

## 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

### QUESTION # 156.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #156. *Is the word of God to be read by all?*

A. Although all are not to be permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation,<sup>1</sup> yet all sorts of people are bound to read it apart by themselves,<sup>2</sup> and with their families:<sup>3</sup> to which end, the holy scriptures are to be translated out of the original into vulgar languages.<sup>4</sup>

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Question 1—*Are all permitted to read the word publicly to the congregation?*

*Answer*—The public reading of the Word of God, in the congregation, is God's ordinance and a mean of grace, Deut. 31:9, 11-13. As such, this practice was the common use amongst the Old Testament church, Acts 13:27. Now, if Moses of old was read with such diligence, Acts 15:21; how much more ought the Gospel of Christ to be read amongst the New Testament church, Heb. 3:1-6? Thus, the apostle enforces this expectation by charging the recipients of his epistles to see that they are read publicly, Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27.

So far from finding a command that all read aloud at once in unison, 1 Cor. 14:11; we see a need for an orderly and edifying manner to be adopted in all public speaking, 1 Cor. 14:29, 30, 40. The reading is to be conducted with an end of edification, Hab. 2:2. We find in the Scriptures that this task of publicly reading the Word was committed to those who were teachers of the people, Neh. 8:2, 3. So, particularly in the worshipping assembly, this duty of reading was discharged by the Levites, or teachers, of old, Neh. 9:3-5. It was the responsibility of the teachers to see that the Word was read with understanding, Neh. 8:8. Jesus himself, being a teacher sent from God, John 3:2; was also one of those to whom the reading of the Scriptures was committed, Luke 4:15-21.

Some reasons for the reading of the Word being committed to those who teach (*i.e.*, pastors and teachers/doctors) are because: 1.) The Scriptures are to be read gravely, or with a sense of the dignity of the matter, Josh. 8:34, 35. 2.) The Scriptures are to be read piously, with reference to the power of God present in and by that Word, Heb. 4:12. 3.) The Scriptures ought to be read over in due order so that the church might be made familiar with the whole of its contents, Luke 24:27. 4.) The Scriptures ought to be read with an eye to giving a sound exposition of the doctrine of the Word, Acts 17:2. 5.) The Scriptures are given to make all wise to salvation, through doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction, 2 Tim. 3:15-17; which is the special duty of those who teach, 2 Tim. 2:24, 25. 6.) It is the duty of those teaching to speak for the congregation in those things requiring one voice, Acts 4:24. 7.) It is the duty of those who teach to catechize and

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<sup>1</sup> Deut. 31:9, 11-13; Neh. 8:2, 3; 9:3-5.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 17:19; Rev. 1:3; John 5:39; Isa. 34:16.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 6:6-9; Gen. 18:17, 19; Ps. 78:5-7.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. 14:6, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 24, 27, 28.

instruct those coming into the faith, which must needs involve the reading of the Scriptures, Acts 8:30-35.

Question 2—*Are all sorts of people bound to read the word of God apart by themselves?*

*Answer*—Although the reading of the Scriptures publicly is to be committed to the hands of some, yet all sorts of people (who are able) are bound to read the Word of God, Josh. 1:8. Reading of the Word is an indication that they are indeed born from on high, Acts 17:11 (noble; *εὐγενέστεροι*). The command to read the Word of God by one's self encompasses those of highest degree to those of more modest degree, Deut. 17:19; Isa. 34:16.

That all should give diligence to the reading of the Word is cleared from the following considerations: 1.) It is in the Scriptures that we find the true doctrine of salvation and eternal life, John 5:39. 2.) It is the character of every really good man to delight in this Word, Ps. 1:2. 3.) It is necessary to avoid that which is erroneous in religion, Matt. 22:29. 4.) It helps to keep men from sinning against the Almighty, Ps. 119:11. 5.) It enlightens the mind to all the duties of life, Prov. 6:23. 6.) It is the source of all true wisdom, Jer. 8:9. 7.) It is the duty of every Christian that the Word of Christ dwell in him, Col. 3:16. 8.) There is a blessing in the reading of the Word, Rev. 1:3.

Question 3—*Should the word of God also be read in families?*

*Answer*—The duty of families worshipping, as families, is clear, Jer. 10:25. It belongs to fathers to see that their children are instructed in the Word of God, including in and through the reading of it, Deut. 11:18-20. Every family ought to be a church and as they are to speak to God in prayer, so they ought to hear God speak to them by reading the Word, Deut. 6:6-9. They are committed to families so that the knowledge of the true God will be passed from fathers to their children, Gen. 18:17, 19; Ps. 78:5-7.

Question 4—*What should we think of the translating of the Scriptures from the original languages into those of the audience?*

*Answer*—Since Christ bids all men, without distinction, to search the Scriptures, John 5:39; it must follow that they need to be translated into the vulgar tongues of those to whom they come, 1 Cor. 14:6, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 24, 27, 28.

The propriety of translating is evident if we consider: 1.) The Scriptures were originally given to the Jews in their native tongue for their understanding in its reading, Deut. 31:10-12. 2.) The New Testament was written in Greek, which at that time was the most general known language amongst all the nations, Acts 21:37; Rev. 9:11; John 19:20. 3.) Both the prophets and the apostles preached their doctrines to various people and nations in their own languages, Jer. 36:15, 16; Acts 2:6. 4.) Immediately after the times of the apostles there were a number of translations (*i.e.*, Syriac, Persian, *etc.*) made into the vulgar tongues of the nations to whom the Gospel was taken, Matt. 28:19, 20.

The necessity of translating is evident, if we consider: 1.) All things must be done to edifying in the worship of God, 1 Cor. 14:26; but tongues without interpretation do not profit the assembly, 1 Cor. 14:12, 13. 2.) All are commanded to make a trial of the spirits and the doctrine proclaimed, 1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Cor. 10:15; as well as are met with this necessity in religious controversy, John 7:52. 3.) It is in the Scriptures that all men must read of the way of eternal life, Prov. 2:9; Luke 16:29. 4.) The Scriptures set forth the duties of all men, in their places and stations, Ps. 119:24; 2 Chron. 23:11. 5.) The Scriptures set forth the ground of all faith, Rom. 4:20; 2 Chron. 20:20. 6.) The Scriptures are the declaration of God's will to his whole church, Hos. 8:12; Rev. 2:1, 8, 12.