

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
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Introduction to the Decalogue

- Interpretation

- J. Douma (cf. WLC 99)

1. “The Decalogue must be interpreted spiritually.”
2. “The negative commandments (‘You shall not . . .’) include positive commands, and vice versa.”
3. “. . . [W]here one sin is mentioned, the commandment intends to cover the entire range of related sins.”
4. “Those commandments concerned specifically with love toward God weigh more heavily than those commandments concerned specifically with love toward neighbor.”
5. “The starting point and goal of all the commandments is love.”

Question and Answer 50

Q. 50: Which is the first commandment?

A. The first commandment is, Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.¹

¹ Exodus 20:3

Question and Answer 50

- Introduction to the First Commandment
 - The First Commandment is first for a reason.
 - It is the most fundamental and comprehensive.
 - In its positive form Christ calls it the “first and greatest commandment” (Deut. 6:4-5; Matt. 22:38).
 - Really, the violation of any other commandment is also a violation of this first commandment.

Question and Answer 51

Q. 51: What is required in the first commandment?

A. The first commandment requireth us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God and our God;¹ and to worship and glorify Him accordingly.²

¹ 1 Chronicles 28:9; Deuteronomy 26:17

² Matthew 4:10; Psalm 29:2

Question and Answer 51

1. "To Know and Acknowledge God"

- It is our duty to know God (1 Chr. 28:9).
- And to acknowledge him (Prov. 3:6).
 - What is the difference between "knowing" and "acknowledging" God?
- We should do this by a humble fear of him (Gen. 42:18).
- And by a hearty confidence in him (Psa. 25:2).
- And by an entire submission to him (James 4:7).

Question and Answer 51

2. “To Be the Only True God and Our God”

- We should acknowledge God as our God (Isa. 44:5).
- And as the only true God (1 Thess. 1:9).
 - What is the difference between acknowledging God to be the only true God and to be our God?
- We should do this publicly and in the face of the world (1 Tim. 6:12).
- We should do it with judgment and understanding (Josh. 24:15).
- We should do it joyfully and without regret (Acts 16:34).

Question and Answer 51

2. “To Be the Only True God and Our God”

- We should do it sincerely and without deceit (Prov. 23:26).
- We should do it entirely and without reserve (Deut. 1:36).
- We should do it resolutely and without hesitation (Josh. 24:21).
- And we should do it fixedly and without revolt (Psa. 80:18).

Question and Answer 51

2. "To Be the Only True God and Our God"
 - We should give ourselves up to the will of God (2 Sam. 15:26).
 - And surrender ourselves to his government (Isa. 26:13).
 - And devote ourselves to his service (2 Chron. 30:8).
 - And God has a just right to all this (1 Chron. 29:14).

Question and Answer 51

3. “To Worship and Glorify Him Accordingly”
 - It is not enough that we verbally devote ourselves to the Lord (Psa. 76:11).
 - We must therefore worship him (1 Pet. 2:5).
 - We must do this with the inner man (Psa. 103:1).
 - And with the whole man (ibid.).
 - And with a view to Christ (Isa. 56:7).
 - And by the assistance of the Spirit (Eph. 3:16).
 - And in the way of his own appointments (Matt. 15:9).

Question and Answer 51

3. “To Worship and Glorify Him Accordingly”
- We should also glorify God (1 Cor. 6:20).
 - We should do this by a constant attendance on his ordinances (Psa. 86:9).
 - And by a humble confession of our sins (Josh. 7:19).
 - And by a regular course of obedience (John 15:8).
 - And if called thereto by suffering for his sake (John 21:19).
 - And this will in the end redound to our own advantage (1 Sam. 2:30).

Question and Answer 52

Q. 52: What is forbidden in the first commandment?

A. The first commandment forbiddeth the denying,¹ or not worshipping and glorifying the true God,² as God and our God,³ and the giving that worship and glory to any other, which is due unto Him alone.⁴

¹ Psalm 14:1

³ Psalm 81:10,11

² Romans 1:21

⁴ Romans 1:25,26

Question and Answer 52

1. Denying God

- It is a sin to deny God (Jude 4).
- God may be denied in his attributes (Psa. 73:11).
- And in his authority (Psa. 12:4).
- And in his providence (Zeph. 1:12).
- And in his truths (2 Pet. 2:1).
- And God may be practically denied even where he is doctrinally owned (Tit. 1:16).
 - “Practical Atheism”

Question and Answer 52

2. Other Ways of Violation

- Ignorance of God is a great sin (Jer. 5:4).
- And forgetfulness of God (Deut. 32:18).
- And distrust of God (Exod. 17:7).
 - Cf. HC 95
- And contempt of God (Psa. 10:13).
- And any abatement of affection toward him (Rev. 2:4).

Question and Answer 52

3. Not Worshiping God

- It is a sin to neglect the worship of God (Isa. 43:22).
- Or to divide it (Zeph. 1:5).
- Or to be remiss in it (Psa. 78:37).
- Or to perform it for selfish ends (Zech. 7:5).

Question and Answer 52

4. Idolatry

- Idolatry is a very heinous sin (1 Cor. 10:7).
- The Gentiles were idolaters (Deut. 29:17).
- They were guilty of the grossest idolatry (1 Cor. 10:20).
- The Papists are idolaters (2 Thess. 2:4).

Question and Answer 52

4. Idolatry

- But there is such a thing as heart idolatry (Ezek. 14:3).
- Proud men are idolaters (Ezek. 28:2).
- And covetous men (Col. 3:5).
- And sensualists (Phil. 3:19).
- Undue flattery is also a kind of idolatry (Acts 12:22).
- This is a sin which God will correct in this world (Ezek. 23:49).
- And he will severely punish it in the world to come (1 Cor. 6:9).

Question and Answer 52

4. Idolatry

– Douma

- “All idolatrous worship is in fact the worship of creatures like rain, sexuality, love, authority, and intellect . . . If these powers remain in their rightful place assigned by the Creator, they serve people. But when they occupy a wrong place, then they eventually master people as God surrenders fallen man to his own desires (Rom. 1:24-25).”

Question and Answer 52

4. Idolatry

– Douma

- “The names [of pagan gods] may disappear, but the powers remain. The Bible also shows us clearly that idolatry can live apart from idol names. We read that a man’s *strength* can be his god (Hab. 1:11). You can say to *gold*, ‘You are my confidence’ (Job 31:24); *money* can be called Mammon (Matt. 6:24); and *covetousness* is explicitly called idolatry in the Bible (Col. 3:5). We can make our *stomach* our god (Phil. 3:19).”

Question and Answer 52

4. Idolatry

– Douma

- “The list could be expanded. People can make idols out of almost anything. The erotic, the desire for power, reason, nature, tradition, and conscience – each of these can be absolutized in ways both uncultured and very refined.”

– Calvin

- “Man's nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols.”

Question and Answer 52

4. Idolatry

– Questions to Ascertain whether or not
Something is an Idol:

- Do I spend more time thinking about it than I do meditating on God and His Word?
- Does it bring you greater joy/delight than your relationship with God?
- Would you disobey God in order to get or keep hold of it?
- Would you be unwilling to sacrifice it if God asked you to?

Question and Answer 53

Q. 53: What are we taught especially 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.¹

¹ Ezekiel 8:5-18

Question and Answer 53

- The Meaning of “Before Me”
 - How is this normally understood?
 - In Hebrew, it is literally, “before my face” and carries with it the idea of defiance.”
 - Calvin
 - “The phrase that follows, ‘before my face,’ makes the offense more heinous because God is provoked to jealousy as often as we substitute our own inventions in place of him. This is like a shameless woman who brings in an adulterer before her husband’s very eyes only to vex his mind the more.”

Question and Answer 53

1. The Omniscience of God

- God sees all our actions (Psa. 139:11).
- He sees our most secret duties (Matt. 6:4).
- He sees our most secret sins (Psa. 90:8).
- And this should dissuade from sin (Gen. 39:9).

Question and Answer 53

1. The Omniscience of God

- Idolaters often flatter themselves that God does not see them (Ezek. 8:12).
- But God does see them (Psa. 44:20-21).
- This is an aggravation of their sin (Isa. 65:3).
- And it should be a preservative against it (1 Chron. 28:9).

Question and Answer 53

2. The Offense of Idolatry

- Idolatry is spiritual robbery (Isa. 42:8).
- And spiritual adultery (Hos. 9:1).
- God is therefore greatly displeased with it (Deut. 32:16).
- And this is a reason why we should be aware of it (Psa. 90:11).