

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTIONS # 8 & 5.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #8. *Are there more Gods than one?*

A. There is but one only, the living and true God.¹

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #5. *Are there more Gods than one?*

A. There is but One only, the living and true God.²

Question 1—*Why is this God called the living God?*

Answer—This God is called the living God, in opposition to, and to distinguish him from the dead idols of men, Ps. 115:4-6. These are but the dead and lifeless things, stocks and stones, silver and gold, which the heathen nations did worship, neglecting the God that made the heavens and the earth, unto whom the Gospel now seeks them to turn, 1 Thess. 1:9. Thus, very often, when God represents himself, in Scripture, as giving his people the highest assurance of anything that he designs to do, he uses the form of an oath, and swears by his own life, Isa. 49:18; Num. 14:21. This language imports the same thing as saying he is setting himself forth as a God of infinite perfection, the God of all glory, Gen. 22:16.

Additionally, God is the fountain of life, having all life in himself, John 5:26. All life is in him and thorough him, whether: 1.) Natural life, Acts 17:28. 2.) Spiritual life, Eph. 2:1. 3.) Eternal life, Col. 3:4.

Therefore, when God is called the living God, he is denoted in the display of all his perfections, in connection with life being the great principle of action, Dan. 6:26; thereby distinguishing him from all lifeless idols, reputed gods by their stupid and profane worshippers, 1 Thess. 1:9. Men, by sin, incline to the worship of the creation, Rom. 1:25; even preferring that which is clearly not God as the object of their service, Gal. 4:8. The foolishness of which appears in them praying to gods of their own making, Isa. 44:17; wherein the senseless worshippers of these idols become as blockish and lifeless as their gods, Ps. 115:8.

Question 2—*Why is he called the true God?*

Answer—Again, he is called the true God to distinguish him from all the false or fictitious gods of the heathen, 1 Thess. 1:9. The heathen, besides their worship of dead idols, worshipped living creatures, which were only gods in their blinded opinion and foolish fancy, but not in reality, Deut. 32:17. These gods, according to the Scripture, are all but idols set to perish from off the earth, Jer. 10:11.

He is called the true God because: 1.) This God alone is true, or faithful, when considered as to fidelity or faithfulness, he is the God of truth, Jer. 10:10. 2.) There is truth of essence, whereby a thing really exists, and not merely as opinion, John 17:3.

¹ Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6; Jer. 10:10.

² Deut. 6:4; Jer. 10:10.

Question 3—*Why do we believe there is only one God?*

Answer—Lest men are inclined to think that the divine nature, the essence of the Deity, what we call God, is either multiplied or divisible, Scripture very pointedly declares that this divinity is one, Deut. 6:4. This unity appears from a consideration of his great power, which is clearly singular, Deut. 32:39. This power shows itself in a way of greatest perfection, in combination with other perfections, which are also singular, Deut. 4:35. From whence, for example, the unity of God, the singleness of the divinity, is deduced, Ps. 86:10. Thus, each of the divine perfections, if considered as touching the perfection of Deity, would supply us with an argument to confirm our faith in the unity of God, 1 Sam. 2:2.

First, the idea of God implies that he is the first cause of all things, in respect of which he is opposed to the creature, and existed from all eternity, Isa. 41:4. Now there can be no more than one being, who is without beginning, and who gave being to all other things, Isa. 44:6. If there are more gods, then they must derive their beings from him, and then they are a part of his creation, and consequently not God, for the divine nature and the created nature are infinitely opposed to each other, Isa. 46:9.

Second, there is one being which is the ultimate end of all things, Rev. 4:11. God, who produced all things out of nothing, must be supposed to have designed some valuable end by so doing, and this end, ultimately considered, cannot be anything short of himself, Prov. 16:4. Hence, the glory that is the result of the creation is unalienable, it cannot be ascribed to any but himself, Ps. 19:1. God thus being the end of all things, he is to be glorified as such, and all worship is to terminate in him, Luke 10:27.

Third, infinitude of perfection, being implied in the idea of God, cannot possibly belong to more than one, Ps. 18:31. If there are more Gods than one, then their perfections must be limited, but such, which is not infinite, cannot be God, Ps. 147:5. As infinite perfection implies all perfection, it cannot be divided amongst many, Isa. 42:8.

Fourth, there is only one power that is almighty, Gen. 35:11. If there were more Gods than one, then this power would be divided, and that power which is able to be nullified by another cannot be described as all mighty, and is, consequently, not God, Rev. 11:17.

Fifth, there is one absolute sovereign will, by which all things come to pass and yet is itself subject to the control of none other, Isa. 46:10. The idea of two or more sovereign wills, implying the presence of two or more sovereign Gods, is a principle that would introduce confusion in the government of the world, Ps. 115:3.

Sixth, if there were more Gods than one, then either one is more excellent than the others, or they are all equally excellent, yet both suppositions are contrary to Scripture, Isa. 40:25.

Although the heathen, through their abominable practice of idolatry, suppressed that knowledge of the unity of God, Rom. 1:19, 20; nonetheless, the wiser heathen have maintained the unity of God, asserting that there is one God superior to all, whom they referred to as “the Father of gods and men,” Acts 17:23. This God, as Acts tells us, is the one declared by Paul as the one true God, of whom are all things, 1 Cor. 8:4, 6.