

## 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 # 189&100.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #189. *What doth the preface of the Lord's prayer teach us?*

A. The preface of the Lord's prayer (contained in these words, *Our Father which art in heaven*,<sup>1</sup>) teacheth us, when we pray, to draw near to God with confidence of his fatherly goodness, and our interest therein;<sup>2</sup> with reverence, and all other child-like dispositions,<sup>3</sup> heavenly affections,<sup>4</sup> and due apprehensions of his sovereign power, majesty, and gracious condescension:<sup>5</sup> as also, to pray with and for others.<sup>6</sup>

*(Shorter Catechism)*

Q #100. *What doth the preface of the Lord's prayer teach us?*

A. The preface of the Lord's prayer, (which is, *Our Father which art in heaven*,<sup>7</sup>) teacheth us to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, able and ready to help us;<sup>8</sup> and that we should pray with and for others.<sup>9</sup>

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Question 1—*Wherein consists the preface of the Lord's prayer?*

*Answer*—The preface to the Lord's prayer consists in these words, *our Father which art in heaven*, Matt. 6:9. In this prayer, we are taught to begin our prayers with a preface, and therein to make an explicit mention of the name of God, and some of his divine perfections, *cf.* Ps. 67:1; 63:1; Ezra 9:6. These words, comprising that part of the prayer containing the circumstances, presume a view of God which the heathen themselves obtained of the Deity by the light of nature, wherein they observed the two principal attributes of God, his goodness and his greatness, whereby they styled him *Optimus Maximus*. Here is affirmed, in this preface, the goodness of God (he is *Father*), whereby we have the confidence of faith, Luke 18:19; and the greatness of this God (he is in *heaven*), whereby we are kept in reverence, Isa. 66:1. Both Christ and his apostles move us from God's goodness, as mediated through Jesus Christ, to his glorious place in heaven, Matt. 11:25; Eph. 1:17. Although, as the prayers of the saints of old prove, one might fix upon the greatness of God before his goodness, Dan. 9:4; Neh. 1:5; yet, if God's greatness is studied apart from his goodness, then his fearfulness dazzles the minds of mortal men, Ps. 9:20. So, too, our prayer moves us from natural light to the light of special revelation in Christ, Acts 17:27.

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<sup>1</sup>Matt. 6:9.

<sup>2</sup>Luke 11:13; Rom. 8:15.

<sup>3</sup>Isa. 64:9.

<sup>4</sup>Ps. 123:1; Lam. 3:41.

<sup>5</sup>Isa. 63:15, 16; Neh. 1:4-6.

<sup>6</sup>Acts 12:5.

<sup>7</sup>Matt. 6:9.

<sup>8</sup>Rom. 8:15; Luke 11:13.

<sup>9</sup>Acts 12:5; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2.

Question 2—*What is the first particular which this preface teaches us?*

*Answer*—The first particular is that this preface teaches us to address God as a Father, in which relation we share something with all of mankind, Mal. 2:10. In this respect, we are to adore him as our Creator, our owner, and our benefactor, Acts 17:28. There is one God only who does truly and properly give a being to all things, which is recognized by Christ and his apostles, Matt. 23:9; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6. Thus, he is said to form the spirit of man, Zech. 12:1; and is, therefore, accounted the God of the spirits of all flesh as well as the Father of spirits, Num. 16:22; Heb. 12:9.

Now, although the unregenerate cannot pray acceptably, because we cannot pray acceptably unless God is our Father by regeneration and adoption, John 9:31; yet, prayer, being a natural duty of all men, though they cannot plead a saving relation to God, their lack of prayer is a neglect for which God will punish them, Jer. 10:25. The unregenerate cannot claim the benefits of Christ's redemption, yet they may confess their obligations to God as their Creator, and consider him as having given them souls capable of spiritual blessings and, consequently, beg that they remain not destitute of those things necessary for everlasting life, Ps. 119:73. Additionally, there are children of God who cannot discern their relation to him, Isa. 50:10; yet, such may not only pray, but pray acceptably, Ps. 103:13.

Those who have, by redemption, regeneration and adoption, become the children of God in the highest sense, may draw near with a holy boldness, Rom. 8:15. It is in and through Christ that we have access to God in prayer, Eph. 2:18; for his sake, we are adopted into the family of heaven, John 1:12. In his mediation alone, we have reason of confidence in our interest in God, John 20:17. The name of the Son is the only foundation of our confidence in and expectation from God, John 14:13. Our confidence in the fatherly goodness of God is rooted in the privilege of becoming sons of God by grace, 1 John 3:1. Thereby, we are made sure of a spiritual interest in God as *Father*, Luke 11:13.

Question 3—*What is the second particular which this preface teaches us?*

*Answer*—The second particular taught us is that God is *our* Father, whereby childlike dispositions ought to be excited, Mal. 1:6. This ought to include: 1.) A humble reverencing, Heb. 12:9; which is becoming of those having an interest in the love and mercy of God, Isa. 64:9. 2.) Patience under rebukes, knowing that the Lord chastens whom he loves, Heb. 12:6. 3.) Grief at displeasing God, particularly through our sin, Luke 15:19. 4.) Contentment with the provision of the Father's house, as the returning prodigal, Luke 15:17; learning to be content with the state in which we are placed, Phil. 4:11. 5.) Obedience to the Father's commands, without disputing of his authority, or his right to govern us, 1 Pet. 1:14, 15. 6.) Zeal for the honor of the Father, unable to hear or see him reproached without the highest resentment, Ps. 69:9; John 2:17. 7.) The love which is engaged by the fatherly relation, 1 John 2:15. 8.) A grateful sense of obligation for all the favors we have received, being under the Father's care, the contrary of which is ingratitude and disingenuousness, Deut. 32:6.

Question 4—*What is the third particular which this preface teaches us?*

*Answer*—The third particular taught us is that God is our Father *in heaven*, wherein is his throne, Acts 7:49. Thus, we are taught by this preface that: 1.) We are to eye his sovereign power and dominion over all, in our addresses to him, believing that he is able to help us in our greatest difficulties, Ps. 115:3. Therefore, we should be possessed of due apprehensions of his sovereign power, majesty, and gracious condescension, Isa.

63:15, 16; Neh. 1:4-6.2.) Our childlike dispositions should be joined with heavenly affections, Ps. 123:1; Lam. 3:41. God's glorious greatness above should strike us with awe in our approaches, Eccl. 5:2. 3.) We are to admire his infinite condescension, that he will look upon creatures here below, 1 Kings 8:27. It is God's glorious and wonderful condescension, who vouchsafes to look from his throne in heaven unto us poor worms on earth, Isa. 66:1, 2. 4.) We are to go to God as those who are strangers on this earth, and to whom heaven is home, because it is our Father's house, 1 Pet. 1:17.

Question 5—*What is the fourth particular which this preface teaches us?*

*Answer*—The fourth particular taught us is that God is *our Father in heaven*, wherein we are lead to consider our relation to, and concern for, all the members of Christ's mystical body, Acts 12:5. We have a joint sympathy with all those who are exposed to the same wants and miseries as ourselves, Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 12:26. Additionally, we are instructed not only to pray for ourselves but to pray for others, 1 Tim. 2:1, 2.