

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

QUESTION # 2.

(*Larger Catechism*)

Q #2. *How doth it appear that there is a God?*

A. The very light of nature in man, and the works of God, declare plainly that there is a God;¹ but his word and Spirit only do sufficiently and effectually reveal him unto men for their salvation.²

Question 1—*What are the things which make it appear that there is a God?*

Answer—The *first* thing that makes it appear that there is a God is the light of nature *in* man, Rom. 1:19, 20. This universe within, is comprised of those things which constitute the image of God in man, both formally, as a rational creature, and materially, as a righteous and holy creature, Gen. 1:27. This image, then, consists in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24; all of which manifest that there is a God to the possessor of these things, Ps. 14:1. This light of nature in man is:

First, the law of God is written upon the heart, or mind (*cf.* Prov. 23:7), whereby men know that standard of rectitude which is required of them, Rom. 2:14, 15. By this law men are brought to know the judgment of God against all sin, Rom. 1:32. Man was created in this state of original rectitude, or righteousness, possessed of the clarity of the law, from which he fell, Eccl. 7:29. Thus, having an innate sense of right and wrong, he knows himself to be a creature bound to God, Rev. 4:11; and, as a sinful man, he knows himself to be guilty of breaking this law of his mind, Eccl. 7:22; Rom. 7:23. This law places within men an *objective* knowledge that there is a God, Eccl. 3:11; 12:13, 14; although sinful man suppresses this truth in unrighteousness and turns this truth into a lie, Rom. 1:18, 25. This law must be written anew upon the heart by the Spirit of God, Jer. 31:33; Heb. 10:16.

Second, that faculty of conscious reason with which man is endowed, which is also called his spirit, Job 32:8; whereby he is distinguished from, and rendered superior to, all other creatures of this lower world, Gen. 2:7; Ps. 92:6. By this power of conscious reasoning, man is able to come to a knowledge of his station as a creature, 1 Cor. 2:11. Also, by this power of reasoning, man is able to observe the connection of things, and their dependence upon one another, and to infer those consequences which may be deduced, Prov. 20:27. It is by the spirit, or conscious reasoning, of the mind that men become living beings, Zech. 12:1; therefore, when men die, they are said to know nothing, Eccl. 9:5. This faculty bestows on man the *subjective* knowledge that there is a God, Num. 27:16; although sinful man does not like to retain this knowledge, Ps. 10:4; Rom. 1:18. This spirit of the mind, reason, must be also renewed, Eph. 4:23; Rom. 8:6; 1 Pet. 1:13.

Third, the presence of the conscience which brings all of the thoughts and actions of men to the bar of His justice, Rom. 2:15; Gen. 3:8-11. Conscience is that which compares the thoughts and actions of men with the law of God and, reasoning thereupon, concludes whether or not the creature stands in a state of righteousness or not, it pronounces innocence or guilt, Gen. 20:5; 42:21, 22. Thus, the properly informed conscience works to

¹ Rom. 1:19, 20; Ps. 19:1-3; Acts 17:28.

² 1 Cor. 2:9, 10; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Isa. 59:21.

convince and convict of sin and righteousness, John 8:9. Believers, having their consciences rightly informed by the Word of God, and possessing a clearer understanding of the law, are possessed of a conscience void of offense before God and man, Acts 24:16. Unbelievers, however, possess no moral certainty through the exercise of their conscience, Tit. 1:15. The conscience is an internal witness of God whereby men are brought to a *relative* knowledge that there is a God, Acts 23:1; although wicked men spend their lives searing it, 1 Tim. 4:2. The conscience, too, must be renewed by the Spirit of God, Heb. 10:22; Rom. 9:1.

The *second* thing that makes it appear there is a God is the light of nature *outside* of man, the works of God, Ps. 19:1-3. The wisdom of God, apparent in his works, demonstrates his being, Ps. 104:24. When men behold the beauty and harmony by which the various parts of the creation serve each other, this, too, declares that there is a God, Hos. 2:21, 22. These are the works of His providence whereby things fall out by measure and, thereby, maintain the life of all living creatures, demonstrating that there is a God, Job 36:27. This is His *ordinary* providence whereby He upholds all creatures and all their actions, Ps. 145:15, 16; 76:10. After all, should we not conclude, when we see something performing its motions in a regular way and advancing in an orderly fashion, that it is the product of one skillful to frame it and set it in order? Isa. 45:9. To this, we might consider His *extraordinary* providence, whereby He makes things happen contrary to the common course of nature, as when miracles are performed, 2 Kings 6:5-7; Matt. 14:25.

Additionally, the being of God is made clear in the structure of the human body, which far exceeds any power or skill of the creature, Ps. 139:14. The very fashioning ought to excite our attention and wonder, Job 10:11. How much more the souls of men, which we observe active apart from ourselves, which declare that there is a God, Ezek. 18:4; Heb. 12:9. So, too, the nature and office of conscience, which works trouble in the souls of the wicked, Isa. 57:20; and joy and peace in the hearts (or, minds) of believers, Rom. 15:13; also declares there is a God, Acts 24:25; Ps. 112:7.

To these, we may add the foretelling of future events, which no creature could possibly do with infallible knowledge, Isa. 41:23.

Question 2—*Does this light of nature in man, or in God's works, sufficiently and effectually make God known to men for their salvation?*

Answer—No, only the Word of God can sufficiently make God known unto us for our salvation, 2 Tim. 3:15-17. Likewise, only the Spirit of God can effectually make God known to us for our salvation, 1 Cor. 2:9, 10. These two, working in concert, are the only infallible means whereby God's salvation for men is held forth, Isa. 59:21.

The light of nature may be sufficient to restrain corrupt passions of men, Jon. 1:14; and it is conducive to the peace and welfare of civil society, Acts 28:4; it also affords some conviction of sin, leaving men without excuse when they sin against it, Rom. 1:20; however, it leaves men with no knowledge of Jesus Christ, Acts 14:16, 17. The light of nature proves that there is a God; but the Word of God discovers Him to us a God reconciled to us in Jesus Christ, if we believe, Acts 10:42, 43. Since only in Scripture Jesus is revealed, and there is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ, Acts 4:12; then, it follows, that the only knowledge sufficient for our salvation is to be found in the Word of God, in both the Old and New Testaments, John 5:39, 46, 47. Life eternal is to know the true God and Jesus whom He has sent, John 17:3. This knowledge alone is sufficient for our salvation, 1 Cor. 2:2.

Although the light of nature provides the things necessary to the conviction of the truth and reasonableness, yet only the Spirit of God works those internal convictions together with the evidences of His peculiar gifts and graces, John 16:7-13. This knowledge of the true God and Jesus, the Savior, though sufficiently revealed in Scripture, is not effectually applied to men apart from the Spirit of God enabling them to regard, understand, and apply this rule, and to walk according to it, 1 Cor. 2:10. This is to know those things according to the spirit of the mind because being taught of the Spirit, 1 Cor. 2:11, 12. And, having this renewed spirit of the mind, men know the mind of the Lord because they have the mind of Christ, 1 Cor. 2:16.

These two are not to be separated, Acts 16:14. The Spirit does not save any man without the Word of God, John 14:6, 1 John 5:11; and the Word of God is not effectual to salvation, unless it is made so by the Spirit of God, Isa. 50:5; Luke 24:45. It is a false conceit to believe that the sufficiency of the Word *alone* can bring men to Christ, Acts 13:48. It is also a false conceit to believe that the effectual working of the Spirit *alone* can bring men to Christ, Eph. 4:14. It is the Spirit working through the Word, John 6:68; Rom. 10:17; and the Word working by the Spirit, John 6:63; Gal. 3:5; that *alone* brings men to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and the only true God who sent Him, 1 Cor. 3:6, 7.