

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

HAVING SEEN WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH US CONCERNING GOD, IT
FOLLOWS TO CONSIDER WHAT THEY REQUIRE AS THE DUTY OF MAN

QUESTIONS # 106 & 48.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #106. *What are we specially taught by these words [before me] in the first commandment?*

A. These words [before me] or before my face, in the first commandment, teach us, that God, who seeth all things, taketh special notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other God: that so it may be an argument to dissuade from it, and to aggravate it as a most impudent provocation:¹ as also to persuade us to do as in his sight, whatever we do in his service.²

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #48. *What are we specially taught by these words [before me] in the first commandment?*

A. These words [before me] in the first commandment teach us, That God, who seeth all things, taketh notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other god.³

Question 1—*What is meant by “before me”?*

Answer—This enjoins us to consider the presence of God in everything we do, Ps. 139:7. This includes in all our thoughts, Ps. 10:4. There is no place, whether physical, mental or spiritual, wherein a man can hide himself from the all seeing eye of God, Job 34:21.

Question 2—*What is the first thing we ought to learn from this fact that all is “before” him?*

Answer—The first thing we ought to consider is that God, who is most holy, is also a jealous God, Nah. 1:2. As such, he taketh notice of the gross sin of idolatry, Ex. 34:14. Just as the husband will overlook many faults in his wife, who will not overlook that of fornication or adultery, the Lord accounts having other gods a specie of spiritual adultery which he abominates, Ezek. 23:1-5, 29, 30.

God takes special notice of heart idolatry, which is a subtle kind of idolatry, so hidden that others do not and even men themselves may not always perceive what it is that is their idol; yet God sees it well, Ps. 44:20, 21. There are no heart idolatries not open to his sight, Ezek. 8:5, 6. These idols may consist of different varieties: 1.) They may be of a spiritual nature, which a man cannot discern until the law has its perfect work in bringing home to the soul its spiritual adultery, Luke 18:9-12. Thus, Paul’s duties and seeming holiness were his idols, Rom. 7:9. 2.) They may lie in things which are in themselves lawful, 1 Tim. 1:8. While it is generally easy to perceive sinfulness in sin, it is not so easy to perceive a man’s ruin in houses, lands, husband, wife, children, *etc.*; yet, these may be idols, Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:18-20. 3.) They may be idols which go under the name of an infirmity, by which, many deceive themselves with entertaining reigning sins, under the

¹ Ezek. 8:5, 6; Ps. 44:20, 21.

² 1 Chron. 28:9.

³ Ezek. 8:5, 6; Ps. 44:20, 21.

name of infirmity; thus, Adam, Gen. 3:12; Eve, Gen. 3:13; Esau, Heb. 12:16, 17; Aaron, Ex. 32:21-24; Judas, Matt. 27:3, 4; and, Pilate, Matt. 27:24. 4.) They may involve self-love, which is ready to magnify men's good, and extenuate their evil, Hos. 10:13; Matt. 16:24. 5.) They may involve a judicial stroke because men do not entertain the discoveries God makes to them, therefore, they shutting their eyes, the Lord righteously blinds them, Rom. 11:7, 8.

Question 3—*What is the next thing we ought to learn from this fact that all is "before" him?*

Answer—Again, God is *especially* displeased with our having any other god because: 1.) He shows his special wrath in this life against idolaters, such as the Israelites for worshipping the golden calf, Ex. 32:34, 35; and the ten tribes for their idolatry at Dan and Bethel, 2 Kings 17:18. As Babylon of old was destroyed for idolatry; so the new Babylon shall be destroyed, Rev. 18:21. Indeed, all idolaters will be punished for eternity, Rev. 21:8. 2.) He shows his displeasure against the idols men set up in their hearts by forcing the idol out of the way in the fury of his jealousy, Judg. 18:24; sometimes by reducing men to the necessity of parting either with the idol or his profession, Matt. 6:24; often making the idols men's plague and punishment, such as the ten plagues on Egypt; or, by the overpowering force of temptation, God brings the truth of the idol into full view, John 12:4-6; 2 Tim. 4:10.

Question 4—*What should be the effect of this warning?*

Answer—It ought to serve a twofold purpose: 1.) To dissuade us from the sin of idolatry knowing that it is a great and aggravated provocation of God, Deut. 4:25, 26. It is a sin of great impudency, Ezek. 16:26. There is no room anywhere for the worshipping or serving of any being but the Lord God, Isa. 44:8; 45:5, 6. There is no hiding such idolatry, even in the secrecy of the heart, Eccl. 12:14. 2.) To persuade us to do all that we do as if in his sight, 1 Chron. 28:9; thus did Job seek to do that he would avoid giving offense to the Almighty, Job 31:5-8, 24-28. It is precisely because God is so great that he takes note of the minutest of things.