

# **The Principles of Christian Religion**

**A Study through the Baptist  
Catechism using Benjamin  
Beddome's *Scriptural Exposition***

# Outline of the BC

- I. Introductory Questions: 1-6
- II. What We are to Believe: 7-43
- III. What Duty God Requires: 44-114
  - A. The Law and our Inability: 44-89
  - B. The Gospel and the Means of Grace: 90-114

Question. 1. *Who is the First and Chiefest being?*

**Answer. God is the First and Chiefest being *a*.**

(a) Isa. 44. 6. & 48.12.

Q. 2. *Ought every One to believe there is a God?*<sup>xviii</sup>

**A. Every One ought to believe there is a God *b*; and it is their great Sin and Folly who do not *c*.**

(b) Heb. 11. 6.

(c) Psal. 14. 1.

Q. 3. *How may we know there is a God?*

A. The Light of Nature in

Question 1. *What is the chief end of man?*

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, *a* and to enjoy Him forever *b*.

(a) 1 Cor. 10. 31.

Rom. 11. 36.

(b) Psa. 73. 24, to the end.

Question 1. *What is the chief and highest end of man?*

Answer 1. Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, *a* and fully to enjoy him forever *b*.

(a) Rom. 11. 36.

1 Cor. 10. 31.

(b) Psa. 73. 24-28

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

A. The very light of nature in

## 1693 Baptist Catechism

man, and the Works of God plainly declare that there is a God *d*; but his Word and Spirit only, do **it fully and effectually**, for **the Salvation of Sinners** *e*.

(d) Rom. 1. 19, 20.

Psal. 19. 1, 2, 3. Acts 17. 24.

(e) 1 Cor. 2. 10.

2 Tim. 3. 15, 16.

Q. 4. *What is the Word of God?*

A. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New **Testament**, are the Word of God, **and** the only certain Rule of Faith and Obedience *c*.

(c)<sup>xix</sup> 2 Tim. 3. 16.

Ephes. 2. 20.

## Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q. 2. *What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him?*

A. The Word of God (which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments) *c* is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him *d*.

(c) 2 Tim. 3. 16. Eph. 2. 20.

(d) 1 Joh. 1. 3, 4.

## Larger Catechism

man, and the works of God, declare plainly that there is a God; *c* but his word and Spirit only do sufficiently and effectually reveal him unto men for their salvation *d*.

(c) Rom. 1. 19-20.

Psa. 19.1-3. Acts 17. 28.

(d) 1 Cor. 2. 9-10.

2 Tim. 3. 15-17. Isa. 59. 21.

Q. 3. *What is the word of God?*

A. The holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the word of God, *e* the only rule of faith and obedience. *f*

(e) 2 Tim. 3. 16.

2 Peter 1.19-21.

(f) Eph. 2. 20. Rev. 22. 18-19.

Isa. 8. 20. Luke 16. 29, 31.

Gal. 1. 8-9. 2 Tim. 3. 15-16.

**Q. 5.** *May all Men make use of the Scriptures?*

**A.** All Men are not only permitted, but commanded and exhorted, to read, hear, and understand the Holy Scriptures *d.*

(d) John 5. 39. Deut. 6. 8. Rev. 1. 3. Acts 8. 30.

**Q. 6.** *What things are chiefly contained in the Holy Scripture?*

**A.** The Holy Scriptures chiefly contain what Man ought to believe concerning God, and what Duty God requireth of Man *e.*

(e) 2 Tim. 1. 13. & 3. 15, 16.

**Q. 3.** *What do the Scriptures principally teach?*

**A.** The Scriptures principally teach, What man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man *e.*

(e) 2 Tim. 1. 13. and 3. 16.

# Introductory Questions: 1-6

- Comparison with the WSC and WLC
  - The Baptists made a conscious decision not to start where the Westminster catechisms started.
    - “... in most things agreeing with the Shorter Catechism of the Assembly. And this we were the rather induced to, because we have commonly made use of that Catechism in our Families: And the Difference being not much, it will be more easily committed to Memory.”
      - “An *Advertisement* to the READER,” Fifth Edition, 1693

# Introductory Questions: 1-6

- Comparison with the WSC and WLC
  - Where does the BC start?
  - Why?
    - It is more traditional.
    - It also seems more appropriate/logical.
      - “There are good reasons for starting with the doctrine of God, if we proceed on the assumption that theology is the systematized knowledge of God, of whom, through whom, and unto whom, are all things. Instead of being surprised that Dogmatics should begin with the doctrine of God, we might well expect it to be a study of God *throughout* in all its ramifications, from the beginning to the end.” – Louis Berkhof

# Introductory Questions: 1-6

- Comparison with the WSC and WLC
  - In the first questions of the BC, we begin not with ourselves and our experience, but with God and His revelation.
    - His Existence (Q&A 1-2)
    - His Revelation of Himself (Q&A 3-6)
  - “We start the study of theology with two presuppositions, namely (1) that God exists, and (2) that He has revealed Himself in His divine Word.” – Berkhof

# Introductory Questions: 1-6

- Comparison with the WSC and WLC
  - In the first questions of the BC, we begin not with ourselves and our experience, but with God and His revelation.
    - His Existence (Q&A 1-2)
    - His Revelation of Himself (Q&A 3-6)
  - “The opening claim of this systematic theology is that the triune God is the object of theology and that this God is knowable because he has revealed himself to us.” – Michael Horton

# Question and Answer 1

Q. 1: Who is the first and chiefest being?

A. God is the first and chiefest being.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 44:6; 48:12; Psalm 97:9

# Question and Answer 1

- In what ways is God the first being?
  - In Temporality
  - In Causality
    - In Creation
    - In Providence
    - In Redemption
- Applications of God as First Being:
  - He deserves to be first in our thoughts.
  - He deserves to be first in our esteem.
  - He deserves the first and best of all that we are, do, and have.

# Question and Answer 1

- In what ways is God the chiefest being?
  - In His Uniqueness and Incomparability
    - In Heaven and on Earth, among Spiritual and Physical Beings
    - For all Eternity
- Applications of God the chiefest being?
  - He deserves to be chiefly loved.
  - He deserves to be chiefly feared.
  - We can find our chief happiness only in

# Question and Answer 2

Q. 2: Ought everyone to believe there is a God?

A. Everyone ought to believe there is a God;<sup>1</sup> and it is their great sin and folly who do not.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 11:6

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 14:1

# Question and Answer 2

- The Importance of Belief in the Existence of God
  - Disbelief in the Existence of God . . .
    - Leads to all kinds of immoralities.
  - Belief in the Existence of God . . .
    - Is a necessary article of the Christian faith.
    - Is the foundation of all practical religion.
    - Is comforting to the believer.
    - Is terrifying to the wicked.

# Question and Answer 2

- The Universality of Belief in the Existence of God
  - The First Man
  - Other Men in the First Ages of the World
  - All Nations
  - Holy Spirits Above
  - The Devils

# Question and Answer 2

- The Danger of Disbelief in the Existence of God
  - It is a folly.
  - It is a shame.
  - It is a sin.
    - Inexcusable
    - Destructive

Question. 1. *Who is the First and Chiefest being?*

**Answer. God is the First and Chiefest being *a*.**

(a) Isa. 44. 6. & 48.12.

Q. 2. *Ought every One to believe there is a God?*<sup>xviii</sup>

**A. Every One ought to believe there is a God *b*; and it is their great Sin and Folly who do not *c*.**

(b) Heb. 11. 6.

(c) Psal. 14. 1.

Q. 3. *How may we know there is a God?*

A. The Light of Nature in

Question 1. *What is the chief end of man?*

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, *a* and to enjoy Him forever *b*.

(a) 1 Cor. 10. 31.

Rom. 11. 36.

(b) Psal. 73. 24, to the end.

Question 1. *What is the chief and highest end of man?*

Answer 1. Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, *a* and fully to enjoy him forever *b*.

(a) Rom. 11. 36.

1 Cor. 10. 31.

(b) Psal. 73. 24-28

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

A. The very light of nature in

## 1693 Baptist Catechism

man, and the Works of God plainly declare that there is a God *d*; but his Word and Spirit only, do **it fully and effectually**, for **the Salvation of Sinners** *e*.

(d) Rom. 1. 19, 20.

Psal. 19. 1, 2, 3. Acts 17. 24.

(e) 1 Cor. 2. 10.

2 Tim. 3. 15, 16.

Q. 4. *What is the Word of God?*

A. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New **Testament**, are the Word of God, **and** the only certain Rule of Faith and Obedience *c*.

(c)<sup>xix</sup> 2 Tim. 3. 16.

Ephes. 2. 20.

## Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q. 2. *What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him?*

A. The Word of God (which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments) *c* is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him *d*.

(c) 2 Tim. 3. 16. Eph. 2. 20.

(d) 1 Joh. 1. 3, 4.

## Larger Catechism

man, and the works of God, declare plainly that there is a God; *c* but his word and Spirit only do sufficiently and effectually reveal him unto men for their salvation *d*.

(c) Rom. 1. 19-20.

Psa. 19.1-3. Acts 17. 28.

(d) 1 Cor. 2. 9-10.

2 Tim. 3. 15-17. Isa. 59. 21.

Q. 3. *What is the word of God?*

A. The holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the word of God, *e* the only rule of faith and obedience. *f*

(e) 2 Tim. 3. 16.

2 Peter 1.19-21.

(f) Eph. 2. 20. Rev. 22. 18-19.

Isa. 8. 20. Luke 16. 29, 31.

Gal. 1. 8-9. 2 Tim. 3. 15-16.

# Question and Answer 3

Q. 3: How may we know there is a God?

A. The light of nature in man and the works of God plainly declare there is a God;<sup>1</sup> but His Word and Spirit only do it fully and effectually for the salvation of sinners.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Romans 1:19,20; Psalm 19:1-3; Acts 17:24

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:10; 2 Timothy 3:15,16

# Question and Answer 3

- How can we know that there is a God?
  - Rational “Proofs” of God’s Existence:
    - The Ontological Argument
      1. Our understanding of God is a being than which no greater can be conceived.
      2. The idea of God exists in the mind.
      3. A being that exists both in the mind and in reality is greater than a being that exists only in the mind.
      4. If God only exists in the mind, then we can conceive of a greater being—that which exists in reality.
      5. We cannot imagine something that is greater than God.
      6. Therefore, God exists.

# Question and Answer 3

- How can we know that there is a God?
  - Rational “Proofs” of God’s Existence:
    - The Cosmological Argument
      1. Every existing thing in the universe must have an adequate cause.
      2. The universe itself must also have an adequate cause, a cause which is indefinitely great.
      3. Therefore God exists.

# Question and Answer 3

- How can we know that there is a God?
  - Rational “Proofs” of God’s Existence:
    - The Teleological Argument
      1. The world everywhere reveals intelligence, order, harmony, and purpose.
      2. This implies the existence of an intelligent and purposeful being, adequate to the production of such a world.
      3. Therefore God exists.

# Question and Answer 3

- How can we know that there is a God?
  - Rational “Proofs” of God’s Existence:
    - The Moral Argument
      1. The very idea of morality implies the existence of a supremely just and good being.
      2. Morality exists.
      3. Therefore God exists.

# Question and Answer 3

- How can we know that there is a God?
  - Rational “Proofs” of God’s Existence:
    - The Historical or Ethological Argument
      1. Among all the peoples and tribes of the earth there is a sense of the divine, a belief in some Higher Power.
      2. The universality of this belief can only be explained by the assumption that a Higher Power made all men and placed this sense in them.
      3. Therefore God exists.

# Question and Answer 3

- How can we know that there is a God?
  - Rational “Proofs” of God’s Existence:
    - Evaluation?
      - They are not necessary: “[The believer’s] conviction respecting the existence of God does not depend on them, but on a believing acceptance of God’s self-revelation in Scripture.”
        - Berkhof
      - They are not irrefutable.
      - They are of limited value: they can at best prove the possibility of the existence of some divine being, but they fall short of proving the certainty of the existence of the God of Scripture.

# Question and Answer 3

- How can we know that there is a God?
  - Rational “Proofs” of God’s Existence:
    - Evaluation?
      - They can still be useful: “They have some value for believers themselves, but should be called *testimonia* rather than arguments. They are important as interpretations of God’s general revelation and as exhibiting the reasonableness of belief in a divine Being. Moreover, they can render some service in meeting the adversary. While they do not prove the existence of God beyond the possibility of doubt, so as to compel assent, they can be so construed as to establish a strong probability and thereby silence many

# Question and Answer 3

- How can we know that there is a God?
  - Revelation
    - We do not reason our way to the knowledge of God: we accept by faith the revelation of Himself that God has condescended to give to us.
    - The initiative is His: we do not ascend to Him, He descends to us.
    - This is where Q&A 3 points us: to God's revelation.
      - The answer hints at the distinction between God's General Revelation and His Special

# Question and Answer 3

- General Revelation

- “The light of nature in man”

- Its Existence (Prov. 20:27)

- What is it?

- Where did it come from?

- Its Limitations

- It was obscured by the Fall (Eph. 4:18).

- It does instruct us in the being of God (Rom. 1:19).

- But it is attended with many doubts and uncertainties (Acts 17:27).

- And there are many things concerning God that it does not and cannot discover to us (1 Cor. 2:14).

# Question and Answer 3

- General Revelation
  - “The works of God”
    - His Works of Creation (Rom. 1:20)
      - Heavenly Bodies (Psa. 19:1)
      - Our Own Bodies (Psa. 139:14)
      - Every Creature (Job 12:7)
    - His Works of Providence (Job 12:9)
      - His Works of Terror (Psa. 9:16)
      - His Works of Mercy (Acts 14:17)
      - The Accomplishment of Prophecies (Isa. 46:9,10)
  - The Insufficiency of General Revelation (1 Cor. 1:21)

# Question and Answer 3

- Special Revelation
  - The Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16)
    - Its Necessity (2 Pet. 1:19)
    - Its Use
      - An Exhortation (Isa. 8:20)
      - A Warning (Col. 2:18)
  - The Spirit of God
    - The Necessity of His Help (Isa. 9:6)
    - The Uniqueness of His Help (2 Cor. 3:6)
    - The Promise of His Help (Luke 11:13)

# Question and Answer 3

- Implications/Applications

1. As we speak to unbelievers . . .

- Make general use of general revelation.
- Make special use of special revelation.

2. As we behold nature . . .

- Be reminded of the glory of God and worship Him.

3. As we read and hear the Word of God . .

- Do so with diligence.
- Do so with dependence.