

Reformation Sunday



The Heidelberg Catechism

Four hundred and fifty years ago, the ruler of a German territory called the Palatinate faced a dilemma. The people who worshipped in his territory followed the teachings of Reformers with different beliefs (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Melancthon and others). To unify the various theological factions and help people learn about the Protestant faith, the ruler, Elector Frederick III (1515-1576), gathered a team of professors, ministers, and advisors to compose a new catechism for his land.



The team, led by theologian Zacharias Ursinus (1534-1583), worked in the city of Heidelberg. They drafted a series of questions and answers with references to biblical verse. The product of their work, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, was first published in January 1563. To make the project useful for Christian instruction, the third edition of the catechism was divided into fifty-two sections, one for each Sunday of the year.

The *Heidelberg Catechism* is one of the most popular and widely

accepted confessional documents of the Reformed churches and has been translated into dozens of languages from the original German. It is included in *The Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Top left: Zacharias Ursinus, from *Historic Manual of the Reformed Church in the United States*, by Joseph H. Dubbs, 1888.

Center left: Heidelberg Castle from *Three Men Came to Heidelberg*, by Thea B. Van Halsema, 1963.

Right: Title page of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, first edition, reprinted 1913.



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