

## THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

HAVING SEEN WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH US CONCERNING GOD, IT  
FOLLOWS TO CONSIDER WHAT THEY REQUIRE AS THE DUTY OF MAN

### QUESTION # 122.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #122. *What is the sum of the six commandments which contain our duty to man?*

A. The sum of the six commandments which contain our duty to man, is, to love our neighbour as ourselves,<sup>1</sup> and to do to others what we would have them to do to us.<sup>2</sup>

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Question 1—*What is the summary of the second table of the law?*

*Answer*—As the first table of the law respects our duty to God, so this second table contains our duty to our neighbor, Eph. 6:2.

This duty is summarized in the words of Christ, Matt. 22:39; which is explicated elsewhere in practical terms, Matt. 7:12. That this part of the law may be summarized appears by that saying of the apostle, Gal. 5:14; by which he has in view this second table, Rom. 13:9. This, then comprehends the “royal law,” Jas. 2:8.

Question 2—*What is implied in the command to love our neighbor as ourselves?*

*Answer*—The duty implied in this command should warn us of several things:

*First*, this serves as a caution against a selfish temper; as though we were born only for, and obliged to do good to none but ourselves, 2 Tim. 3:2. Such who study only their happiness, ease and comfort: 1.) Disobey the command to be turned away from selfish gain, Ps. 119:36. 2.) Break the natural bonds of friendship and remove themselves from sound judgment, Prov. 18:1. 3.) Promote a selfish ambition that engenders strife, Jas. 3:14; Phil. 1:16.

*Second*, this implies that we endeavor to promote the good of all, with whom we converse, Luke 10:33-36; Prov. 27:10. In this way, we make ourselves a blessing to mankind, 1 Thess. 5:15. This duty does not exclude self love, Lev. 19:18; but it obliges us to that love of others which relates to both their spiritual and temporal good, Luke 10:29; Prov. 19:17.

Whether the apostle intends that we ought to love others better than ourselves, Phil. 2:3; may be cleared in the following considerations: 1.) It cannot intend that those who have attained a great measure of the knowledge of the truths of God should reckon themselves as ignorant of, or unstable in, the doctrines of the gospel, Gal. 6:6; nor, that they who have a more large experience of the grace of God should conclude they have no more experience than the unregenerate, John 1:16. 2.) The meaning is that the greatest saint should not think himself better than the least any otherwise than as he has received more from the discriminating grace of God, 1 Cor. 4:7; indeed, he should perceive more sin in himself than he can see in others, 1 Tim. 1:15. 3.) The truth is that the best of saints would have remained as the most vile of sinners had they been left to their own devices, Tit. 3:3-7.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 22:39.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 7:12.

The extent of this love to our neighbors is expressed by a willingness to lay down our lives for them, 1 John 3:16; Rom. 5:7. The true intent of which appears: 1.) That we are principally expected to hazard our lives, or expose ourselves to the utmost danger, even of death itself, for others, John 13:34; Rom. 16:4. 2.) This is not to be done rashly, and at all times, Eccl. 3:2; but when God, who is the sovereign Lord of our lives calls us to it, Heb. 11:35-38. 3.) This is a duty peculiarly fitted to be performed on behalf, not of everyone, but for the brethren, John 15:12, 13; especially those who are more eminently useful in the church of God than ourselves or others, Phil. 2:30. 4.) This ought to be done at those times, when in exposing ourselves for the sake of others, we give our testimony to the gospel, Rev. 12:11; Acts 20:24.

Question 3—*Wherein does this love to our neighbor most appear?*

*Answer*—The notion of doing unto others what we would have them do unto us is one of the most undeniable, and self-evident truths contained in the law of nature, Luke 21:15. Even the most vile of men, when they deliberate upon their own actions cannot but blame themselves from acting the contrary part, 1 Sam. 24:17. Therein appears the justness of characterizing this as the sum of the second table, Job 6:25.

This golden rule is neglected by the greatest part of the world who: 1.) Turn away their hearts from the afflicted, so as not to pity, nor to help, nor to endeavor to comfort them in distress, contrary the mind of the Psalmist, Ps. 35:13-15. 2.) Deny to others those natural, civil, or religious liberties, which, by God's appointment, they have a right to, or envy them in possession thereof, Gen. 38:26; 1 Sam. 26:21; Tit. 3:3.

Question 4—*Why may this be characterized as the "royal law"?*

*Answer*—The same word in Hebrew (מְדִינָה), signifies both "princes," 1 Sam. 2:8; and to be willing, Ex. 35:5. As such, it is submitted unto and obeyed by those who have been made kings and priests unto God, 1 Pet. 2:9; because in a royal manner, with a princely spirit, willingly, and with all readiness of mind they seek to receive the word of God, Acts 17:11; Prov. 25:2. Then, having received this word, they offer a willing obedience, Rom. 12:1.