

REFORMATION 500 WEEK 52 PILGRIMS AND PURITANS

"[Bloody] Mary was succeeded by Elizabeth (1558-1603), the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn.... Unlike Edward VI who chose Protestantism, and Mary, who hoped to return England to her Catholic roots, Elizabeth was a shrewd politician who compromised by choosing the 'middle way' between Protestantism and Catholicism. Many Christians felt that the Church of England was not reformed enough and that it should be purified of Roman Catholic corruptions." Their critics called them "Puritans" (DeMar, *Reformation*, 229).

When Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, she was succeeded by her cousin James VI of Scotland (son of Mary Stuart "Queen of Scots"), who became James I (1603-1625) of England (no descendants of Henry VIII were left to claim the English throne). It was during his reign that the first permanent English settlement in North America was established as Jamestown in 1607, and the King James Bible was published in 1611. [The famous story of Pocahontas is part of the early history of Jamestown].

King James immediately began to persecute the Puritans. Those Puritans who saw the process of reforming the Episcopal Church of England as hopeless, "separated themselves from the Church of England and became known as *Separatists*"; and "because they believed that all local churches should be independent of each other, they were called *Congregationalists* or *Independents*" (Kuiper, *Church in History*, 251).

One of these groups of separatists "was a congregation in the little English town of Scrooby." In 1607, they "decided to leave the country to avoid persecution," and in 1609 finally found refuge in Leyden, Holland, "which offered religious freedom to all kinds of Christians [and where the Arminian controversy was underway].

"In addition to poor work conditions, these Separatists were concerned that their children were forgetting their English culture, and, even worse, becoming influenced by Dutch worldliness. The English Reformers wanted to live in a culture where God's law was the rule for all of life, and they decided that the Netherlands was not that place.... The only other place of refuge which would grant them the freedom they desired was America" (DeMar, 270).

The Leyden separatists left Holland in 1620, a year after the Synod of Dort; and from Plymouth, England, they boarded the Mayflower on September 16, 1620, crammed with other travelers "whom they called 'Strangers' because they did not share the Separatists' faith" (DeMar, 273). They called themselves "pilgrims." They landed at Plymouth Harbor, Massachusetts, in late December, 1620.

Thus: "The Reformation period begins with Luther's Theses (1517), and ends with the Peace of Westphalia (1648)," which "brought to a close the terrible Thirty Years' War and secured a legal existence to the Protestant faith (Lutheran and Reformed) throughout Germany" (Schaff, *History*, 7:86). The year 1648 also marked the publication (in Puritan England) of the *Westminster Confession*, "the last of the great creeds of Protestantism to come out of the Reformation" (Kuiper, 252).

"There are three fundamental principles of the Reformation: the supremacy of the *Scriptures* over tradition, the supremacy of *faith* over works, and the supremacy of the Christian *people* over an exclusive priesthood" (Schaff, 7:16).

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REFORMATION 500 WEEK 52: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM QA 127FF

Question 127: WHAT IS THE SIXTH PETITION? “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one;” that is, since we are so weak in ourselves that we cannot stand a moment, and besides, our deadly enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, assail us without ceasing, be pleased to preserve and strengthen us by the power of Your Holy Spirit, that we may make firm stand against them and not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, until finally complete victory is ours.

It is Satan, not God, who tempts us to sin (James 1:13). But God does *lead* us into temptation; just as He once led Jesus into temptation (Matt. 4:1). Therefore, we pray that our Father would not lead us to a place where we will be tempted to sin. Our heavenly Father leads us into temptation so we learn how weak we really are (Deut. 8:2). Peter found out the hard way that he was powerless to resist the temptation to deny Christ three times! None of Christ’s disciples listened to His warning, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). Without Christ, we cannot resist temptation (John 15:5), which is why we must seek His help. We need to pray to be delivered from our three deadly enemies that attack us without ceasing: the devil (1 Pet. 5:8), the ungodly world (John 15:9; 1 Cor. 15:33), and our own sinful flesh (Rom. 7:18-24). The devil “is the author, leader, and architect of all malice and iniquity” (Calvin); and he seeks to use our other two enemies against us (John 13:2; Matt. 16:21-23; 2 Tim. 2:23; 1 John 5:19). Satan cannot take away our salvation but he can take away everything else, if God permits (remember what he took from Job!). We need to pray, “Deliver us from evil.”

Question 128: HOW DO YOU CLOSE THIS PRAYER? “For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever;” that is, all this we ask of You, because as our King, having power over all things, You are willing and able to give us all good; and that thereby not we, but Your holy name may be glorified forever.

The word “for” indicates the reason we can be confident our Father will answer these six petitions. “*You are the best king*. Therefore, You will give to Your subjects what is necessary and tends to their salvation. *You are most powerful*. Therefore, You will show your power in giving these greatest of all gifts, which can be given by none, besides You. *It shall contribute to Your glory*. Therefore, You will do it” (Ursinus, 658). This prayer is rooted in the OT. “Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all” (1 Chron. 29:10-11).

Question: 129: WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE WORD ‘AMEN’? ‘Amen’ means: so shall it truly and surely be. For my prayer is much more certainly heard of God than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of Him.

Our confidence is not based on our feelings, but on the promises of the God who has caused us to desire these things from Him. This is why we can confidently say: Amen!

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