

# A Turn of Events: from Chaos to Comfort (Part 6)

The year was 1562. The land was in chaos over lack of direction concerning the Lord's Supper as well as some other points of doctrine. The light of the Reformation had dawned nearly fifty years earlier when Luther nailed his theses to the door in Wittenberg, but that light had scattered in many different directions and was not yet fully understood. It must be gathered into one, clear beacon of truth. This would be a year for creeds and confessions.

Electoral Frederick III ruled from his castle in Heidelberg, Germany. He saw the need for writing a unifying catechism. His own wife was Lutheran and tried to persuade him to see the Lord's Supper from the Lutheran point of view over against Calvin's, but he was not convinced. There had been much trouble and confusion in Heidelberg over the Lord's Supper, and now he knew not where to turn. He shut himself alone in his rooms to study the Scriptures themselves for direction. God answered his prayer and Frederick emerged with confidence. The Calvinistic view was the Scriptural one. He knew what kind of men ought to write the new catechism as well.

Twenty-eight-year-old Zacharius Ursinus was recently appointed as professor of dogmatics at Heidelberg's university. Twenty-six-year-old Caspar Olevianus was the new pastor of the Church of the Holy Spirit. Both men had already shown themselves to be extremely gifted in teaching and preaching, as well as outstanding in godliness. Both had been taught by John Calvin, Peter Martyr, and other important reformers. Frederick assigned the task to them.

But even Frederick could not have known the full import of the document that would result from their pens. God knew. God had brought these men to Heidelberg. God had prepared them for the task. In all their studies, Ursinus and Olevianus came to understand that Luther had gone too far in saying Christ's body and blood were present in the Lord's Supper in a physical way. They also understood that to say Christ was not present in the bread and wine at all was not enough. What was the Biblical view? Jesus Christ is indeed present in the Lord's Supper, but only in a spiritual way. This truth would now be made clear to all.

Not only would the Lord's Supper be properly set forth, Olevianus' bold and eloquent preaching would combine with Ursinus' careful teaching and clear, poetical mind to yield a catechism unparalleled in clarity and beauty, useful for both preaching and teaching. God had led both men to see and hear the theme of all of Scripture, a melody that rang in glorious three-step rhythm to comfort the people of God, young

and old, in life and in death: misery, deliverance, gratitude. Over and over—the triple knowledge is necessary for comfort.

The Heidelberg Catechism was adopted without reservation in 1563 and was received by the church with much thanksgiving. Centuries later we are still profoundly grateful for God's leading from confusion and chaos to order and comfort by having shown them—and us—this knowledge of the truth. Indeed, according to the plan and wisdom of God, such is the turn of events.