

Karla Apperloo-Boersma and Herman J. Selderhuis, eds. *Power of Faith: 450 Years of the Heidelberg Catechism*.

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Anniversaries of important events often provide effective stimulus for scholarship and also occasion for special museum exhibits. When scholarship and exhibit come together, as they do in this volume, the result can offer, as this volume does, concrete reinforcement for the presentations of scholarly analysis in rich and copious illustrations that give readers visual substantiation for the subject. This volume reproduces lectures given at a conference on the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563 at the Johannes a Lasco Bibliothek, Emden, and serves as a catalogue to exhibits on the Catechism at the Kurpfälzisches Museum der Stadt Heidelberg, the Heidelberg Schloss, and the Paleis Het Loo National Museum in Apeldoorn. The illustrations not only present the materials from the exhibits, reproduced with highest quality, but also buttress the essays, providing helpful instructional materials that depict the cultural, social, and political settings in which the Catechism conveyed its conception of reality and the proper course of Christian living to audiences, first in the Palatinate, then in various parts of Europe, above all, the Netherlands, and finally in lands across the globe. Each of the three exhibits, with a total of some 450 artifacts — printed works, manuscripts, paintings, sculpture, architecture, etc. — offer succinct, illuminating explanations for each item, with bibliographical references. Photographic reproductions and explanations can serve to lead students into the early modern framework for defining life that such catechisms cultivated across confessional lines throughout Europe and beyond.

Most of the volume's essays assess the origins, composition, and early use of the Catechism in the context of ecclesiastical and political developments in the Palatinate and of German imperial tensions in the mid-sixteenth century; others analyze its use in the Netherlands over the centuries. A brief review cannot do justice to the work of each author. Herman Selderhuis's orientation to the Catechism, its way of applying scripture to life, and its spread beyond the Palatinate sets the framework for more narrowly focused studies. Lyle Bierma highlights its background in instructional materials from Luther and other Lutherans, including Melancthon and Brenz, as well as from Zurich and Geneva, but concludes that the Catechism's trifold division into human misery, deliverance, and gratitude most closely parallels an anonymous catechism published in Lutheran Regensburg in 1547, republished in Heidelberg in 1558. Irene Dingel places the Catechism in the context of interconfessional polemics with a perceptive analysis of the critiques issued by Matthias Flacius, Tilemann Heshusius, and the Mansfeld ministerium. Peter Opitz's assessment of the Catechism's theology accentuates the elements taken from Heinrich Bullinger's thought, noting that Bullinger's "irenic posture" attracted Ursinus — a characteristic not noted by opponents whom he accused of idolatry and superstition.

Another group of essays analyzes the tug and pull of confessional loyalties in the Palatinate in the sixteenth century, giving insight into how church and theology interacted with other societal and political forces locally and on the wider imperial level. Johannes Ehmann's investigation of the Catechism's introduction and later use in the Palatinate reveals how church and secular government intertwined in pursuing their own as well as shared interests. The cultural impact and context of the Catechism is analyzed in Klaus Winkler's fine study of Heidelberg court musicians as they fulfilled their calling for successive princes, and Eike Wolgast's analysis of the document in the university milieu clearly elucidates how faith and higher education coordinate. Barbara Mahlmann-Bauer explores the rejection of astrology by Ursinus's circle, especially as it related to views of predestination. Four essays demonstrate a variety of ways in which the Heidelberg Catechism has played a significant and ongoing role in Dutch public life, culture, and instruction in the faith.

This volume stands as a significant contribution to the scholarly appraisal of the Heidelberg Catechism in its broader ecclesiastical and cultural context. As introduction, overview, resource, and stimulus to further investigations of the transmission of Christian teaching to the public, specifically in the case of the Heidelberg Catechism but more generally in the Western catechetical tradition, this volume assumes an important place as a tool for research and instruction.

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