdom, and all His other attributes, what He commands us in His Word to know and think respecting them [John 17:3]” (Ursinus, 630). Therefore, we must diligently study God’s Word, and pray for the Spirit’s enlightenment, so that we might praise and magnify all God’s attributes, as the biblical writers teach us in many places. “Great and marvelous are Your works, LORD God Almighty” (Rev. 15:3). “Praise the LORD, O give thanks to the LORD; for He is good” (Ps. 106:1) “His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice” (Deut. 32:4). “You, LORD, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You” (Ps. 86:5); “bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations” (Ps. 100:4-5).

Our whole life, thoughts, words, and deeds, must praise and honor God. As God’s adopted children, His image is being restored in us. “Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children” (Eph. 5:1). “Be holy for **I AM** holy” (1 Pet. 1:16). “Just as it is shame and disgrace to an earthly father to have a bad, unruly child, so God is dishonored if we who are called by His name and enjoy His manifold blessings fail to speak and live as godly children” (Martin Luther). God told adulterous King David: “by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme [ridicule]” His name (2 Sam. 12:14; cf. Rom. 2:24; 1 Tim. 5:14; Titus 3:5).

“But we cannot by ourselves sanctify the name of God. Therefore, we must pray to God to grant to us the strength by which we may hallow the name of God; yea, that He Himself would hallow His holy name in us [1 Pet. 3:15]” (Ursinus, 632).

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