

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 # 109 & 51.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #109. *What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?*

A. The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising,¹ counselling,² commanding,³ using,⁴ and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself;⁵ tolerating a false religion;⁶ the making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever;⁷ all worshipping of it,⁸ or God in it or by it;⁹ the making of any representation of feigned deities,¹⁰ and all worship of them, or service belonging to them,¹¹ all superstitious devices,¹² corrupting the worship of God,¹³ adding to it, or taking from it,¹⁴ whether invented and taken up of ourselves,¹⁵ or received by tradition from others,¹⁶ though under the title of antiquity,¹⁷ custom,¹⁸ devotion,¹⁹ good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever;²⁰ simony;²¹ sacrilege;²² all neglect,²³ contempt,²⁴ hindering,²⁵ and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed.²⁶

¹ Num. 15:39.

² Deut. 13:6-8.

³ Hos. 5:11; Mic. 6:16.

⁴ 1 Kings 11:33; 12:33.

⁵ Deut. 12:30-32.

⁶ Deut. 13:6-12; Zech. 13:2, 3; Rev. 2:2, 14, 15, 20; 17:12, 16, 17.

⁷ Deut. 4:15-19; Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:21-23, 25.

⁸ Dan. 3:18; Gal. 4:8.

⁹ Ex. 32:5.

¹⁰ Ex. 32:8.

¹¹ 1 Kings 18:26, 28; Isa. 65:11.

¹² Acts 17:22; Col. 2:21-23.

¹³ Mal. 1:7, 8, 14.

¹⁴ Deut. 4:2.

¹⁵ Ps. 106:39.

¹⁶ Matt. 15:9.

¹⁷ 1 Pet. 1:18.

¹⁸ Jer. 44:17.

¹⁹ Isa. 65:3-5; Gal. 1:13, 14.

²⁰ 1 Sam. 13:11, 12; 15:21.

²¹ Acts 8:18.

²² Rom. 2:22; Mal. 3:8.

²³ Ex. 4:24-26.

²⁴ Matt. 22:5; Mal. 1:7, 13.

²⁵ Matt. 23:13.

²⁶ Acts 13:44, 45; 1 Thess. 2:15, 16.

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #51. *What is forbidden in the second commandment?*

A. The second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images,²⁷ or any other way not appointed in his Word.²⁸

Question 1—*Does the second commandment forbid any worship which God has not instituted in his Word?*

Answer—Yes, Lev. 10:1-3. It is the nature of irreligion to fail to show due regard to the instituted worship and ordinances of God and duly complying therewith, Job 15:4. It is amongst the forms of irreligion to be condemned when men do not receive, but reject the ordinances of God as though it is some strange thing, Hos. 8:12. This is the sin of atheists, which is the character of all unregenerate men, Eph. 2:12; they not only deny him, but they reject his instituted worship, Rom. 8:7. This sin is also the sin of Quakers and Spiritualists who believe that there is no need for any kind of external worship, contrary to the command of God, 1 Cor. 6:20. This is also the sin of those who do not receive, but reject any of the ordinances of God, whether the singing of Psalms, the proper administration of the sacraments, the use of that form of church government instituted by Christ, etc.

The sin of this last group appears when we consider the things forbidden by this command. 1.) We are not to give expression to the devices of our sinful hearts in matters concerning the worship and government of the church of Christ, Num. 15:39. 2.) We are forbidden all counsel or consent to that which is contrary to or, in any way, defective in matters subject to the institution of Christ, Deut. 13:6-8. 3.) We are prohibited from the making or keeping of any commands not of God in those things instituted, Hos. 5:11; Mic. 6:16. 4.) This prohibition extends to the using of anything not instituted in the worship of God, 1 Kings 11:33; 12:33. 5.) We are expressly forbidden to any wise approve those things which are not instituted being given place in the worship of God, Deut. 12:30-32.

Additionally, this command enjoins us to maintain a position of complete intolerance toward all false religion, Ps. 97:10. False religion consists in any act of devotion or reverence which incorporates anything not instituted by God, Jer. 10:14, 15. We may see the following: 1.) This intolerance is to be maintained without respect of persons, with a full recognition that enticing to a false religion in any way is a crime worthy of death, Deut. 13:6-12. 2.) Tolerating a false religion is a crime which requires those most intimate with its attempts to be most forward in its rebuke, in the face of all family or societal connections, Zech. 13:2, 3. 3.) Intolerance toward false religion is considered a great part of Christ's patience and perseverance in a declining state, Rev. 2:2, 14, 15, 20. 4.) It is this very trait of intolerance, by the magistrate of one of the ten horns, that will bring about the final destruction of Antichrist prior to the Millennium, Rev. 17:12, 16, 17.

Question 2—*What sins are especially noted as contrary to the second commandment?*

Answer—The sins especially noted consisted in all attempts to make representations of God, whether of all or any of the three Persons, Deut. 4:15-19. This prohibition extends: 1.) To those inward mental images whereby men conceive of God as something he is not, Acts 17:29. 2.) To any outward images or likenesses to be found in the creation, Rom. 1:21-23, 25.

²⁷ Deut. 4:15-19; Exod. 32:5, 8.

²⁸ Deut. 12:31, 32.

Furthermore, this command especially prohibits: 1.) Any kind of worship which terminates upon these dead idols which by their very nature prove them to be no fit representations of the Deity, Dan. 3:18; Gal. 4:8. 2.) Any vain attempts to worship the true God in or by them, because the joining of the true God to false worship is ultimately false religion, Ex. 32:5. 3.) The making use of representations of feigned deities in the worship of God, Ex. 32:8. 4.) Any use of the worship of them or service which belongs unto them in the worship of the true God, 1 Kings 18:26, 28; Isa. 65:11. By which we mean particularly all ceremonies that counterfeit such as are not of the true church, Lev. 18:3.

Finally, we are warned against: 1.) Allowing anything grounded in superstition, although it may give appearance of much wisdom, to be used in the worship of God, Acts 17:22; Col. 2:21-23. 2.) Any species of devotion that corrupts the worship of the true God appointed, Mal. 1:7, 8, 14. 3.) Any inclination that either adds to or takes away from that acceptable worship which God has instituted, Deut. 4:2.

Question 3—*What common excuses for corrupting the worship of God are condemned by the second commandment?*

Answer—That men should seek to find cover for their sin is no new thing, it began in the Garden of Eden, Gen. 3:11, 12. Since the Fall, man has no capacity for spiritual insight or any genuine regard for what is spiritual, 1 Cor. 2:14. Natural men are accustomed to make excuses for their uniform failure to keep the law of God, Rom. 2:15; especially does this apply in the matter of divine worship, Isa. 1:12.

The most commonly adduced excuses for corrupting the worship of God are: 1.) These are things which have been invented or taken up for the very purpose of worshipping God, Ps. 106:39. 2.) These are simply things received by tradition whereby we offer worship to God, Matt. 15:9. 3.) To this, some plead these are things that have a great show of antiquity, implying that duration makes sin no longer to be sin, 1 Pet. 1:18. 4.) There are those who plead usage based upon custom, Jer. 44:17. 5.) Again, some plead their desire or wish to show or offer devotion to God, Isa. 65:3-5; Gal. 1:13, 14.

It must be remembered in this place that we are not excused though we add to these excuses any special pleading of good intention or “any other pretence whatsoever,” 1 Sam. 13:11, 12; 15:21.

Question 4—*What other sins are prohibited by the second commandment?*

Answer—We are additionally to be warned against other kinds of sins that are subsumed under this command. These are sins which affect the circumstances of the worship of God and its proper conduct.

First, there is the sin of simony, Acts 8:18. This is the sin of seeking ecclesiastical office for personal gain, whether economic or otherwise, Acts 8:19, 20. Under this motivation, men do not seek the things that are God’s but study their own comfort, contrary to the truth, Phil. 2:21; 1 Cor. 10:24.

Second, there is the sin of sacrilege which involves the violation and injurious treatment of God in his worship, Rom. 2:22. This occurs whenever men fail to yield God what is his; Mal. 3:8. In terms of worship, each act of spurious devotion, by replacing or treating with irreverence the Deity, involves the sin of sacrilege, Mark 11:17.

Third, this encompasses all neglecting of the worship God has instituted, Ex. 4:24-26. Under this rubric may be noted: 1.) Neglect of prayer, Ps. 14:4; whether in the congregation, when men unnecessarily absent themselves, or fail to join hearts to those prayers offered, Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 14:16; in neglect of family worship, Jer. 10:25; or, in

neglect of secret prayer, Matt. 6:6. 2.) The neglect of singing the Lord's praises, whether in public or private, Eph. 5:19. 3.) The neglecting of reading and hearing the word read, whether in public, private or secret, Luke 8:18. 4.) The neglect of preaching the word thereby starving rather than feeding souls, 2 Tim. 4:1, 2. 5.) The neglect of hearing the word preached, which men are guilty of when they absent themselves from public ordinances, which thing declares a lack of the Spirit of God, Jude 19. 6.) Ministers neglecting to administer the sacraments, particularly in the way Christ has ordained, 1 Cor. 11:23. 7.) When men neglect the sacraments of God by slighting or not receiving them according to appointment, Luke 7:30; 2 Chron. 30:10. 8.) Neglecting the duty of fasting and prayer, or of vowing and covenanting, when called by the Lord's providence, Mic. 6:9; Num. 21:2. 9.) The neglect of the exercise of church discipline to purge the church of scandalous members, Rev. 2:14; Gal. 5:12. 10.) When parents and ministers neglect the catechizing of those under them, Ex. 12:26, 27. 11.) The neglect of spiritual conference, especially on the Lord's day, Mal. 3:16.

This neglect also appears, when men receive some of the ordinances of Christ, but not all. Such as: 1.) When churches receive his doctrine and worship, but not his government and discipline, Eph. 1:20-23 *and* 4:8, 11. 2.) When families mince God's worship by singing and reading but not praying, or praying, but not reading and singing, *etc.* Or, when they worship God in the evening, but for their thronging after the world, neglect the morning sacrifice, Ex. 29:39. 3.) When men pick and choose whether to wait on public ordinances but not private or secret. Or, when they let family prayers stand for secret prayers, *etc.* Luke 11:23.

Fourth, this speaks to all contempt men have for the worship and ordinances of God, Matt. 22:5; Mal. 1:7. This extends both to inward irreverence, Eccl. 5:1; as well as, to any kinds of outward irreverence, Mal. 1:13, 14. This extends to those who sleep during ordinances, Acts 20:9. It also applies to those who mock when men make conscience of God's worship, Isa. 28:22. This contempt is likely to call down divine judgments, 2 Chron. 36:16.

Together with this sin is when men hinder God's worship and ordinances, Matt. 23:13. Such hindrance occurs when: 1.) Magistrate's laws or force attempt to silence ministerial duties, Acts 4:18. 2.) Men discourage and discountenance faithful ministers by calumnies and reproaches heaped, 1 Thess. 2:1, 2. 3.) Men put in and keep in scandalous men, which drive the people from the worship and ordinance of God's appointment, 1 Sam. 2:17. 4.) Men keep back those under them from attending the worship of God, Luke 11:52. 5.) When family worship is shuffled off for the eager pursuits of worldly business, Amos 8:5; or, because there is strife and contention in families, 1 Pet. 3:7. 6.) Men not make allowances for those under their authority to seek the Lord, whether in public, private or secret, Ex. 20:10.

Last, when men not only hinder but actively make opposition to the worship and ordinances of God's appointing, Acts 13:44, 45; 1 Thess. 2:15, 16. Such should take heed and know that they shall find themselves fighting, not against men, but against God, Acts 5:39.