

The Westminster Shorter Catechism of 1647

Translated into 21st Century American English

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Notes to the Reader..... | 3 |
| Scripture Proof Texts - Important Information..... | 3 |
| Introduction..... | 5 |
| Change Log..... | 6 |
| The Westminster Shorter Catechism - Questions 1–10..... | 7 |
| Questions 11–20..... | 8 |
| Questions 21–30..... | 10 |
| Questions 31–40..... | 12 |
| Questions 41–50..... | 13 |
| Questions 51–60..... | 15 |
| Questions 61–70..... | 17 |
| Questions 71–80..... | 19 |
| Questions 81–90..... | 21 |
| Questions 91–100..... | 22 |
| Questions 101–107..... | 24 |
| Appendix A: Notes on Memorization..... | 27 |
| Appendix B: Background and Editorial Philosophy..... | 28 |

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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;¹ 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.

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

¹ 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.

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 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.²

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.

² 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.

Introduction

While the editor does not presume to replace any denomination's standard text, the present translation is 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.

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.

August 17, 2015

A footnote was added to Q68: “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.”

August 5, 2015

So that readers do not have to go online to access Scripture proof texts, four versions are now included for which the editor was able to obtain permission. The Helpful Hints section was updated to reflect this. Small changes were also made throughout the text for typographical error correction, clarity, and modernization.

February 16, 2015

The English Standard Version (ESV), by kind permission, was added to the versions available both within the document itself, and in screen tips.

February 7, 2015

Original release.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism - Questions 1–10

Question 1. What is the chief purpose of man?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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

Deuteronomy 6:4; Jeremiah 10:10

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

A. There are three persons³ in the Godhead:⁴ 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?

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

³ 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.

⁴ Godhead: divine nature or essence of God

Q. 8. How does God execute⁵ His decrees?

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

Q. 9. What is the work of creation?

A. The work of creation is God's making all things out of nothing, by the word of His power, in the space⁶ of six days, and all very good.

Genesis 1; Hebrews 11:3

Q. 10. How did God create man?

A. God created man male and female, after His own image, having knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.⁷

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

Questions 11–20

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

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?

A. When God had created man, He entered into a covenant⁸ of life with him, promising life upon condition of perfect obedience. Also God forbade him to eat of the tree⁹ 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?

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

⁵ execute: in this context, carry out, put into effect

⁶ space: in this context, time span

⁷ creature: in the context of this catechism, any created thing, not necessarily a human or animal

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

Q. 14. What is sin?

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

1 John 3:4

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

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?

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.¹⁰

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

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

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?

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

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?

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

¹⁰ 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.

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

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 salvation¹¹ by a Redeemer.^b

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

Questions 21–30

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

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?

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?

A. Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the offices¹² of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, in both His states of humiliation and exaltation.

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?

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

¹¹ *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).

¹² 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

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

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?

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; 1 ^dCorinthians 15:25; Psalm 110¹³

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

A. Christ’s humiliation¹⁴ 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?

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?

A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ by the effectual¹⁵ 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?

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

¹³ RPCNA *Constitution* omits Psalm 110.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ effectual: completely effective

Questions 31–40

Q. 31. What is effectual calling?

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; ^b2 Thessalonians 2:13–14; ^cActs 2:37; ^dActs 26:18; ^eEzekiel 36:26–27; ^fJohn 6:44–45; ^gPhilippians 2:13

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

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?

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^{16, 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; ^ePhilippians 3:9

Q. 34. What is adoption?

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?

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 8:1¹⁷

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ Only the RPCNA *Constitution* has Romans 8:1.

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

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

^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?

A. The souls of believers¹⁸ 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.^{19, 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?

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?

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

Micah 6:8; 1 Samuel 15:22

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

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?

A. The entire moral law is summarized in the Ten Commandments.

Deuteronomy 10:4; Matthew 19:17

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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).

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

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

A. The first Commandment forbids denying God.^a It forbids not worshiping 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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

A. The reasons annexed²⁰ 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

^aPsalm 95:2–3, 6; ^bPsalm 45:11; ^cExodus 34:13–14

Q. 53. What is the third Commandment?

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?

A. The third Commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God’s names,^a titles,^b attributes,^{21, c} ordinances,^{22, d} Word,^e and works.^{23, f}

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

²⁰ annexed to: attached to, particularly something added to a larger or more important body

²¹ attributes: characteristics or qualities, e.g., His wisdom or eternal nature.

²² 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.

²³ works: creation and providence, or parts of them if in specific reference to God’s handiwork

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

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

A. The Sabbath is to be sanctified²⁴ by a holy resting all that day,^a even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful²⁵ 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

²⁴ sanctified: made holy or kept holy

²⁵ lawful: generally in the context of the WSC, compliant with God’s law

Questions 61–70

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

A. The fourth Commandment forbids:

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

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?

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?A. The fifth Commandment requires²⁶ preserving the honor,²⁷ and performing the duties,²⁸ due to everyone in their various places and relationships as²⁹ superiors,^{30, a} inferiors,^{31, b} or equals.^{32, c}

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

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

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?

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?

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

Exodus 20:13

²⁶ 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).

²⁷ “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.

²⁸ 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.

²⁹ 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.

³⁰ superiors: not only those in authority over us, but also those with superior age, graces, gifts, or abilities

³¹ 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

³² 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.

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

A. The sixth Commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life^{33, a} and the life of others.^b

^aEphesians 5:28–29; ^b1 Kings 18:4

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

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?

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

Exodus 20:14

Questions 71–80

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

A. The seventh Commandment requires the preservation of our own and our neighbor’s chastity,³⁴ 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?

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?

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

Exodus 20:15

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

A. The eighth Commandment requires lawfully procuring³⁵ and furthering the wealth and outward estate³⁶ 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

³³ 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.

³⁴ 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.

³⁵ procure: obtain by care and effort

³⁶ outward estate: earthly goods and property

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

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?

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?

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^{37, c}

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

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

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?

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?

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

³⁷ Witness bearing does not imply that the occasion must be a formal court proceeding. Gossip is a form of witness bearing.

Questions 81–90

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

A. The tenth Commandment forbids all discontentment with our own estate,^{38, 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?

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?

A. Some sins in themselves, and [others] by reason of various aggravations,³⁹ 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?

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?

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 use⁴⁰ 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?

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

³⁸ 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

³⁹ aggravate: to make more serious or more grave

⁴⁰ This by no means implies salvation by works of any kind.

Q. 87. What is repentance to life?

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] means⁴¹ by which Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?

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?

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?

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; ^cPsalm 119:18; ^dHebrews 4:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; ^ePsalm 119:11; ^fLuke 8:15; James 1:25

Questions 91–100

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

A. The sacraments are not effectual by any virtue in them,⁴² 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

⁴¹ Only the RPCNA Constitution has *and ordinary* in the Question.

⁴² The physical ceremonies and actions in themselves, in isolation from Christ and faith, are worthless.

Q. 92. What is a sacrament?

A. A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ. By the sensible⁴³ signs of the sacrament, Christ and the benefits of the New Covenant are represented, sealed,⁴⁴ 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?

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?

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:

- Engraftment⁴⁵ 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?

A. Baptism is not to be administered to any who are outside of the visible Church,⁴⁶ 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.^{47, 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?

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

⁴³ sensible: in this context, able to be perceived by human senses, such as touch, sight, taste, and so on

⁴⁴ 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*.

⁴⁵ 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).

⁴⁶ visible Church: all who profess faith in Christ in all denominations

⁴⁷ As the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Westminster Larger Catechism* make clear, only one parent need be a believer.

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

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?

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?

A. The whole Word of God is useful to direct us in prayer.^a But the special rule of direction⁴⁸ 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?

A. The preface of the Lord’s Prayer, which is,⁴⁹ “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?

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,^{50, b} and that He would arrange all things to His own glory.^c

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

⁴⁸ *Rule* and *direction* are not redundant here; the former is law, and the latter is a general pattern.

⁴⁹ Short quotes in Q. 100–107 are from the NKJV, Matthew 6:9–13.

⁵⁰ 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.

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

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?

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?

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?

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.^{51, 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?

A. In the sixth petition, which is, “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,”^{52, 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

⁵¹ 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.

⁵² 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.”

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

A. The conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer, which is “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen,”^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;⁵³ ^c1 Chronicles 29:10–13; ^d1 Corinthians 14:16; Revelation 22:20–21

⁵³ 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.
- 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*.⁵⁴
- 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 which 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 lines on a web page causes the reader to skip over

⁵⁴ Chicago University Press, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 2010.

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.⁵⁵

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*⁵⁶ as the source text. The editor also downloaded three different web sources claiming to be the original WSC with the original Scripture proof texts.⁵⁷ 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*,⁵⁸ 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

⁵⁵ Grammar-Quizzes.com, <http://www.grammar-quizzes.com/punc-lists.html> (accessed November 29, 2014).

⁵⁶ *Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, C-1, <http://reformedpresbyterian.org/downloads/constitution2010.pdf> (accessed September 30, 2014).

⁵⁷ 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).

⁵⁸ 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.