

Question 105: What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?

Answer: The sins forbidden in the first commandment are, atheism, in denying or not having a God; idolatry, in having or worshiping more gods than one, or any with or instead of the true God; the not having and avouching him for God, and our God; the omission or neglect of anything due to him, required in this commandment; ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehensions, false opinions, unworthy and wicked thoughts of him; bold and curious searching into his secrets; all profaneness, hatred of God; self-love, self-seeking, and all other inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things, and taking them off from him in whole or in part; vain credulity, unbelief, heresy, misbelief, distrust, despair, incorrigibleness, and insensibleness under judgments, hardness of heart, pride, presumption, carnal security, tempting of God; using unlawful means, and trusting in lawful means; carnal delights and joys; corrupt, blind, and indiscreet zeal; lukewarmness, and deadness in the things of God; estranging ourselves, and apostatizing from God; praying, or giving any religious worship, to saints, angels, or any other creatures; all compacts and consulting with the devil, and hearkening to his suggestions; making men the lords of our faith and conscience; slighting and despising God and his commands; resisting and grieving of his Spirit, discontent and impatience at his dispensations, charging him foolishly for the evils he inflicts on us; and ascribing the praise of any good we either are, have, or can do, to fortune, idols, ourselves, or any other creature.¹

1. What is the literal meaning of the word *atheism*?

Atheism literally means "**no-God-ism**": it designates the teaching or belief that there is no God; hence it signifies the denial of God's existence.²

2. What are the three kinds of atheism?

a. **Theoretical** atheism

b. **Virtual** Atheism

c. **Practical** atheism

3. What is theoretical atheism?

Theoretical atheism is the absolute denial, as a matter of opinion or belief, of the **existence of any God or gods.**

4. What is virtual atheism?

Virtual atheism is the denial of the existence of the **God of the Bible.** The virtual

¹ Westminster Larger Catechism, <http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html?mainframe=http://www.reformed.org/documents/larger1.html> (October, 2011).

² Johannes Geerhardus Vos. Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary (Kindle Locations 3504-3505). Kindle Edition.

atheist is a religious person, in his own way. But, at bottom his belief is no better than plain theoretical atheism.³

5. What is practical atheism?

Practical atheism is **conducting our lives** as if there were no God, even though we may admit that there is a God.

6. Which form of atheism is most common?

a. **Theoretical atheism** is the most rare

b. **Virtual atheism** is common among ministers, professors of theology, college and university professors, and philosophers.

c. **Practical Atheism** is the most common of all forms of atheism.

7. What is the literal meaning of the word *idolatry*?

Idolatry literally means the **worshipping of images**, or of a god or gods by means of **images**.

8. In what sense does the catechism use the word *idolatry*?

The catechism uses *idolatry* in a broad, inclusive sense, making the term include **polytheism**.

9. Why is atheism, in any form, a terrible sin?

Because God is the Creator of all men, and the atheist refuses to **recognize or worship** his creator; in doing so, he denies the most fundamental of all relationships and is expressing his perversion and wickedness.

10. Why is it a terrible sin to have more gods than one, or to have any other god with or instead of the true God?

God demands total, undivided **devotion** and **allegiance**. God will have all or nothing. To offer him a part of our loyalty and service is to dishonor and offend him.

11. Why is ignorance concerning the true God a great sin?

a. Because only as we have a true knowledge of him can we **worship, love and serve** him rightly.

b. Because **abundant provision** has been made for mankind to have a true knowledge of God.

³ Ibid., 3514-3515. Kindle Edition.

12. Why is forgetfulness of God a great sin?

Our forgetfulness indicates that our hearts are **hardened by sin** and that we do not really care very much about God.

13. Why is it sinful to have misapprehensions, false opinions, and unworthy and wicked thoughts about God?

Every false idea or unworthy thought about God **arises from sin**—not only from our own personal sin, but also from the **fall of the human race** into sin by Adam's transgression against God.

14. Does not every person have a right to his own opinion about God?

- a. A person has **no moral right** to believe anything false about God.
- b. A person **has a civil right** to hold his false beliefs without interference by his fellow citizens or the state; the civil government has no jurisdiction over people's thoughts and beliefs.

15. What is meant by "bold and curious searching into [God's] secrets"?⁴

- a. Searching with a **wrong attitude** (boldness or irreverence)
- b. Searching with a **wrong motive** (curiosity, rather than a desire to glorify God and benefit mankind)

16. What is the meaning of "profaneness"?

"Profaneness" is not the same as "profanity". Profaneness is a sin of **character**. A profane person is one who regards sacred and holy things as if they were **ordinary or commonplace**. Example: **Esau**

17. How can we explain the fact that unregenerate people really hate God?

This can only be explained in light of original **sin and total depravity**.

18. Is self-love a sin?

Only if it is **inordinate** self-love. When self-love results in a person loving himself more than his neighbor, and especially more than God, then it is inordinate self-love.

19. What is the real nature of the sin of worldliness?

Worldliness, in its essence, is **loving** and **seeking** the things of the world more than we **love** and **seek** God.

⁴ These items have been renumbered for our class. In the book, Vos begins a new chapter here. Johannes Geerhardus Vos. Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary (Kindle Locations 3552-3553). Kindle Edition.

20. What is the meaning of “vain credulity”?

A readiness to **believe or accept** that which is really unworthy of belief or acceptance because it lacks evidence of truth.

21. Why is unbelief a dreadful sin?

We are saved by means of faith, and since unbelief is the **opposite of faith**, it cuts off the possibility of a person’s salvation as long as he continues in his unbelief.

22. What is the meaning of “heresy”?

The word *heresy* means carrying on **propaganda** for false doctrine.

23. What is misbelief?

Religious delusion, that is, a firm, confident faith in something which is false or wrong.

24. What is meant by “distrust” and “despair”?

Distrust means **doubting** or **disbelieving** God’s promises, love, and goodness.

Despair means disbelieving God’s promises, love, and goodness **totally, to the limit**.

Examples: **Cain and Judas**

25. What is the meaning of “incorrigibility”?⁵

Incapable of being corrected. God’s goodness and his judgments ought to bring men to repentance, but unless accompanied by the special work of the Holy Spirit, they do not lead to true repentance.

26. What is meant by “insensibility under judgments”?

Failure to recognize **God’s hand** in the troubles and calamities that come upon a person or a nation.

27. What do we mean by the expression “hardness of heart”?

A state of character in which **spiritual sensitivity** has been largely or entirely lost.

Unless God in his special grace and mercy gives a person a new heart, he cannot be saved.

28. What is a Biblical example of “hardness of heart”?

Pharaoh.

⁵ These items have been renumbered for our class. In the book, Vos begins a new chapter here. Johannes Geerhardus Vos. Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary.

Question 105 Scripture References:

- Ps. 14:1. The sin of atheism.
- Eph. 2:12. Those who are without God have no hope.
- Jer. 2:27-28 compared with 1 Thess. 1:9. The sin of idolatry contrasted with serving the true God.
- Ps. 81: 11. The sin of rejecting God as the object of our supreme devotion.
- Isa. 43:22-24. The sin of neglecting God and the worship he requires.
- Jer. 4:22; Has. 4:1, 6. The sin of ignorance concerning God and his will.
- Acts 17:23, 29. The sin of misapprehending the nature of God and his will.
- Isa. 40:18. The sin of false opinions concerning God.
- Ps. 50:21. The sin of unworthy and wicked thoughts about God.
- Deut. 29:29 29:29. Bold and curious searching into God's secrets.
- Titus 1 :1 6; Heb. 12:16. The sin of profaneness.
- Rom. 1:30. The sin of hating God.
- 2 Tim. 3:2. The sin of inordinate self-love.
- Phil. 2:21. The sin of immoderate self-seeking.
- I John 2:15-16. The sin of setting our hearts on created things rather than on God.
- I Sam. 2:29; Col. 3:2, 5. Love of the world and earthly things more than God.
- I John 4:1 . The sin of vain credulity.
- Heb. 3:12. The sin of unbelief.
- Gal. 5:20; Titus 3:10. The sin of heresy.
- Acts 26:9. The sin of misbelief, or sincere belief of what is false.
- Ps. 78:22. The sin of distrust.
- Gen. 4:13. The sin of despair.
- Jer. 5:3. The sin of being incorrigible.
- Isa. 42:25. Insensibleness under divine judgments.
- Rom. 2:5. The sin of hardness of heart.