

A Brief and Easy Explanation of the

The Shorter Catechism

Presented by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster
to both houses of Parliament, and by them approved,
Wherein the Newest Students¹ May in a Speedy and Easy Way
Be Brought to Understand the Principles of Religion,
In Imitation of a Catechism Formerly Published by
Mr. Herbert Palmer, B.D. and late Master of Queen's College
by

John Wallis, Minister of the Gospel

Translated into 21st Century American English

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¹ The original has “Meanest Capacities.” This phrase is offensive to modern ears, but Wallis surely had no unkind thoughts, thinking mostly of younger children. He wrote for an audience where substantial knowledge of the Christian religion was general and pervasive, not for a modern, multicultural, and international audience.

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Notes to the Reader

Words or phrases in brackets [] are generally synonyms or short definitions of the word just preceding the brackets. Occasionally brackets contain explanatory material. Footnotes give longer definitions or explanations. Also, some footnotes point out

variations between the source texts used in this translation;² such variations are typically very minor. Helpful Hint: When using Adobe Reader, you can click on a footnote to jump to it. Then use <alt><left-arrow> to return to the main text. Other PDF readers and non-Windows computers will have a similar keyboard shortcut; check the menus or toolbars in the browser or PDF reader.

Scripture Proof Texts - Important Information

Scripture proof texts are an important concern in this document; the WSC is, after all, only a summary of teachings from the Word of God. Portions of the WSC are typically *followed* by superscripted letters that correspond to the same superscripted letter *preceding* one or more Scripture references. These superscripted letters mirror the WSC/Scripture proof text linkage of the original WSC. These letters are omitted when all references pertain to the whole paragraph. Also, in certain cases, the letters may not exactly mirror the original linkage due to rearrangement of the text for readability.

In versions of this document with embedded or hyperlinked proof texts, all Scripture references are followed by four hyperlinks: ESV, KJ3, NASB, and WEB, standing for the English Standard Version, the King James 3 Bible, the New American Standard Bible, and the World English Bible respectively. Some comments on these four versions and their differences are in order. These four are the only faithful, reliable, and contemporary Bible versions for which the editor was able to obtain permission to quote extensively. At the time of the writing of the Westminster documents, both the Geneva Bible and the King James Version (KJV) (also known as the Authorized Version) were in common use, but quotations within the Westminster documents are from the KJV, and much of the wording of the Westminster standards comes straight out of the KJV. In light of this, the KJ3 and the WEB are quite helpful as they are direct descendants of the KJV and of the original language manuscript streams from which the KJV was translated. Of these two, the WEB is by far the more readable. The KJ3 is a “literal translation” of the original languages. It can be extremely helpful to the careful reader by showing idiomatic and other features of the original languages that are often lost by other translations; knowledge of such features adds color and depth to our understanding of God’s Word. On the other hand, the KJ3 can mislead the reader for this very same reason. By way of example, consider Daniel 10:4 in the KJ3: “And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the hand of the great river.” Other versions put “side” or “bank” instead of “hand,” which makes the meaning immediately clear. It is the editor’s considered opinion that most readers should not use the KJ3 without simultaneously consulting another translation. This caution applies to all other literal translations as well. The ESV and NASB draw upon other original language manuscript streams (at least to

² The two primary source texts were those found in the *Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, C-1*, <http://reformedpresbyterian.org/downloads/constitution2010.pdf> (accessed September 30, 2014) and three web sites: <http://www.semperreformanda.com/creeds/westminster-shorter-catechism/>, <http://www.westminsterconfession.org/confessional-standards/the-westminster-shorter-catechism.php>, and <http://www.grace4families.org/index.php/doctrine/shorter-catechism> (accessed January 3, 2015). These three were electronically compared and found identical. See Appendix B for more information.

some extent) than did the KJV, and thus, in some cases, the reasons that the Westminster Divines chose a particular passage may be harder to discern. The NASB has long had a reputation for precision, while the ESV is among the easiest of contemporary and faithful translations to read. The careful seeker of Divine Truth will routinely consult multiple translations (Proverbs 11:14) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.³

These hyperlinks will jump to the referenced text, which text is included in this document. Each proof text also has a nearby “Back” link. The reader should note the difference between these Back links and the browser or reader Back button: the included Back link returns the reader to the proof text hyperlink, while the browser or reader Back button returns the reader to the former page location. Also, on the web version *only*, pausing the mouse over a hyperlink will display the passage in a screen tip, up to the first 256 characters. (This is true whether the web version is accessed online or as files on your computer.) Most web browsers and PDF readers will allow the user to open a “New Window” displaying the same document in two windows. Some readers will find this feature helpful as they study the WSC text and proof Scriptures together, something the editor highly recommends. Also, some Scripture passages may seem incomplete to some readers. This is because the WSC was written for those with some amount of Bible knowledge; they would recognize the context. In such cases, the reader is strongly encouraged to study the broader context of the Scripture passage.

Editor’s Introduction

John Wallis, the author of the *Explanation*,⁴ was one of the scribes of the Westminster Assembly and is more broadly known as a pioneer in mathematics. The *Explanation* met with great approval by the Assembly and was printed in 1648.⁵ Wallis’s *Explanation* contains the original text of the *Shorter Catechism*, including questions, answers, and Bible proof texts. For each *Catechism* question and answer, Wallis inserted a series of additional questions, each of which has a “Yes” or “No” answer. In the spirit of Wallis’s original work, this present translation of Wallis’s *Explanation* uses the main questions and answers from the editor’s translation of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*⁶ and simply inserts translations of Wallis’s new questions and answers into the modern *Catechism* text between the question and the long answer of

³ The editor is well aware of the “KJV Only,” Westcott-Hort, Majority Text, and other schools of thought and the attending, often uncharitable, controversies concerning them. He does not apologize for the simplifications presented here, since these topics are outside of the scope of this document.

⁴ John Wallis, *A Brief and Easie Explanation of the Shorter Catechisme Presented by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, to both Houses of Parliament, and by Them Approved* (London: printed by A. Miller for Tho. Underhill as the sign of the Bible in Wood-street, 1648). Reproduction of the original in the Congregational Library (London, England). Identified on UMI microfilm (Early English Books, 1641–1700) reel 1859 as W46. Published by EEBO Editions, ProQuest, December 13, 2010) ISBN-13: 978-1171330981. This source text is the sole source for the present translation. The editor has found the EEBO source text reproduction to be of fair to poor quality and to contain many errors; neither the EEBO source text, nor the present translation of Wallis’s material should be considered authoritative. Generally, these errors do not appear to be the fault of EEBO.

⁵ William Maxwell, DD, Hetherington, LLD, *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Edmonton, AB: Still Waters Revival Books, 1991), 302.

the *Catechism*.⁷ As such, all footnotes, introductory material, appendices, and so on that appear in the translation are preserved as well. Finally, in contrast to the formal prose of the *Catechism*, Wallis's questions are in an informal conversational style, and often in incomplete sentences; the editor has endeavored to preserve this aspect as well.

Wallis's phrase in his title, "meanest capacities,"⁸ seems offensive today, but at that time it applied mainly to younger children; older children were expected to memorize and understand the *Shorter Catechism*. Wallis addresses his book to "Christian Reader," an appropriate form of address in seventeenth-century England where most people considered themselves Christians and substantial knowledge of the Christian religion was general. In the modern, internationally connected, and multicultural world, there are many people who have had little or no exposure to biblical, much less Reformed, Christianity. It is this audience, as well as children in Christian families, who may benefit from the simplified questions, additional detail, and clarifications provided in the *Explanation*. Thus, the editor was motivated to translate this nearly lost work for the benefit of twenty-first-century readers.

While the editor does not presume to replace any denomination's standard text, the present translation is also given in order to make the original richness of the 1647 WSC accessible and easily read by the contemporary reader, all to the glory, praise, and honor of God. The editor has endeavored to faithfully retain the meaning of the original text, translating word for word when possible. At the same time, the goal of readability is paramount with the intent that one may read with ease, focusing on the material without being distracted by antique spelling, vocabulary, grammar, or difficult sentence constructs. For this reason, there are times when the original text is quite considerably modified and rearranged. Details on the translation process and philosophy may be found in Appendix B.

Regrettably, no human work can be translated without some loss of finer shades of meaning. It is the editor's opinion, however, that this loss is small compared to the loss imposed on many readers by changes in word and phrase meanings over time. Readers interested in more detailed study are encouraged to consult the referenced Scriptures and some of the many commentaries on the WSC, as well as the original WSC itself.

The Scripture proof texts given here are the originals provided by the Westminster Divines. This is in keeping with the goal of providing a faithful translation of the original WSC. Most editions of the WSC use different sets of proof texts than the original; the editor makes no judgment concerning these other sets, recognizing that others may have different goals.

⁶ Tom Sullivan, Editor, *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, <http://beforgiven.info/HostedLiterature.htm#wsc> (Accessed August 8, 2015).

⁷ Due to the number of errors in the *Explanation*, no attempt was made to use text from the *Explanation* as source material for the main *Shorter Catechism* questions and answers.

⁸ The editor has put "Newest Students" for "Meanest Capacities" in the title. Wallis surely meant no unkindness.

The editor has endeavored to translate faithfully without interjecting his own opinions. Nonetheless, the WSC is a human work that is a product of its place in history and geography. God has continued to raise up able theologians in the intervening 370 years, and we now know that there do exist a very few theological errors in the WSC. The editor is conscience-bound to point out these errors for fear of propagating that which is not in accordance with Scripture. All such editorial opinions are clearly designated in the footnotes. Let the reader be as the Bereans, searching the Scriptures, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Change Log

Unlike traditional paper book publishing, electronic publishing allows fairly rapid increments to new additions. This log allows the reader to know what changes have been made from an earlier version.

March, 13, 2018

Question 9, second yes/no question, was reworded for clarity. Footnote was added to last question to warn reader that some Bible versions omit the conclusion from the Lord's Prayer. Minor typographical corrections.

October 22, 2015

Original release.

Author's Introduction

Christian Reader:

You have here presented to you a brief explanation of the *Shorter Catechism* composed by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, and presented by them to both Houses of Parliament. Since this is a somewhat unusual method, I thought it necessary to give you this brief rationale for it.

You may have seen a Catechism previously published in similar form by that godly, learned, and reverend divine, now with God, Mr. Herbert Palmer. This form, though somewhat unusual, was considered by him to be very useful, and it was accordingly received with great commendation. It was his earnest desire (as is well known) that the Assembly's *Catechism* (intended for public use) should be published in a similar form, either by the Assembly, or (at least) by some private author. He was fully resolved to do it himself [and would have] had God granted him life to see that catechism fully completed. For this reason, and also due to the intimate acquaintance I had with him, I was quite persuaded to undertake that which Palmer was prevented by death from doing, both to accomplish Palmer's desires, and to gratify those who may receive benefit from using it.

The questions and answers of the Assembly's *Catechism* (together with the texts of Scripture annexed by them for the proofs of it), I have completely preserved without any variation. In composing the questions and answers, the Assembly was careful that all of the answers would be complete sentences by themselves so that the meaning of the answer would not depend upon the foregoing question. Indeed, these form so many distinct aphorisms [concise formulations of truth] that contain in brief the basis of the Christian religion. By this means, the learner is not required to tax his memory with the question in order to understand the answer. Nor is there the similar danger of confounding his understanding by misapplying the answer to the wrong question, a problem in many other catechisms. The questions are also so framed that any one of them may be asked alone by itself without depending upon the previous question.

The only thing I did in it was to add, right next to the Assembly's answers, the shorter questions that are answered by "Yes" or "No."⁹ Thus, the different particulars of the larger answer are distinctly pointed out and briefly explained. [This is suitable] to the comprehension of those [unfamiliar with the Christian religion or of young age,]¹⁰ who might not observe [some of the particulars of], or understand, the large answer if it were learned by rote.¹¹ All of this is done without taxing the learner's memory because to answer these short questions is not so much an exercise of the memory, but of judgment, and ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, assenting to the former and denying the latter. Indeed, the memory is greatly helped by it since there is nothing in the general answer except what the learner is reminded of by some of the questions. When using it, especially for tender minds,¹² the instructor may first rehearse the main question without expecting an immediate answer to it until he has asked all of the shorter questions belonging to it and received answers to them. He may then repeat the main question. Thus the learner will be better able to give the general answer to the whole, having already assented to all of it by parts. However, the judicious instructor is not limited; at need, he may vary his method or material by addition, omission, or alteration as he sees fit. If you receive any good from these endeavors, let God have the glory, and he [Wallis] will have fulfilled his purpose,

Who is yours in Christ Jesus,
J. W. [John Wallis]

⁹ Wallis's work was in three columns, from left to right: Questions, Yes or No answers, then the *Catechism* answers. The editor has chosen a format for the present work that is easier to use.

¹⁰ The original has "weak capacities," which is unnecessarily offensive to modern ears. Wallis would have been thinking primarily of younger children in a culture where substantially complete knowledge of Christianity was general.

¹¹ Recall that the *Shorter Catechism* was frequently committed to rote memory in Wallis's time.

¹² The original has "weak capacities."

Questions 1–10

Question 1. What is the chief purpose of man?

Is it to seek himself or make himself great?	No
Or, to enjoy the profits or pleasures of the world?	No
Or, is it to glorify God and enjoy Him forever?	Yes

Answer. Man's chief purpose is to glorify God,^a and to enjoy Him forever.^b

^a1 Corinthians 10:31; Romans 11:36; ^bPsalms 73:25–28

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

Can we receive sufficient direction from our own wisdom or the light of nature?	No
Or, from God's works of creation and providence only?	No
Or, is the Word of God the only rule?	Yes
Or, must we daily expect new revelations from heaven?	No
Is it the Word of God that is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?	Yes
Or, something else?	No

A. The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments,^a is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him.^b

^a2 Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 2:20; ^b1 John 1:3–4

Q. 3. What do the Scriptures primarily teach?

Do they teach us what man is to believe concerning God?	Yes
And, what duty God requires of man?	Yes

A. The Scriptures primarily teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.

2 Timothy 1:13; 2 Timothy 3:16

Q. 4. What is God?

Does God have a body or bodily parts?	No
Or, is He a spirit without body or bodily parts?	Yes
Is God infinite in being?	Yes
Without any bounds of place, time, or perfection?	Yes
Or, is He finite as all creatures ¹³ are?	No
Is God eternal in being, without either beginning or end?	Yes
Or, had He a beginning as all creatures have?	No
And, will He ever have an end?	No
Is God unchangeable?	Yes
Or, is He subject to change as creatures are?	No

¹³ creature: any created thing, not necessarily an animal or plant

Is God infinite in wisdom?	Yes
Knowing all things?	Yes
And, doing all things wisely?	Yes
Or, can there be something that God does not know?	No
Or, does He lack wisdom in some things?	No
Or, at some times?	No
Is God almighty, that is, infinite in power?	Yes
Is God able to do all things?	Yes
Or, is there anything too hard for Him?	No
Is God infinite in holiness?	Yes
Or, is there any sin in Him?	No
Or, does He allow any to sin?	No
Is God infinite in justice?	Yes
Is He just in all things and at all times?	Yes
Or, is there any injustice or unrighteousness in Him?	No
Is God infinite in goodness?	Yes
Is He good in Himself [intrinsically good]?	Yes
And, the source of all good in creatures?	Yes
Is God infinite in truth?	Yes
Is it possible for Him to lie?	No
Or, to err or be deceived?	No
Is God eternal and unchangeable in all these perfections?	Yes
And, is it impossible for Him to be otherwise?	Yes
Is God a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being?	Yes
And, is He infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His wisdom?	Yes
And, in His power?	Yes
And, in His holiness?	Yes
And, in His justice?	Yes
And, in His goodness?	Yes
And, in His truth?	Yes

A. God is a spirit,^a infinite,^b eternal,^c and unchangeable,^d in His being,^e wisdom,^f power,^g holiness,^h justice, goodness, and truth.ⁱ

^aJohn 4:24; ^bJob 11:7–9; ^cPsalms 90:2; ^dJames 1:17; ^eExodus 3:14; ^fPsalms 147:5; ^gRevelation 4:8; ^hRevelation 15:4; ⁱExodus 34:6–7

Q. 5. Are there more Gods than one?

Are there more Gods than one? ¹⁴	No
Were those gods that the heathen worshiped as gods?	No
Is the living and true God the only God?	Yes

A. There is just one only, the living and true God.

Deuteronomy 6:4; Jeremiah 10:10

¹⁴ Wallis places the “No” after the main question; the editor repeats the question for consistency of format here and other places.

Q. 6. How many persons are there in the Godhead?

Are there three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Yes

Are there more than these three? No

Or, fewer? No

Is the Father God? Yes

Is the Son God? Yes

Is the Holy Spirit God? Yes

Are there three Gods? No

Or, are these three one God? Yes

Are they the same in substance? Yes

Or, of different substances? No

Are they equal in power and glory? Yes

Or, is one more powerful than another? No

Or, more glorious than another? No

A. There are three persons¹⁵ in the Godhead:¹⁶ the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, the same in substance and equal in power and glory.

1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19

Q. 7. What are the decrees of God?

Are they His eternal purpose, by which He has foreordained whatever events or things happen? Yes

Or, does anything happen that God has not decreed? No

Or, differently than God has decreed? No

Are the decrees of God eternal? Yes

Does God purpose or decree anything now besides what He has purposed from all eternity? No

Do changes in creatures motivate a change in God's purposes? No

Do changes in creatures cause a change in God's purposes? No

Or, has God, from all eternity, by an unchangeable decree, foreordained those changes in creatures? Yes

Has God foreordained all things for His own glory? Yes

Or, does anything happen that does not serve to glorify God? No

Or, that was not intended by Him for that purpose? No

Was God moved to make such decrees by anything outside of Himself? No

Or, was it only according to the counsel of His will? Yes

A. The decrees of God are His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will. By this counsel, for His own glory, He has foreordained whatever events or things happen.

Ephesians 1:4, 11; Romans 9:22–23

¹⁵ The Trinity is an unfathomable mystery that defies earthly analogies; *persons* refers to different, distinct, divine modes of being, against whom the concept of the individual human person is a very limited analogy.

¹⁶ Godhead: divine nature or essence of God

Q. 8. How does God execute¹⁷ His decrees?

Is the work of creation an execution of God's decrees?	Yes
And, the works of providence?	Yes
Or, does God cause anything to happen in His providence that was not previously decreed?	No

A. God executes His decrees in the works of creation and providence.

Q. 9. What is the work of creation?

Is it God's making all things out of nothing in the space of six days?	Yes
Or, was there anything that God did not directly make, or else make out of other things that He had made?	No
Did God make all things by the word of His power without the use of instruments?	Yes
Did God create anything sinful, mistakenly, or wrongly?	No
Or, was all very good?	Yes

A. The work of creation is God's making all things out of nothing, by the word of His power, in the space¹⁸ of six days, and all very good.

Genesis 1; Hebrews 11:3

Q. 10. How did God create man?

Did God create man both male and female after His own image?	Yes
In knowledge, righteousness, and holiness?	Yes
And, did man have dominion over the creatures?	Yes

A. God created man male and female, after His own image, having knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.¹⁹

Genesis 1:26–28; Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24

Questions 11–20

Q. 11. What are God's works of providence?

Does God preserve and govern all of His creatures?	Yes
And, all their actions?	Yes
Or, is there anything that does not stand in need of His preservation?	No
Or, that is exempt from His government?	No
Is God most holy, wise, and powerful in all His acts of providence?	Yes

¹⁷ execute: in this context, carry out, put into effect

¹⁸ space: in this context, time span

¹⁹ creature: in the context of this catechism, any created thing, not necessarily a human or animal

Or, is there any lack of holiness in God's providence?	No
Or, lack of wisdom?	No
Or, of power?	No

A. God's works of providence are His most holy,^a wise,^b and powerful preserving^c and governing all His creatures, and all their actions.^d

^aPsalm 145:17; ^bPsalm 104:24; Isaiah 28:29; ^cHebrews 1:3; ^dPsalm 103:19; Matthew 10:29–31

Q. 12. What special act of providence did God exercise toward man in the state [condition] in which he was created?

Did God enter into a covenant of life with man?	Yes
Upon condition of perfect obedience?	Yes
Or, absolutely, without any condition?	No
Had he liberty to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil?	No
Or, was he forbidden to eat from it?	Yes
And, that upon pain of death?	Yes

A. When God had created man, He entered into a covenant²⁰ of life with him, promising life upon condition of perfect obedience. Also God forbade him to eat of the tree²¹ of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death.

Galatians 3:12; Genesis 2:17

Q. 13. Did our first parents continue in the state in which they were created?

Did our first parents continue in the state in which they were created?	No
Or, did they fall from it by sinning against God?	Yes
Were they confirmed in innocence?	No
Were they forced to sin?	No
Or, were they left to the freedom of their own will?	Yes

A. Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the state in which they were created by sinning against God.

Genesis 3:6–8, 13; Ecclesiastes 7:29

Q. 14. What is sin?

Is any transgression of God's Law sin?	Yes
And, any lack of conformity to it?	Yes
Even in the smallest matters?	Yes
Or, only some gross transgressions?	No

A. Sin is any lack of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God.

²⁰ covenant: a formal agreement between two parties. But God's covenants with man are special as they are dictated by God to man. Such covenants, as expressed to man, usually have many of the following features: God's declaration of who He is, a historical background, commands to man, blessings and curses for obedience or disobedience thereof, and promises of eternal significance.

²¹ This was a real tree whose fruit is frequently called "the forbidden fruit." How it conferred knowledge is unknown as no such trees exist today.

1 John 3:4

Q. 15. What was the sin by which our first parents fell from the state in which they were created?

Was it their eating the forbidden fruit?	Yes
Or, was it some other sin?	No

A. The sin by which our first parents fell from the state in which they were created was their eating the forbidden fruit.

Genesis 3:6, 12

Q. 16. Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?

Did Christ fall as well as others?	No
Or, those who descend from Adam by ordinary generation?	Yes
Did they all sin with Adam in his first transgression?	Yes
And, fall with him into sin? ²²	Yes
Was the covenant made with Adam for his posterity as well as for himself?	Yes
Or, for himself only?	No

A. The covenant was made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity. Thus, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression.²³

Genesis 2:16–17; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22

Q. 17. Into what state did the fall bring mankind?

Into a state of sin?	Yes
And, misery?	Yes

A. The fall brought mankind into a state of sin and misery.

Romans 5:12

Q. 18. What is sinful about that state into which man fell?

Is man guilty of Adam's first sin?	Yes
And, does man lack original righteousness?	Yes
Or, does man still retain that righteousness in which he was created?	No
Is there a corruption of man's whole nature?	Yes
Or, is some part undefiled?	No
Is this what is commonly called original sin?	Yes
Do all actual transgressions proceed from it?	Yes
And, are they part of the sinfulness of man's condition?	Yes

A. The sinfulness of that state into which men fell consists in both:

1. That which is commonly called *original sin*:

²² The source text is unclear here, rendering the meaning uncertain.

²³ transgression: in this context, breaking God's law. Also, Adam's sin is passed from father to son and father to daughter by spiritual means, not biological, genetic, or epigenetic means.

- The guilt of Adam’s first sin
 - The lack of original righteousness
 - The corruption of his whole nature
2. All actual transgressions that proceed from it

Romans 5:12, 19; Romans 5:10–20; Ephesians 2:1–3; James 1:14–15; Matthew 15:19

Q. 19. What is the misery of that state into which man fell?

Have all men lost communion with God by their fall?	Yes
And, are they under His wrath and curse?	Yes
Are they made liable to all the miseries of this life?	Yes
And, to death itself?	Yes
Does death put an end to all their misery?	No
Or, are they liable to the pains of hell forever?	Yes

A. All humans, by their fall, lost communion with God^a and are under His wrath and curse.^b They are thus made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.^c

^aGenesis 3:8, 10, 24; ^bEphesians 2:2–3; Galatians 3:10; ^cLamentations 3:39; Romans 6:23; Matthew 25:41, 46

Q. 20. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?

Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?	No
Or, does he deliver all mankind out of it?	No
Or, has He elected some to everlasting life?	Yes
From all eternity?	Yes
And, was it out of His mere good pleasure?	Yes
Or, because of something God foresaw in the elect that moved Him to that election?	No
Does God deliver the elect out of the state of sin and misery and bring them into a state of salvation?	Yes
Are the elect thus delivered and saved by the first covenant, which was a covenant of works, upon their perfect obedience?	No
Or, did God enter into a covenant of grace to deliver and save them by a Redeemer?	Yes

A. God, out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life.^a Thus He entered into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the state of sin and misery and to bring them into a state of salvation²⁴ by a Redeemer.^b

^aEphesians 1:4; ^bRomans 3:20–22; Galatians 3:21–22

²⁴ *Salvation* must be distinguished from *justification*; salvation is a package containing many benefits and graces such as adoption, sanctification, divine intercession, and so forth (see Q. 33 ff. below).

Questions 21–30

Q. 21. Who is the Redeemer of God’s elect?

Is the Lord Jesus Christ the only redeemer of God’s elect?	Yes
Or, is there any other redeemer?	No
Is Christ the eternal Son of God?	Yes
And, did Christ become man?	Yes
Is Christ both God and man?	Yes
Are there two distinct natures in Christ?	Yes
And, two distinct persons?	No
Or, two distinct natures and one person?	Yes
And, does Christ continue to be so forever?	Yes

A. The only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ,^a the eternal Son of God. He became man,^b and thus was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.^c

^a1 Timothy 2:5–6; ^bJohn 1:14; Galatians 4:4; ^cRomans 9:5; Luke 1:35; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 7:24–25

Q. 22. How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

Did Christ, the Son of God, become man by taking to Himself a true body and true human soul?	Yes
Or, did Christ have a body without a soul?	No
Or, did Christ have a soul without a body?	No
Was Christ conceived and born in an ordinary way as others are?	No
Or, was Christ conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary and born of her?	Yes
Was Christ conceived and born without sin?	Yes
Or, was He conceived and born in sin as others are?	No

A. Christ, the Son of God, became man by taking to Himself a true body^a and true human soul.^b He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary and born of her,^c yet without sin.^d

^aHebrews 2:14, 16; Hebrews 10:5; ^bMatthew 26:38; ^cLuke 1:27, 31, 35, 42; Galatians 4:4; ^dHebrews 4:15; Hebrews 7:26

Q. 23. What offices does Christ execute as our Redeemer?

Does He execute the office of a prophet?	Yes
And, of a priest?	Yes
And, of a king?	Yes
Did Christ execute these offices in his state of humiliation?	Yes
And, in His state of exaltation?	Yes

A. Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the offices²⁵ of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, in both His states of humiliation and exaltation.

²⁵ office: in this context, both the idea of a position of duty, trust, and authority, and the idea of a specific function apply to Christ

Acts 3:21–22; Hebrews 12:25; 2 Corinthians 13:3; Hebrews 5:5–7; Hebrews 7:25; Psalm 2:6; Isaiah 9:6–7; Matthew 21:5; Psalm 2:8–11

Q. 24. How does Christ execute the office of a prophet?

In revealing to us the will of God for our salvation?	Yes
Or, is there anything necessary for our salvation that He has not revealed?	No
Does He reveal this by His Word and Spirit?	Yes
Or, only by His Word without the Spirit?	No

A. Christ executes the office of a prophet by revealing to us, by His Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.

John 1:18; 1 Peter 1:10–12; John 15:15; John 20:31

Q. 25. How does Christ execute the office of a priest?

In His offering Himself, just once, as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice?	Yes
And, to reconcile us to God?	Yes
Or, was He offered up by someone else against His will?	No
Was He offered up a sacrifice more than once?	No
And, is He to be offered up ever again?	No
Or, does His offering up Himself a sacrifice only once sufficient to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God?	Yes
Did Christ make intercession for us?	Yes
And, does He continue to do so?	Yes
Or, has He finished His intercession along with His sacrifice?	No
And, is intercession part of His priestly office?	Yes

A. Christ executes the office of a priest:

- In His offering up of Himself, just once, as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice^a and reconcile us to God^b
- In making continual intercession for us^c

^aHebrews 9:14, 28; ^bHebrews 2:17; ^cHebrews 7:24–25

Q. 26. How does Christ execute the office of a king?

Does He subdue us to Himself?	Yes
Or, do we submit to Him merely out of our own accord?	No
Or, are we by nature enemies to Him?	Yes
And, does Christ rule and govern us?	Yes
Or, does Christ permit us to do what we want?	No
Or, allow us to remain rebellious?	No
Does He defend us?	Yes
And, restrain all of His and our enemies?	Yes
And, conquer them?	Yes
Or, does He leave us exposed to dangers and let us fend for ourselves?	No

Or, allow our enemies to do what they wish?	No
Or, leave them unconquered and allow them to prevail finally against Him?	No
Or, against us?	No
And, are these all parts of His kingly office?	Yes

A. Christ executes the office of a king in subduing us to Himself,^a in ruling^b and defending us,^c and in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies.^d

^aActs 15:14–16; ^bIsaiah 33:22; ^cIsaiah 32:1–2; ^d1 Corinthians 15:25; Psalm 110²⁶

Q. 27. In what did Christ’s humiliation consist?

Was being born an abasement of Christ?	Yes
Especially in a low condition?	Yes
Was He made under the Law?	Yes
Or, was He exempted from subjection to the Law?	No
Was He freed from the misery of this life?	No
Or, did He undergo the misery of this life?	Yes
And, the wrath of God?	Yes
Did He suffer death?	Yes
An ordinary natural death?	No
Or, did He undergo the cursed death of the Cross?	Yes
Was He buried?	Yes
And, did He rise again immediately?	No
Or, did He continue under the power of death for a time?	Yes
And, were all these things parts of Christ’s humiliation?	Yes

A. Christ’s humiliation²⁷ consisted in His:

- Being born, and that in a low condition^a
- Being made under the law^b
- Undergoing the miseries of this life^c
- Being subject to the wrath of God,^d and the cursed death of the Cross^e
- Being buried,^f and continuing under the power of death for a time^g

^aLuke 2:7; ^bGalatians 4:4; ^cHebrews 12:2–3; Isaiah 53:2–3; ^dLuke 22:44; Matthew 27:46; ^ePhilippians 2:8; ^f1 Corinthians 15:3–4; ^gActs 2:24–27, 31

Q. 28. In what does Christ’s exaltation consist?

Did Christ continue still in the grave and under the power of death?	No
Or, did He rise again from the dead the third day?	Yes
Was He to continue on the earth after His resurrection?	No
Or, did He ascend up into Heaven?	Yes
And, sit at the right hand of God the Father?	Yes

²⁶ RPCNA Constitution omits Psalm 110.

²⁷ In this context, *humiliation* refers primarily to Christ’s voluntary humbling of Himself, not something imposed upon Him by outside forces, although, of course, this did occur at the hands of His earthly enemies.

And, will Christ remain there forever?	No
Or, will He come to judge the world at the last day?	Yes
Or, will He come again before that time?	No
And, are all these part of Christ's exaltation?	Yes

A. Christ's exaltation consists in His rising again from the dead on the third day,^a in ascending up into heaven,^b in sitting at the right hand of God the Father,^c and in coming to judge the world at the last day.^d

^a1 Corinthians 15:4; ^bMark 16:19; ^cEphesians 1:20; ^dActs 1:11; Acts 17:31

Q. 29. How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?

By the effectual application of it to us by His Holy Spirit?	Yes
Or, may it be effectually applied to us without the Spirit?	No
Or, can those to whom the Spirit does not apply the redemption be partakers of it?	No

A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ by the effectual²⁸ application of it to us^a by His Holy Spirit.^b

^aJohn 1:11–12; ^bTitus 3:5–6

Q. 30. How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?

By working faith in us?	Yes
And, by that means uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling?	Yes
Or, may all this be done without the Spirit?	No

A. The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ by working faith in us,^a thus uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.^b

^aEphesians 1:13–14; John 6:37, 39; Ephesians 2:8; ^bEphesians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 1:9

Questions 31–40

Q. 31. What is effectual calling?

Is it the work of God's Spirit?	Yes
In effectual calling, does the Spirit of God convince us of our sin?	Yes
And, of our misery?	Yes
Or, are those effectually called who are never thus convinced of these?	No
Does the Spirit enlighten our minds in the knowledge of Christ?	Yes
And, renew our wills?	Yes
Or, do our minds remain as blind and our wills as perverse as they were before?	No
Can this be accomplished without the Spirit?	No

²⁸ effectual: completely effective

And, does the Spirit, by all this, persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, who is freely offered to us in the Gospel?	Yes
Or, in spite of all this, do we remain unwilling?	No
Or, unable?	No
Or, can we be thus persuaded or enabled without the Spirit?	No

A. Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit.^a He convinces us of our sin and misery,^b enlightens our minds in the knowledge of Christ,^c and renews our wills.^d By these, He persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ, who is freely offered to us in the Gospel.^e

^a2 Timothy 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14; ^bActs 2:37; ^cActs 26:18; ^dEzekiel 36:26–27; ^eJohn 6:44–45; Philippians 2:13

Q. 32. What benefits do those who are effectually called partake of in this life?

In this life, do they partake of justification?	Yes
And, adoption?	Yes
And, sanctification?	Yes
And, the various benefits that, in this life, either accompany or flow from these?	Yes

A. Those who are effectually called, in this life, partake of justification,^a adoption,^b sanctification, and the various benefits that, in this life, either accompany or flow from them.^c

^aRomans 8:30; ^bEphesians 1:5; ^c1 Corinthians 1:26, 30

Q. 33. What is justification?

In justification, does God pardon all our sins?	Yes
Or, only some of them?	No
Or, are we still accounted as guilty?	No
And, does He accept us as righteous in His sight?	Yes
Because of our own merits or satisfaction [of God’s justice]?	No
Or, only because of the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone?	Yes
Or, may we obtain it without faith?	No
Or, by faith and works together?	No
And, is all this an act of God’s free grace?	Yes
Or, can we merit or deserve [grace or anything else] from God?	No
At least in part?	No

A. Justification is an act of God’s free grace, in which He pardons all our sins^a and accepts us as righteous in His sight,^b on the sole basis of the righteousness of Christ imputed^{29, c} to us. Justification is received by faith alone.^d

^aRomans 3:24–25; Romans 4:6–8; ^b2 Corinthians 5:19, 21; ^cRomans 5:17–19; ^dGalatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9

²⁹ imputed: accounted, reckoned (to the account of). This important theological term has not even the smallest hint of the frequent modern connotation of falseness or artificiality. God cannot lie.

Q. 34. What is adoption?

By adoption, are we received into the number of the sons of God? Yes

And, have a right to all their privileges? Yes

And, is this an act of God's free grace? Yes

A. Adoption is an act of God's free grace,^a by which we are received into the number of, and have a right to all the privileges of, the sons of God.^b

^a1 John 3:1; ^bJohn 1:12; Romans 8:17

Q. 35. What is sanctification?

By sanctification, are we renewed after the image of God? Yes

In the whole man? Yes

Or, only in some part? No

Or, do we remain unrenewed as before? No

And, are we perfectly sanctified or renewed? No

Or, enabled (by degrees) more and more, to die to sin and live to righteousness? Yes

Are we able by ourselves to work this sanctification or renewal? No

Or, to merit it at God's hands? No

Or, is it a work of God's free grace? Yes

A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace,^a by which we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God,^b and are enabled more and more to die to sin and live to righteousness.^c

^a2 Thessalonians 2:13; ^bEphesians 4:23-24; ^cRomans 6:4, 6; Romans 8:1³⁰

Q. 36. What are the benefits that in this life accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?

In this life, may we have assurance of God's love? Yes

And, peace of conscience? Yes

And, joy in the Holy Spirit? Yes

Or, are these unobtainable until after this life?³¹ No

And, will we have an increase of grace in this life? Yes

And, perseverance in grace to the end? Yes

And, do all these benefits accompany or flow from our justification, adoption, and sanctification? Yes

Or, can those who are not justified, adopted, and sanctified have any of these benefits? No

A. The benefits that in this life accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience,^a joy in the Holy Spirit,^b increase of grace,^c and perseverance in grace to the end.^d

³⁰ Only the RPCNA *Constitution* has Romans 8:1.

³¹ The original is unclear. A typographical error is suspected. The question may also be read, "Or, can these still be had after this life? Yes"

^aRomans 5:1–2, 5; ^bRomans 14:17; ^cProverbs 4:18; ^d1 John 5:13; 1 Peter 1:5

Q. 37. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?

At death, are believers' souls made perfect in holiness?	Yes
Or, does some corruption remain in them?	No
And, do they immediately pass into glory?	Yes
Before they are again united to their bodies?	Yes
Do their bodies immediately pass into glory?	No
Or, rest in their graves until the resurrection?	Yes
Are their bodies separated from Christ at death?	No
Or, are they still united to Christ?	Yes

A. The souls of believers³² are, at their death, made perfect in holiness^a and immediately pass into glory.^b Their bodies, being still united to Christ,^c rest in their graves^d until the resurrection.^{33, e}

^aHebrews 12:23; ^b2 Corinthians 5:1, 6, 8; Philippians 1:23; Luke 23:43; ^c1 Thessalonians 4:14; ^dIsaiah 57:2; ^eJob 19:26–27

Q. 38. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?

Will believers be raised again?	Yes
In the same condition as they were before?	No
Or, will they be raised in glory?	Yes
And, will they be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment?	Yes
Or, rejected?	No
And, condemned?	No
And, will they be made perfectly blessed, fully enjoying God?	Yes
To all eternity?	Yes
Or, only for a time?	No

A. At the resurrection, believers will be raised up to glory.^a Thus they will be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment^b and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God^c to all eternity.^d

^a1 Corinthians 15:43; ^bMatthew 25:23; Matthew 10:32; ^c1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 13:12; ^d1 Thessalonians 4:17–18

Q. 39. What is the duty that God requires of man?

Does God require obedience to His revealed will?	Yes
Or, is it our choice whether or not we will obey Him?	No
And, is God's revealed will the rule of our obedience?	Yes

A. The duty that God requires of man is obedience to His revealed will.

³² In New Testament Greek, the same root applies to the noun form of the word translated “faith,” and the verb form translated “believe.” Biblically, then, a believer is one who has saving faith in Jesus Christ.

³³ The implication is that the decay of the body in the grave or dissolution of the body by any other means is no obstacle to Almighty God, who will change the bodies of believers into a glorious body of a different nature (Matthew 22:30).

Micah 6:8; 1 Samuel 15:22

Q. 40. What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?

Was the moral law given to man at first?	Yes
Or, not until afterwards?	No ³⁴
And, did God reveal that to man as the rule of his obedience?	Yes

A. The rule that God at first revealed to man for his obedience was the moral law.

Romans 2:14–15; Romans 10:5

Questions 41–50

Q. 41. Where is the entire moral law summarized?

Is it summarized in the Ten Commandments?	Yes
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A. The entire moral law is summarized in the Ten Commandments.

Deuteronomy 10:4; Matthew 19:17

Q. 42. What is the sum of the Ten Commandments?

Are we to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind?	Yes
And, to love our neighbor as ourselves?	Yes
And, is this the sum of the Ten Commandments?	Yes

A. The sum of the Ten Commandments is to love the Lord our God, with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves.

Matthew 22:37–40

Q. 43. What is the preface to the Ten Commandments?

(No intermediate questions.)

A. The preface to the Ten Commandments is in these words: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

Exodus 20:2

Q. 44. What does the preface to the Ten Commandments teach us?

Does it teach us that God is the Lord?	Yes
And, that He is our God?	Yes
And, that He is our Redeemer?	Yes
Or, can we be redeemed by any other?	No

³⁴ The original has “Yes,” contradicting the answer above. This is surely a typographical error. The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Ch. 19:2 states, “After Adam’s fall, this law continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness. As such, it was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in Ten Commandments.”

And, that therefore we are bound to keep all His commandments? Yes

In spite of all this, may we break His commandments? No

Or, at least some of them? No

A. The preface to the Ten Commandments teaches us that God is the Lord, and our God and Redeemer. Therefore we are bound to keep all His Commandments.

Luke 1:74–75; 1 Peter 1:15–19

Q. 45. What is the first Commandment?

(No intermediate questions.)

A. The first Commandment is, “You shall have no other gods before Me.”

Exodus 20:3

Q. 46. What is required in the first Commandment?

Does it require us to know God? Yes

Or, may we be safely ignorant of Him? No

And, are we to acknowledge Him to be the only true God? Yes

And, that there is no other than He? Yes

And, to be our God? Yes

Or, is it enough to acknowledge Him to be God, though we do not take Him to be our God? No

And, are we to worship and glorify Him accordingly? Yes

To love Him, fear Him, trust in Him, and obey Him? Yes

As God, and as our God? Yes

A. The first Commandment requires us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God and our God,^a and to worship and glorify Him accordingly.^b

^a1 Chronicles 28:9; Deuteronomy 26:17; ^bMatthew 4:10; Psalm 29:2

Q. 47. What is forbidden in the first Commandment?

Does it forbid denying the true God to be God? Yes

Or, to be our God? Yes

And, neglecting to worship and glorify Him as such? Yes

Or, to give that glory or worship to any other, which are due to Him alone? Yes

Or, may we give that glory or worship to some other? No

Or, forbear to give it to Him? No

A. The first Commandment forbids denying God.^a It forbids not worshipping and glorifying the true God as God^b and our God.^c It also forbids giving that worship and glory to any other, which is due to Him alone.^d

^aPsalm 14:1; ^bRomans 1:21; ^cPsalm 81:10–11; ^dRomans 1:25–26

Q. 48. What are we specially taught by the words “before Me” in the first Commandment?

Do they teach us that God, who sees all things, takes notice of the sin of having any other God?	Yes
Or, does He fail to take notice of it at all?	No ³⁵
And, is He much displeased with it?	Yes

A. The words “before Me” in the first Commandment teach us that God, who sees all things, takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other God.

Ezekiel 8:5–18; Psalm 44:20–21

Q. 49. What is the second Commandment?

(No intermediate questions.)

A. The second Commandment is, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

Exodus 20:4–6

Q. 50. What is required in the second Commandment?

Does God leave us to worship and serve Him in whatever way or manner we please?	No
Or, not to worship Him at all?	No
Or, has God appointed any religious worship and ordinances in His Word?	Yes
And, does this Commandment require us to receive and observe all such?	Yes
And, to keep them pure and intact?	Yes
Or, may we reject them?	No
Or, not observe them?	No
At least some of them?	No
Or, allow them to be polluted?	No
Or, corrupted?	No

A. The second Commandment requires receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all of the religious worship and ordinances that God has appointed in His Word.

Deuteronomy 32:46; Matthew 28:20; Acts 2:42

Questions 51–60

Q. 51. What is forbidden in the second Commandment?

Does it forbid worshiping God by images or any other way not appointed in His Word?	Yes
---	-----

³⁵ The original has “Yes,” certainly a typographical error.

Or, may we worship God by images? No

Or, by any other way of our own invention? No

A. The second Commandment forbids worshiping God by images^a or any other way not appointed in His Word.^b

^aDeuteronomy 4:15–19; Exodus 32:5, 8; ^bDeuteronomy 12:31–32

Q. 52. What are the reasons annexed to the second Commandment?

Has God a sovereignty over us? Yes

And, ownership of us? Yes

And, has He a zeal for His own worship? Yes

And, are these reasons why we should not worship Him in any other way than what He has appointed in His Word? Yes

A. The reasons annexed³⁶ to the second Commandment are: God’s sovereignty over us,^a His ownership of us,^b and the zeal He has for His own worship.^c

^aPsalms 95:2–3, 6; ^bPsalms 45:11; ^cExodus 34:13–14

Q. 53. What is the third Commandment?

(No intermediate questions.)

A. The third Commandment is, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”

Exodus 20:7

Q. 54. What is required in the third Commandment?

Does it require the holy and reverent use of God’s names? Yes

Of His titles? Yes

And, of His attributes? Yes

And, of His ordinances? Yes

Of His Word? Yes

And, of His works? Yes

Or, may any of these be used in an unholy or irreverent manner? No

A. The third Commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God’s names,^a titles,^b attributes,^{37, c} ordinances,^{38, d} Word,^e and works.^{39, f}

^aMatthew 6:9; Deuteronomy 28:58; ^bPsalms 68:4; ^cRevelation 15:3–4; ^dMalachi 1:11, 14; ^ePsalms 138:1–2; ^fJob 36:24

Q. 55. What is forbidden in the third Commandment?

Does it forbid all profaning anything by which God makes Himself known? Yes

³⁶ annexed to: attached to, particularly something added to a larger or more important body

³⁷ attributes: characteristics or qualities, e.g., His wisdom or eternal nature

³⁸ ordinances: prayer, sacraments, worship, etc., which He has ordained. The right and faithful use of oaths and vows is an ordinance to which the third Commandment is particularly applicable.

³⁹ works: creation and providence, or parts of them if in specific reference to God’s handiwork

.....
And, all abusing of these? Yes

A. The third Commandment forbids all profaning or abusing of anything by which God makes Himself known.

Malachi 1:6–7, 12; Malachi 2:2; Malachi 3:14

Q. 56. What is the reason annexed to the third Commandment?

.....
Is it because the Lord our God will not allow the breakers of this Commandment to escape His righteous judgments? Yes

.....
Do such breakers sometimes escape punishment from men? Yes

.....
And, may they likewise escape God's righteous judgments? No

A. The reason annexed to the third Commandment is: however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, the LORD our God will not allow them to escape His righteous judgment.

1 Samuel 2:12, 17, 22, 29; 1 Samuel 3:13; Deuteronomy 28:58–59

Q. 57. What is the fourth Commandment?

.....
(No intermediate questions.)

A. The fourth Commandment is, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

Exodus 20:8–11

Q. 58. What is required in the fourth Commandment?

.....
Does it require keeping holy to God such set times as He has appointed in His Word? Yes

.....
Has God expressly appointed one whole day in seven to be a holy Sabbath to Himself? Yes

.....
Or, has He left it to us to keep what time we please? No

A. The fourth Commandment requires keeping holy to God such set times as He has appointed in His Word; specifically one whole day in seven, to be a holy Sabbath to Himself.

Deuteronomy 5:12–14

Q. 59. Which day of the seven has God appointed to be the weekly Sabbath?

.....
Did God at first appoint the last day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath?⁴⁰ Yes

.....
And, was this to be observed from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ? Yes

⁴⁰ The original has “first day,” an obvious typographical error.

And, is it to be observed still?	No
Or, the first day of the week ever since?	Yes
And, is that to continue to the end of the world?	Yes
Is this the Christian Sabbath?	Yes

A. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath. Since then, the first day of the week is the Christian Sabbath, which is to continue to the end of the world.

Genesis 2:2–3; 1 Corinthians 16:1–2; Acts 20:7

Q. 60. How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?

Is it enough to rest some part of that day?	No
Or, must we rest all the day?	Yes
Even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days?	Yes
Or, only from such things that are at all times sinful?	No
Are works of necessity and mercy to be done that day?	Yes
And, may we spend the rest of the time idly?	No
Or, must we spend the whole time in the public and private exercises of God’s worship, except for time taken up by works of necessity and mercy?	Yes
Or, when we have spent some time in public worship, may we spend the rest of the time as we please?	No

A. The Sabbath is to be sanctified⁴¹ by a holy resting all that day,^a even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful⁴² on other days,^b and by spending the whole time in public and private exercises of God’s worship,^c except for time taken up by works of necessity and mercy.^d

^aExodus 20:8, 10; Exodus 16:25–28; ^bNehemiah 13:15–19, 21–22; ^cLuke 4:16; Acts 20:7; Psalm 92 Title; Isaiah 66:23; ^dMatthew 12:1–13

Questions 61–70

Q. 61. What is forbidden in the fourth Commandment?

Does it forbid the omission of the duties required?	Yes
And, carelessly performing them?	Yes
And, profaning the day by idleness?	Yes
Or, by doing that which is in itself sinful?	Yes
Or, by unnecessary thoughts, words, and works about worldly employments and recreations?	Yes

A. The fourth Commandment forbids:

- The omission, or careless performance, of the duties required^a
- Profaning the day by:

⁴¹ sanctified: made holy or kept holy

⁴² lawful: generally in the context of the WSC, compliant with God’s law

- Idleness^b
- Doing that which is in itself sinful^c
- Unnecessary thoughts, words, or works about our worldly employments or recreations^d

^aEzekiel 22:26; Amos 8:5; Malachi 1:13; ^bActs 20:7, 9; ^cEzekiel 23:38; ^dJeremiah 17:24–26; Isaiah 58:13

Q. 62. What are the reasons annexed to the fourth Commandment?

Is God’s allowing us six days of the week for our own employments a reason why we should the more keep a seventh day holy to Him? Yes

And, does God assert a special right of ownership of the seventh day? Yes

And, are God’s own example and His blessing the Sabbath day further reasons for us to keep it holy? Yes

A. The reasons annexed to the fourth Commandment are:

- God allows us six days of the week for our own employments^a
- God asserts His special ownership right in the seventh day
- His own example
- He blessed the Sabbath day^b

^aExodus 20:9; ^bExodus 20:11

Q. 63. What is the fifth Commandment?

(No intermediate questions.)

A. The fifth Commandment is, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”

Exodus 20:12

Q. 64. What is required in the fifth Commandment?

Does it require preserving the honor that belongs to everyone in their various places and relationships? Yes

As superiors, inferiors, or equals? Yes

Or, only the honor due to our natural parents? No

Or, only to our superiors? No

And, does it require performing all of the duties that are due to them? Yes

A. The fifth Commandment requires⁴³ preserving the honor,⁴⁴ and performing the duties,⁴⁵ due to everyone in their various places and relationships as⁴⁶ superiors,^{47, a} inferiors,^{48, b} or equals.^{49, c}

^aEphesians 5:21; ^b1 Peter 2:17; ^cRomans 12:10

Q. 65. What is forbidden in the fifth Commandment?

Does it forbid neglecting the honor or duty that belongs to everyone in their various places and relationships?	Yes
And, doing anything against it?	Yes
Or, may we reproach or disgrace our superiors?	No
Or, unduly oppose and resist them?	No
Or, disobey their lawful commands?	No
Or, may we carry ourselves proudly and scornfully toward our equals?	No
Or, inferiors?	No

A. The fifth Commandment forbids neglecting, or doing anything against, the honor and duty due to everyone in their various places and relationships.

Matthew 15:4–6; Ezekiel 34:2–4; Romans 13:8

Q. 66. What is the reason annexed to the fifth Commandment?

Is there a promise of long life and prosperity to all who keep this Commandment?	Yes
And, are we to understand this (and other such promises of earthly mercies) to be without limitation?	No
Or, only as it will serve for God’s glory and their own good?	Yes

⁴³ This is an extremely compressed answer that covers all interpersonal relationships of all kinds. The reader is strongly encouraged to study the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Questions 123–133, for a fuller exposition. Several commentaries are also helpful, such as those by Thomas Vincent, *The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly Explained and Proved from Scripture* (Still Waters Revival Books, www.PuritanDownloads.com), or Thomas Boston, *Commentary on the Shorter Catechism, 2 Volumes*, (Still Waters Revival Books, www.PuritanDownloads.com).

⁴⁴ “Preserving the honor” includes personally honoring those to whom honor is due, but also, where appropriate, protecting and defending the honor of those to whom honor is due.

⁴⁵ Here, “duties” includes both general duties such as love to neighbor and enemy, and specific duties such as parent to child and child to parent.

⁴⁶ None of the following terms refer in any way to the value and dignity that comes from being made in the image of God. This human dignity is neither increased nor decreased by these terms.

⁴⁷ superiors: not only those in authority over us, but also those with superior age, graces, gifts, or abilities

⁴⁸ inferiors: not only those over whom we have authority, but also those who, by reason of younger age, weakness, smaller graces, lesser gifts, weaker abilities, or infirmities, are deserving of kindness, care, and aid as needed

⁴⁹ equals: those who are more or less equal in age, graces, gifts, or abilities. It is well worth observing that the relations of *superior*, *inferior*, and *equal* may all apply between the same two parties depending upon circumstances. For example a pastor and a police officer may be equal at the dinner table and unequal while behind the pulpit or on duty in a patrol car. For another example, one may have great faith but be weak in doctrine, while another is weak in faith but knows much doctrine. These have different graces and should each respect and honor the graces in the other and aid the other in his weaknesses.

A. The reason annexed to the fifth Commandment is a promise of long life and prosperity to all who keep this Commandment (as far as it will serve for God’s glory and their own good).

Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:2–3

Q. 67. What is the sixth Commandment?

(No intermediate questions.)

A. The sixth Commandment is, “You shall not murder.”

Exodus 20:13

Q. 68. What is required in the sixth Commandment?

Does it require all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life? Yes

And, to preserve the life of others? Yes

Or, is it sufficient that we do not take it? No

Or, may we use unlawful means to preserve it? No

A. The sixth Commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life^{50, a} and the life of others.^b

^aEphesians 5:28–29; ^b1 Kings 18:4

Q. 69. What is forbidden in the sixth Commandment?

Does it forbid taking our own life? Yes

And, taking our neighbor’s life unjustly? Yes

And, whatever tends to either of these? Yes

Or, does it allow hatred or malice? No

Or, rash or immoderate anger? No

Or, reproaches or injuries that do not actually take away life? No

And, does it forbid all executions of criminals by civil governments? No

Or, all taking the lives of men in lawful warfare or necessary defense? No

A. The sixth Commandment forbids taking our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatever tends toward it.

Acts 16:28; Genesis 9:6

Q. 70. What is the seventh Commandment?

(No intermediate questions.)

A. The seventh Commandment is, “You shall not commit adultery.”

Exodus 20:14

⁵⁰ From the context of this and the next question, it is clear that “life” includes not only life as opposed to death, but also all that pertains to a person’s living out his or her life, such as freedom and well-being.

Questions 71–80

Q. 71. What is required in the seventh Commandment?

Does it require the preservation of our own chastity?	Yes
And, the chastity of our neighbors?	Yes
And, this in heart, speech, and behavior?	Yes
Or, is it sufficient to avoid gross acts of sexual sin?	No

A. The seventh Commandment requires the preservation of our own and our neighbor's chastity,⁵¹ in heart, speech, and behavior.

1 Corinthians 7:2–3, 5, 34, 36; Colossians 4:6; 1 Peter 3:2

Q. 72. What is forbidden in the seventh Commandment?

Does it forbid all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions?	Yes
Or, does it allow unchaste or wanton thoughts?	No
Or, lascivious or wanton words?	No
Or, [unchaste] non-verbal signals or signs?	No

A. The seventh Commandment forbids all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions.

Matthew 15:19; Matthew 5:28; Ephesians 5:3–4

Q. 73. What is the eighth Commandment?

(No intermediate questions.)

A. The eighth Commandment is, “You shall not steal.”

Exodus 20:15

Q. 74. What is required in the eighth Commandment?

Does it require lawfully procuring and furthering our own wealth and outward estate?	Yes
And, the wealth and outward estate of others?	Yes
Or, is it sufficient to look to ourselves only, without regarding others?	No
Or, may we be altogether careless of either?	No
Or, may we use any sinful or unlawful way to procure wealth to ourselves or others?	No

A. The eighth Commandment requires lawfully procuring⁵² and furthering the wealth and outward estate⁵³ of ourselves and others.

Genesis 30:30; 1 Timothy 5:8; Leviticus 25:35; Deuteronomy 22:1–5; Exodus 23:4–5; Genesis 47:14, 20

Q. 75. What is forbidden in the eighth Commandment?

⁵¹ chastity: in this context, purity of mind, speech and body, with regard to sexual matters. The idea that chastity precludes marriage or relations with one's own spouse is utterly false.

⁵² procure: obtain by care and effort

⁵³ outward estate: earthly goods and property

Does it forbid whatever does, or may, unjustly hinder our own wealth or outward estate? Yes

Or, the wealth and outward estate of our neighbor? Yes

Or, may we unjustly damage others to enrich ourselves? No

A. The eighth Commandment forbids whatever does, or may, unjustly hinder our own or our neighbor's wealth or outward estate.

Proverbs 21:17; Proverbs 23:20–21; Proverbs 28:19; Ephesians 4:28

Q. 76. What is the ninth Commandment?

(No intermediate questions.)

A. The ninth Commandment is, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

Exodus 20:16

Q. 77. What is required in the ninth Commandment?

Does it require maintaining and promoting truth between man and man? Yes

And, of our own and our neighbor's good name? Yes

Especially in witness bearing? Yes

Or, is it enough to seek our own credit, though with damage to truth or the good name of others? No

Or, may we be careless of either? No

A. The ninth Commandment requires maintaining and promoting:

- Truth between man and man^a
- Our own and our neighbor's good name^b

especially in witness bearing^{54, c}

^aZechariah 8:16; ^b3 John 12, ^cProverbs 14:5, 25

Q. 78. What is forbidden in the ninth Commandment?

Does it forbid whatever is damaging to truth? Yes

And, whatever is injurious to our own or our neighbor's good name? Yes

Is it sometimes lawful to lie? No

At least in smaller matters? No

Or, for our own or others' advantage? No

Or, to preserve ourselves or others? No

Or, for a good purpose? No

A. The ninth Commandment forbids whatever is detrimental to truth, or injurious to our own good name, or that of our neighbor.

1 Samuel 17:28; Leviticus 19:16; Psalm 15:3

Q. 79. What is the tenth Commandment?

⁵⁴ Witness bearing does not imply that the occasion must be a formal court proceeding. Gossip is a form of witness bearing.

(No intermediate questions.)

A. The tenth Commandment is, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”

Exodus 20:17

Q. 80. What is required in the tenth Commandment?

Does it require full contentment with our own condition? Yes

Without the least inward promptings or inclinations to the contrary? Yes

Or, is enough that we do not use unlawful means to alter our condition? No

And, must we have a right and charitable frame toward our neighbor and all that is his? Yes

Rejoicing in another’s good just as our own? Yes

And, sympathizing with others in affliction? Yes

Or, is it enough that we do not outwardly wrong them in anything? No

A. The tenth Commandment requires full contentment with our own condition,^a with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbor and all that is his.^b

^aHebrews 13:5; 1 Timothy 6:6; ^bJob 31:29; Romans 12:15; 1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Corinthians 13:4–7

Questions 81–90

Q. 81. What is forbidden in the tenth Commandment?

Does it forbid all discontentment with our own estate? Yes

Even in the least inward promptings or inclinations of the heart? Yes

And, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbor? Yes

And, all inordinate inward promptings or emotions to anything that is his? Yes

May we wish his hurt? No

Or, covet anything that is his? No

A. The tenth Commandment forbids all discontentment with our own estate,^{55, a} envying or grieving at the good of our neighbor,^b and all inordinate inclinations and emotions [or desires] to anything that is his.^c

^a1 Kings 21:4; Esther 5:13; 1 Corinthians 10:10; ^bGalatians 5:26; James 3:14, 16; ^cRomans 7:7–8; Romans 13:9; Deuteronomy 5:21

Q. 82. Is any man able to perfectly keep the commandments of God?

⁵⁵ estate: in this context: not only our outward estate (of worldly goods) but all that God has been pleased to give us, our situation in life, and so on

Is any man able to perfectly keep the commandments of God?	No
Was Adam able before his fall?	Yes
Is any mere man since the Fall able in this life to perfectly keep them?	No
Was Christ able to do it in this life?	Yes
And, was He mere man?	No
Or, was He God as well as man?	Yes
Will the glorified saints in heaven be able to perfectly keep the commandments of God?	Yes
But are the saints able to do so in this life?	No
But do they daily break them in thought, word, and deed?	Yes

A. No mere man since the Fall is able in this life to perfectly keep the commandments of God,^a but daily breaks them in thought, word, and deed.^b

^aEcclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8, 10; Galatians 5:17; ^bGenesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21; Romans 3:9–21; James 3:2–13

Q. 83. Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?

Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?	No
Or, are some sins more heinous in the sight of God than others?	Yes
Are some sins in themselves more heinous than others?	Yes
And, are some sins made more heinous by reason of various aggravations than they would be otherwise?	Yes

A. Some sins in themselves, and [others] by reason of various aggravations,⁵⁶ are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

Ezekiel 8:6, 13, 15; 1 John 5:16; Psalm 78:17, 32, 56

Q. 84. What does every sin deserve?

Does every sin deserve God’s wrath and curse?	Yes
In this life only?	No
Or, only in that which is to come?	No
Or, both in this life and that which is to come?	Yes
Is not that too great a punishment?	No
Even for the smallest sins?	No

A. Every sin deserves God’s wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come.

Ephesians 5:6; Galatians 3:10; Lamentations 3:39; Matthew 25:41

Q. 85. What does God require of us that we may escape His wrath and curse that are due to us for sin?

Is there any way to escape them?	Yes
And, will all escape them?	No
Does God require of us faith in Jesus Christ that we may escape them?	Yes

⁵⁶ aggravate: to make more serious or more grave

And, does God require repentance to life?	Yes
Or, will any escape God's wrath and curse who does not believe in Christ?	No
Or, does not repent?	No
Or, is it sufficient to say Christ has believed and repented for us?	No
Are there outward means by which Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?	Yes
And, does God require a diligent use of all these means?	Yes
Or, may we safely neglect any of them?	No
Or, use them carelessly?	No
Or, can we expect that those who do not use them will ordinarily escape the wrath and curse of God?	No

A. To escape the wrath and curse of God that are due to us for sin, God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance to life,^a and the diligent use⁵⁷ of all the outward means by which Christ communicates [transfers, conveys] to us the benefits of redemption.^b

^aActs 20:21; ^bProverbs 2:1–5; Proverbs 8:33–36; Isaiah 55:3

Q. 86. What is faith in Jesus Christ?

Is it a saving grace by which we receive and trust in Christ alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel?	Yes
Or, may we expect to be saved by any other, without Christ?	No
Or, [something else] together with Christ?	No
Or, to be saved by Christ upon any other terms than as He is offered to us in the Gospel?	No
Do we receive and rest upon Christ for salvation by any other graces [besides faith]?	No
Or, by our good works?	No
Or, is it by faith only?	Yes

A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace,^a by which we receive and trust in Him alone for salvation, as He is [displayed and] offered to us in the Gospel.^b

^aHebrews 10:39; ^bJohn 1:12; Isaiah 26:3–4; Philippians 3:9; Galatians 2:16

Q. 87. What is repentance to life?

Is it a saving grace in which a sinner turns from sin to God?	Yes
Or, may there be repentance to life without a turning from sin?	No
Or, without turning to God?	No
And, does this arise out of a true sense of his sin?	Yes
And, a true perception and understanding of the mercy of God in Christ?	Yes
Or, may we expect a true repentance without these?	No
Will there be grief and hatred of sin?	Yes
And, a purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience?	Yes

⁵⁷ This by no means implies salvation by works of any kind.

Or, can he be said to turn from his sin to God, who does not
grieve for his sin? No

Nor hate it? No

Or, who does not purpose and endeavor after new obedience? No

A. Repentance to life is a saving grace,^a by which a sinner:

- Out of a true sense of his sin^b
- From perception and understanding of the mercy of God in Christ^c
- With grief and hatred of his sin

turns from his sin to God,^d with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.^e

^aActs 11:18; ^bActs 2:37–38; ^cJoel 2:12; Jeremiah 3:22; ^dJeremiah 31:18–19; Ezekiel 36:31; ^e2 Corinthians 7:11; Isaiah 1:16–17

Q. 88. What are the outward [and ordinary] means⁵⁸ by which Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?

Are His ordinances the ordinary and outward means by which
Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption? Yes

Especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer? Yes

Are all these made effectual to the elect for salvation? Yes

And, to them only? Yes

Or, are they made effectual to salvation to any that are not
elected? No

A. The outward and ordinary means by which Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are His ordinances, especially the Word, sacraments, and prayer. All of these are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 2:42, 46–47

Q. 89. How is the Word made effectual to salvation?

Is the Word an effectual means of convincing and converting
sinners? Yes

And, when they are converted, is it effectual to build them up
in holiness and comfort through faith to salvation? Yes

Is the reading of the Word effectual to these purposes? Yes

But especially the preaching of the Word? Yes

And, has the Word this efficacy of itself without the Spirit? No

Or, does the Spirit of God make it effectual for these purposes? Yes

A. The Spirit of God makes the Word an effectual means as it is read, but especially as it is preached, to convince and convert sinners, and to build them up in holiness and comfort through faith to salvation.

Nehemiah 8:8; 1 Corinthians 14:24–25; Acts 26:18; Psalm 19:8; Acts 20:32; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; Romans 10:13–17; Romans 1:16

Q. 90. How is the Word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?

⁵⁸ Only the RPCNA Constitution has *and ordinary* in the Question.

Will any negligent reading or hearing the Word fulfill the need?	No
Or, must we attend to it with diligence?	Yes
And, with preparation?	Yes
And, with prayer?	Yes
And, must we receive it with faith and love?	Yes
And, lay it up in our hearts?	Yes
And, practice it in our lives?	Yes
Or, is it enough to read or hear the Word, though we never take heed to lay it up or practice it?	No

A. That the Word may become effectual to salvation, we must:

- Attend to it with diligence,^a preparation,^b and prayer^c
- Receive it with faith and love^d
- Lay it up in our hearts^e
- Practice it in our lives^f

^aProverbs 8:34; ^b1 Peter 2:1–2; ^cPsalms 119:18; ^dHebrews 4:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; ^ePsalms 119:11; ^fLuke 8:15; James 1:25

Questions 91–100

Q. 91. How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?

Is it from any virtue inherent to the sacraments themselves?	No
Or in the one who administers them?	No
Or, is it only by the blessing of Christ and the work of His Spirit?	Yes
Do they become effectual in all?	No
Or, only in those who receive them by faith?	Yes

A. The sacraments are not effectual by any virtue in them,⁵⁹ or in the one who administers them. The sacraments become effectual means of salvation only by the blessing of Christ^a and the working of His Spirit in those who receive them by faith.^b

^a1 Peter 3:21; Matthew 3:11; 1 Corinthians 3:6–7; ^b1 Corinthians 12:13

Q. 92. What is a sacrament?

Is it a holy ordinance instituted by Christ?	Yes
Or, only of man's invention?	No
Are sensible signs used in it?	Yes
Are Christ and the benefits of the covenant represented, sealed, and applied to believers by sensible signs?	Yes
Or, are they useless and empty signs?	No
Or, do they signify and confirm temporal blessings only?	No

⁵⁹ The physical ceremonies and actions in themselves, in isolation from Christ and faith, are worthless.

A. A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ. By the sensible⁶⁰ signs of the sacrament, Christ and the benefits of the New Covenant are represented, sealed,⁶¹ and applied to believers.

Genesis 17:7, 10; Exodus 12; 1 Corinthians 11:23, 26

Q. 93. What are the sacraments of the New Testament?

Baptism and the Lord's Supper? Yes

Are there more sacraments of the New Testament than these two? No

A. The sacraments of the New Testament are baptism^a and the Lord's Supper.^b

^aMatthew 28:19; ^bMatthew 26:26–28

Q. 94. What is baptism?

Does the sacrament of baptism signify and seal our engrafting into Christ and our partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace? Yes

And, does it signify and seal our engagement to be the Lord's? Yes

And, is this done by washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit? Yes

A. Baptism is a sacrament, in which the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,^a signifies and seals our:

- Engraftment⁶² into Christ
- Partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace
- Engagement to be the Lord's^b

^aMatthew 28:19; ^bRomans 6:4; Galatians 3:27

Q. 95. To whom is baptism to be administered?

Is baptism to be administered promiscuously to those outside of the visible Church, as well as to those within it? No

May those who are out of the visible Church be baptized when they come to profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Christ? Yes

And, before then? No

Are the infants of those who are members of the visible Church to be baptized? Yes

⁶⁰ sensible: in this context, able to be perceived by human senses, such as touch, sight, taste, and so on

⁶¹ seal: (verb) to confirm, ratify, guarantee, make secure; (noun) something that represents such a guarantee or provides the security; in Scripture, *seal* often has a close association in meaning with a *sign*.

⁶² engraftment: the process of grafting a *scion* onto a *stock*, both being woody plants. The stock is an already rooted plant. The scion may be of a same or (usually) different species and may be a branch or whole plant above the roots. The grafting process involves making a special cut on the trunk or a branch of both the stock and scion so that the two may be joined and bound. Done right, the scion and stock become as one plant, the stock providing water and nutrients and the scion, products of photosynthesis. Both remain their own original species. The reference to engraftment is to call to mind the teaching of Christ that He is the vine and believers are the branches (John 15:1–5, Romans 11:17–24).

.....
While they are infants? Yes

A. Baptism is not to be administered to any who are outside of the visible Church,⁶³ until they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him.^a But the infants of those who are members of the visible Church are to be baptized.^{64, b}

^aActs 8:36–37; Acts 2:38; ^bActs 2:38–39; Genesis 17:10; Colossians 2:11–12; 1 Corinthians 7:14

Q. 96. What is the Lord’s Supper?

.....
Is it a sacrament in which, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to Christ’s appointment, His death is openly displayed? Yes

.....
Or, is it sufficient that only bread be given and received? No

.....
Or, only wine? No

.....
Or, has Christ appointed giving and receiving of both bread and wine? Yes

.....
And, by this giving and receiving bread and wine, do we display forth Christ’s death? Yes

.....
In the Lord’s Supper, are worthy receivers made partakers of Christ’s body and blood, with all His benefits to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace? Yes

.....
Do all those who receive the Lord’s Supper thus partake of Christ? No

.....
Or, only those who are worthy receivers? Yes

.....
Do they partake of Christ’s body and blood in a physical and fleshly manner? No

.....
Or, by faith? Yes

A. The Lord’s Supper is a sacrament, in which, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to Christ’s appointment, His death is openly displayed and worthy receivers are made partakers of His body and blood, with all His benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. This partaking is not after a physical and fleshly manner, but by faith.

1 Corinthians 11:23–26; 1 Corinthians 10:16

Q. 97. What is required for the worthy receiving of the Lord’s Supper?

.....
Must those who would worthily partake of the Lord’s Supper examine themselves concerning their knowledge to discern the Lord’s body? Yes

.....
And, of their faith to feed upon Him? Yes

.....
And, of their repentance, love, and new obedience? Yes

.....
Or, can those who are ignorant or who cannot discern the Lord’s body partake worthily? No

.....
Or, who do not believe? No

⁶³ visible Church: all who profess faith in Christ in all denominations

⁶⁴ As the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Westminster Larger Catechism* make clear, only one parent need be a believer.

Or, not repent?	No
Or, who have no love for God?	No
Or, for His children?	No
Or, who do not endeavor to walk in new obedience?	No
Is there any danger of coming unworthily?	Yes
Do those who come unworthily eat and drink judgment to themselves?	Yes

A. It is required of those who would worthily partake of the Lord’s Supper that they examine themselves concerning:

- Their knowledge to discern the Lord’s body^a
- Their faith to feed upon Him^b
- Their repentance,^c love,^d and new obedience^e

Otherwise, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.^f

^a1 Corinthians 11:28–29; ^b2 Corinthians 13:5; ^c1 Corinthians 11:31; ^d1 Corinthians 10:16–17; ^e1 Corinthians 5:7–8; ^f1 Corinthians 11:28–29

Q. 98. What is prayer?

Is it only to repeat some words, though without feeling or understanding?	No
Or, is it an offering up of our desires to God?	Yes
For things agreeable to His will?	Yes
May we pray to some being besides God?	No
To saints, angels, or the virgin Mary?	No
Or, to images?	No
Must we pray in Christ’s name?	Yes
And, in His only?	Yes
Trusting in Him and none else to make our prayers accepted?	Yes
Or, may we pray in the name of any other?	No
Or, for things sinful or not agreeable to God’s will?	No
In our prayers, must we confess our sins?	Yes
And, thankfully acknowledge God’s mercies?	Yes

A. Prayer is an offering up of our desires to God^a for things agreeable to His will,^b in the name of Christ,^c with confession of our sins,^d and with thankful acknowledgment of His mercies.^e

^aPsalms 62:8; ^b1 John 5:14; ^cJohn 16:23; ^dPsalms 32:5–6; Daniel 9:4; ^ePhilippians 4:6

Q. 99. What rule has God given for our direction in prayer?

Is the whole Word of God of use to direct us in prayer?	Yes
And, is that form of prayer that Christ taught His disciples (commonly called “the Lord’s Prayer”) a more special rule of direction?	Yes

A. The whole Word of God is useful to direct us in prayer.^a But the special rule of direction⁶⁵ is that form of prayer that Christ taught His disciples, commonly called “The Lord’s Prayer.”^b

^a1 John 5:14; ^bMatthew 6:9–13, Luke 11:2–4

Q. 100. What does the preface of the Lord’s Prayer teach us?

Do the words “Our Father in heaven” teach us to draw near to God with all holy reverence?	Yes
And confidence?	Yes
As children to a father that is able to help us?	Yes
And, ready to help us?	Yes
Or, may we pray irreverently?	No
Or, distrustfully?	No
Doubting God’s power to help us?	No
Or, His willingness to help us?	No
And, do the words teach us to pray with others?	Yes
And, for others?	Yes

A. The preface of the Lord’s Prayer, which is,⁶⁶ “Our Father in heaven,”^a teaches us to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father [who is] able and ready to help us.^b Also, it teaches us that we should pray with and for others.^c

^aMatthew 6:9; ^bRomans 8:15; Luke 11:13; ^cActs 12:5; 1 Timothy 2:1–2

Questions 101–107

Q. 101. What do we pray for in the first petition?

Do we pray, in the words “Hallowed be your name,” that God would enable us and others to glorify Him in all things by which He makes Himself known?	Yes
In His titles, attributes, ordinances, Word, and works?	Yes
And that He would arrange all things to His own glory?	Yes
Or, may we be altogether careless of God’s glory?	No

A. In the first petition, which is “Hallowed be Your name,”^a we pray that God would enable us and others to glorify Him in all things by which He makes Himself known,^{67, b} and that He would arrange all things to His own glory.^c

^aMatthew 6:9; ^bPsalms 67:2–3; ^cPsalms 83

Q. 102. What do we pray for in the second petition?

⁶⁵ *Rule and direction* are not redundant here; the former is law, and the latter is a general pattern.

⁶⁶ Short quotes in Q. 100–107 are from the NKJV, Matthew 6:9–13.

⁶⁷ God has made Himself known via His name, but also by His attributes, ordinances, Word, creation, and providence. From this knowledge, God’s name is better known and understood. By acknowledging the credit and glory due God for His attributes, ordinances, Word, creation, and providence, we glorify His name.

Do we pray, in the words “Your kingdom come,” that Satan’s kingdom may be destroyed?	Yes
Or, may Satan’s kingdom and God’s kingdom stand together?	No
That the kingdom of grace may be advanced?	Yes
Ourselves and others brought into it and kept in it?	Yes
And, that the kingdom of glory may be hastened?	Yes

A. In the second petition, which is “Your kingdom come,”^a we pray, that:

- Satan’s kingdom may be destroyed^b
- The kingdom of grace may be advanced^c
- Ourselves and others may be brought into it and kept in it^d
- The kingdom of glory may be hastened^e

^aMatthew 6:10; ^bPsalms 68:1, 18; ^cRevelation 12:10–11; ^d2 Thessalonians 3:1; Romans 10:1; John 17:9, 20; ^eRevelation 22:20

Q. 103. What do we pray for in the third petition?

Do we pray, in the words “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” that God, by His grace, would make us able to know His will?	Yes
And, to obey it?	Yes
And, to submit to it?	Yes
And, do so in all things?	Yes
As the angels do in heaven?	Yes
May we in some things disobey His will?	No
Or, grudge at it?	No
Or, prefer our own wills before His will?	No
But must we know, obey, and submit to His will in all things?	Yes
Are we able or willing to do His will by ourselves?	No
And, can we be made willing and able apart from His grace?	No

A. In the third petition, which is “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,”^a we pray that God, by His grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to His will in all things,^b as the angels do in heaven.^c

^aMatthew 6:10; ^bPsalms 67; Psalm 119:36; Matthew 26:39; 2 Samuel 15:25; Job 1:21; ^cPsalms 103:20–21

Q. 104. What do we pray for in the fourth petition?

Do we pray, in the words “Give us this day our daily bread,” that we may receive an appropriate portion of the good things of this life?	Yes
And, that from God’s free gift?	Yes
And, enjoy His blessing with them?	Yes
Can we, by ourselves, procure them by our industry?	No
Do we deserve to have them bestowed upon us?	No
Or, blessed to us?	No
And, can the things of this life be good by themselves without God’s blessing?	No

A. In the fourth petition, which is “Give us this day our daily bread,”^a we pray that, by God’s free gift, we may receive an appropriate portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy His blessing with them.^b

^aMatthew 6:11; ^bProverbs 30:8–9; Genesis 28:20; 1 Timothy 4:4–5

Q. 105. What do we pray for in the fifth petition?

Do we pray, in the words “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” that God, for Christ’s sake, would freely pardon all our sins?	Yes
Have we, by our sins, become debtors to God’s justice?	Yes
Can we ourselves satisfy God’s justice and so pay that debt?	No
Or, have them forgiven us for our own sake?	No
Or, only for Christ’s sake?	Yes
Does God expect that when we desire forgiveness from Him, we should forgive others from the heart?	Yes
Or, is it enough that we do it in words only?	No
And, can we do this by ourselves?	No
Or, must we be enabled by His grace?	Yes
And, is it any encouragement to ask forgiveness from God when by His grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others?	Yes

A. In the fifth petition, which is “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,”^a we pray that God, for Christ’s sake, would freely pardon all our sins.^b By His grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others; thus we are the more encouraged to ask God’s forgiveness for our debts.^{68, c}

^aMatthew 6:12; ^bPsalms 51:1–2, 7, 9; Daniel 9:17–19; ^cLuke 11:4; Matthew 18:35

Q. 106. What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

Do we pray, in the words “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,” that God would keep us from being tempted to sin?	Yes
Or, at least support and deliver us when we are tempted?	Yes
Are God’s children in danger of being tempted to sin like everyone else?	Yes
Are we able by ourselves to avoid temptation?	No
Or, to stand or be supported in temptation by our own strength?	No

⁶⁸ It is clear from Matthew 6:14–15 that if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us. Conversely, if we forgive others, then God will forgive us—if we are believers in Christ. It is important to realize that forgiveness is from grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8–10). Thus, if we forgive others, it is not the cause or grounds of our forgiveness by God, but is rather evidence of saving faith. Likewise, an unforgiving heart is evidence of lack of saving faith. With this in mind, we can then understand how our having a forgiving heart can encourage us to seek God’s forgiveness of us (last sentence of A. 105): We see the evidence of saving grace in our hearts and are thus encouraged to go boldly to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). The fifth petition is spoken from the perspective of a believer who has a forgiving spirit.

Or, deliver ourselves out of temptation? No

And, is anyone other than God able to do it for us? No

A. In the sixth petition, which is, “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,”^{69, a} we pray that God would either keep us from being tempted to sin,^b or support and deliver us when we are tempted.^c

^aMatthew 6:13; ^bMatthew 26:41; ^c2 Corinthians 12:7–8

Q. 107. What does the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer teach us?

Do the words “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen” teach us to take our encouragement in prayer from God only? Yes

Or, can we have sufficient encouragement from ourselves or any other creature? No

And, are we to praise Him in our prayers? Yes

Ascribing to Him the kingdom, or absolute sovereignty, over all things? Yes

And, almighty power to do all things? Yes

And, infinite majesty and glorious excellency above all things? Yes

Or, is any creature exempt from His authority? No

Or, is anything too hard for His power? No

Or, is any creature equal to Him in glory? No

Do we say “Amen” in testimony of our desire and assurance to be heard? Yes

A. The conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer, which is “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen,”^{70, a} teaches us to take our encouragement in prayer from God only,^b and in our prayers to praise Him, crediting kingdom, power, and glory to Him.^c And, in testimony of our desire and assurance to be heard, we say, “Amen.”^c

^aMatthew 6:13; ^bDaniel 9:4–9, 16–19;⁷¹ ^c1 Chronicles 29:10–13; ^d1 Corinthians 14:16; Revelation 22:20–21

⁶⁹ The Greek has, literally, “the evil.” This leads to the translation, “the evil one,” on the assumption that the evil one is implied. Other translators ignore the definite article and simply translate “evil.”

⁷⁰ Some ancient manuscripts omit from the end of Matthew 6:13, “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” Thus some translations omit, even without mention, this final text. Whether or not to include this text is a matter of textual criticism and translator’s judgment into which this editor will not venture.

⁷¹ Only the RPCNA *Constitution* includes Daniel 9:5–6.

Appendix A: Notes on Memorization

Historically, due to the very high cost of books, great emphasis was placed on rote memorization. The tradition of having students and children memorize all or part of the *Shorter Catechism* continues today as well, and many have profited. However, this translation of the WSC is oriented toward ease of reading, not memorization. Thus, this appendix gives a few hints on how one may memorize or recite passages in this translation. Of course, one is free to develop his or her own methods.

Perhaps the most potentially troublesome for memory or recital are bulleted lists as in the example below:

Q. 18. What is the sinfulness of that state into which man fell?

- A. The sinfulness of that state into which men fell, consists in both:
1. That which is commonly called *original sin*:
 - The guilt of Adam's first sin
 - The lack of original righteousness
 - The corruption of his whole nature
 2. All actual transgressions that proceed from it.

There is a difference between bulleted lists and numbered lists; numbers imply a particular order, while bullets do not. It is thus clear that a method is needed of articulating this structure. In the original, commas or semicolons usually appeared at the line breaks; hence, one might simply pause between lines. The example below shows another way; the structure is preserved, while words in brackets are words that one might add as an aid in memory or recital. Slashes indicate alternate choices.

- A. The sinfulness of that state into which men fell, consists in both:
[One / First] That which is commonly called *original sin*:
 [One, Point / First, Point] The guilt of Adam's first sin
 [One, Point / First, Point] The lack of original righteousness
 [One, Point / First, Point] The corruption of his whole nature
[Two / Second] All actual transgressions that proceed from it.

Had the above example simply defined original sin, one would have:

- A. Original sin is:
 [Point] The guilt of Adam's first sin
 [Point] The lack of original righteousness
 [Point] The corruption of his whole nature.

In the first example above, "original sin" is emphasized. This leads to the question of how to treat quotation marks and emphasis. One choice, and probably the easiest, is a brief pause. After all, emphasis does not really change the meaning and quotations are typically obvious in context. "Quote"/"Unquote" might also be spoken where applicable.

Appendix B: Background and Editorial Philosophy

As related in the Introduction, accurate translation of the meaning of the original text of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* is a vital and important goal. Nonetheless, however accurate the translation may be, if it is not accessible to the reader all is lost. Thus, readability is a paramount and overriding consideration. For this purpose, the following changes have been made during translation:

- Spelling and punctuation are modernized.
- To avoid confusion, negative questions (e.g., “Are you not coming with us?”) are replaced with positive (normal) questions.
- Obsolete words are replaced with contemporary synonyms.
- Words that may not be obsolete, but whose common or contemporary meaning is often unknown or differs from that of the text, are likewise replaced with contemporary synonyms or defined.
- Similarly, words with a precise theological meaning are explained in footnotes.
- Overly long and run-on sentences (by contemporary standards) are broken up into multiple sentences.
- Embedded lists are sometimes bulleted, particularly where the structure is complex, the list long, or the list items are complex phrases, clauses, or sentences.
- In some cases the order of phrases is altered for clarification or ease of reading.
- Other small changes are often made that make the text easier to read, such as substituting the antecedent for a pronoun.
- Occasionally, footnotes give longer explanations of terms or concepts so that the reader may more fully understand the WSC text.
- The contemporary text generally follows American usage per the *Chicago Manual of Style*.⁷²
- The Westminster Divines thoroughly and equally included women with men as human beings made in the image of God. They understood references to “men,” “mankind,” and so on, as completely including both sexes. This understanding and usage is also that of the Holy Scriptures. The editor therefore sees no reason to do violence to the text for the sake of “gender inclusiveness,” particularly when standards of English usage on this matter are currently in flux, to say nothing of frequently resulting in awkward constructions.

The original WSC has a certain majestic terseness and style that is, as is common in translations, greatly diminished by the editor’s current work. This is regrettable, but not so nearly regrettable as when a person is denied access to these eternal truths due to difficulties in reading comprehension. In particular, the frequent use of bulleted lists may surprise or irritate some readers. But quoting from Grammar-Quizzes.com:

Block text visually runs text together. It is wordy
but saves space. Using more than three or four

⁷² Chicago University Press, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 2010.

lines on a web page causes the reader to skip over the last few lines. Did you actually read this last line?

A bulleted or numbered list:

- Visually emphasizes information
- Capsulizes a concept
- Facilitates reading comprehension.⁷³

The quoted block text, particularly the last line, may shock the highly educated, but the editor wishes to serve as many readers as possible.

The editor used the *Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*⁷⁴ as the source text. The editor also downloaded three different web sources claiming to be the original WSC with the original Scripture proof texts.⁷⁵ These were electronically compared and merged, then used as a second-source check text for proofreading and alignment of Scripture proof texts. Reference was also made to other published WSC texts such as in Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*,⁷⁶ as well as primary and secondary historical sources where necessary to ascertain the meaning of a word or phrase.

The editor welcomes constructive feedback and corrections at the email address given below. (The address is a graphic to foil harvesting by spammers.) The editor will particularly appreciate notice of errors that cause the translation to fail to faithfully convey the original meaning of the text of the WSC.

info@BeForgiven.INFO

⁷³ Grammar-Quizzes.com, <http://www.grammar-quizzes.com/punc-lists.html> (accessed November 29, 2014).

⁷⁴ *Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, C-1, <http://reformedpresbyterian.org/downloads/constitution2010.pdf> (accessed September 30, 2014).

⁷⁵ The three were: <http://www.semperreformanda.com/creeds/westminster-shorter-catechism/>, <http://www.westminsterconfession.org/confessional-standards/the-westminster-shorter-catechism.php>, and <http://www.grace4families.org/index.php/doctrine/shorter-catechism> (accessed January 3, 2015).

⁷⁶ Schaff, Philip, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 3, Revised by David Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 598.