

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 # 130.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #130. *What are the sins of superiors?*

A. The sins of superiors are, besides the neglect of the duties required of them,¹ and inordinate seeking of themselves,² their own glory,³ ease, profit, or pleasure;⁴ commanding things unlawful,⁵ or not in the power of inferiors to perform;⁶ counseling,⁷ encouraging,⁸ or favouring them in that which is evil;⁹ dissuading, discouraging, or discountenancing them in that which is good;¹⁰ correcting them unduly;¹¹ careless exposing, or leaving them to wrong, temptation, and danger;¹² provoking them to wrath;¹³ or any way dishonouring themselves, or lessening their authority, by an unjust, indiscreet, rigorous, or remiss behaviour.¹⁴

Question 1—*Wherein does it appear that neglect of required duties is a sin of superiors?*

Answer—The relation of superiors finds its excellence in being exerted for the benefit of its inferiors, Heb. 7:7. And, as noted in with respect to the duties required, this is to preserve and cultivate a proper respect for just and lawful exercise of authority amongst men, whereby all social order is not only preserved but upheld, Tit. 2:15. Thus, any neglect of those duties wherein that excellency is displayed and conveyed to inferiors is contrary to that which is required by this command, Ezek. 34:2-4.

This neglect appears: 1.) In any and all inordinate, or excessive, seeking of themselves, Phil. 2:21. This is contrary to that disposition of love whereby superiors ought to study how best to improve that relation for the gain of their inferiors, 1 Cor. 13:5. This is especially true when men seek to take advantage of the poor in their necessities, Isa. 3:14, 15. 2.) When men are given to seek their own glory, John 5:44. This, too, is contrary to a lawful occupation of the relation of a superior, when men fail to seek the glory of God who set them in their places and stations, John 7:18. This is often expressed

¹ Ezek. 34:2-4.

² Phil. 2:21.

³ John 5:44; 7:18.

⁴ Isa. 56:10, 11; Deut. 17:17.

⁵ Dan. 3:4-6; Acts 4:17, 18.

⁶ Ex. 5:10-18; Matt. 23:2, 4.

⁷ Matt. 14:8; *compared with* Mark 6:24.

⁸ 2 Sam. 13:28.

⁹ 1 Sam. 3:13.

¹⁰ John 7:46-49; Col. 3:21; Ex. 5:17.

¹¹ 1 Pet. 2:18-20; Heb. 12:10; Deut. 25:3.

¹² Gen. 38:11, 26; Acts 18:17.

¹³ Eph. 6:4.

¹⁴ Gen. 9:21; 1 Kings 12:13-16; 1:6; 1 Sam. 2:29-31.

by a pride and haughtiness in treating their inferiors with contempt and disdain much like the Pharisees did to those whom they apprehended inferior in gifts or station, John 7:49. 3.) When men are consumed with their own ease, profit or pleasure, whereby they turn the relation of superior into a pretext for self-aggrandizement, Isa. 56:10, 11. Additionally, it is one of the notes of those who have exchanged a lawful superiority for a tyrannical positioning to the harm of those accounted inferior, Deut. 17:17.

Question 2—*Wherein do superiors boldly and actively sin against their inferiors?*

Answer—Superiors greatly sin against their inferiors in a bold and active way when: 1.) They command those things, of their inferiors, which are in themselves sinful, which they cannot, in their consciences, comply with without contracting great moral pollution, Dan. 3:4-6. This includes all attempts to silence speaking the truth in order for the maintaining of some ulterior motive other than the glory of God, Acts 4:17, 18. 2.) They demand those things which are impossible, and being enraged against their inferiors when they fail to do them, Ex. 5:10-18. This sin is aggravated when it is to be expected that they themselves are to conform to the “rightness” of the thing demanded, Matt. 23:2, 4.

Again, superiors aggravate in sinning against this duty when: 1.) Instead of offering godly counsel, they use their authority to seek and procure some evil end by their counsel, Matt. 14:8; especially, when this counsel is tendered to those inferiors desirous of seeking moral guidance, Mark 6:24. 2.) Instead of encouraging their inferiors in that course which is right and good before God, they purloin and prostitute their authority to encourage gross wickedness in and by their inferiors, 2 Sam. 13:28. This is often indicative that the LORD has cast them off for destruction, 1 Sam. 2:23-25. 3.) Instead of countenancing them in their righteousness they sell their authority to favor them in the doing of that which is evil, 1 Sam. 3:13. This occurs when those in authority forego the appointed means of discipline, Prov. 23:13, 14.

Question 3—*Where do all these sins tend or lead unto?*

Answer—These sins tend or lead unto that which dampens the cultivation of a godly spirit in inferiors by: 1.) Dissuading, discouraging or discountenancing them in that which is good, John 7:46-49; Col. 3:21; especially when it leads to holding the true religion in contempt, Ex. 5:17. 2.) Inflicting correction which is beyond what is due which, while they must bear it patiently, 1 Pet. 2:18-20; yet, is contrary to the intention of the One who bestowed that authority that He might seek the profit of those under authority together with His own glory, Heb. 12:10. Those who exceed what is just and equitable, besides contravening the law of God, often void their own authority in the eyes of those under them, Deut. 25:3. 3.) Carelessly exposing, or leaving their inferiors to commit that which is wrong, yield unto temptation and fall into grave moral or physical danger, Gen. 38:11, 26; Acts 18:17. 4.) Creating situations which exasperate them and, thus, tempt and provoke their inferiors to wrath, Eph. 6:4.

Question 4—*Why are these sins carefully to be avoided?*

Answer—These sins all have a native tendency, by an unjust, indiscreet, rigorous or remiss behavior, to: 1.) Bring dishonor to themselves, Gen. 9:21. 2.) Lessen their authority, even when it is just and lawful, 1 Kings 12:13-16.

When men fail to exercise their just and lawful authority, their remissness encourages the spirit of rebellion and pride which is only too natural in sinful men, 1 Kings 1:5, 6. When men fail to exercise their superior relations according to what is righteous and equitable, it often falls out that God removes from them all authority, 1 Sam. 2:29-31.