

Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism

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The reformation in the palatinate is a direct result of the greater German Reformation.

The major rulers of the palatinate were:

1. Ludwig V 1508-44 who was a moderate Roman Catholic that opposes Protestantism for political reasons.
2. Fredrick II 1544-56 was a RC and became a Lutheran during his reign—he helps Luther in the peace of Augsburg and the palatinate follows suit.
3. Otto Henry 1556-1559 was influenced by Melanchthan and his ecumenical ways between the protestants.
4. Fredrick III. 1559-1576 takes Melanathanian philosophy and narrows it to Reformed.
 - a. The council of Trent and the Counter Reformation is in progress; the strict Lutherans are raising their voices against the Philipist.

The Catechism was put together for the following purpose:

1. To be a teaching guide for teacher and taught to the “blooming youth”.
2. To be a preaching guide for preachers and taught to the congregation.
3. Unity of confession throughout the territory.
4. To maintain political unity from religious unity.

Theme & Structure

The over-arching theme is comfort.

- You then have three major sections:
 - Misery (Guilt) *Sin* Death
 - Deliverance (Grace) *Salvation* Deliverance
 - Gratitude (Gratitude) *Service* Discipleship

All this is based on Q&A #2:

Q: What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

A: Three things:

- First, how great my sin and misery are;
- Second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;
- Third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.

Most catechisms at that time would talk about the Apostles Creed, Ten Commandments, Lords Prayer and the Sacraments.

(Klooster) The Heidelberg Catechism is obviously more personal than the Westminster. That personal character does not make the catechism anthropocentric, however.