

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

QUESTIONS # 92 & 40.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #92. *What did God at first reveal unto man as the rule of his obedience?*

A. The rule of obedience revealed to Adam in the estate of innocence, and to all mankind in him, besides a special command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was the moral law.¹

(Shorter Catechism)

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

A. The rule which God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the moral law.²

Question 1—*What was the rule of obedience first revealed to man?*

Answer—The rule of obedience first revealed to man was the *moral law*, Rom. 10:5. These laws take their rise from the holy nature of God, wherein is grounded our obligation to obedience, Lev. 20:7; Ps. 111:7, 8. This flows not merely or even principally from the command of God, but from their being agreeable to his divine perfections, (*cf.* Ex. 20:8-11) from whence may be ascribed the reason for God assigning them as a matter of duty, 1 Pet. 1:16, Ex. 15:26. These are reducible to what we call the law of nature, Rom. 2:14, 15; which, because of its agreeableness to the dictates of reason, is called *the moral law*, Luke 12:57, Eph. 6:1. As such, it constantly binds and directs the manners of all men.

We are induced to yield obedience to this law of nature, or *moral law*, when: 1.) We consider that we are creatures, who are led to confess that we are subject to God, and therefore bound to obey him, Job 37:7; Ps. 64:9. 2.) We think of the absolute perfection of God, we understand this obedience must be agreeable thereto, *cf.* Bildad, Job 8:20; Ps. 19:7. 3.) We remember God is a Spirit, we are reminded that obedience must be performed in a spiritual manner, Job 32:8; Rom. 7:14. 4.) We recall that he is a holy God, and therefore he ought to be worshipped in reverence and holy fear, Ps. 96:9.

Question 2—*Was this revealed to Adam in the estate of innocence?*

Answer—Yes. Eccl. 7:29. The word translated “upright” (yāshār; יָשָׁר) means “straight” or “righteous.” This is an original rectitude predicated of the original man, Adam, *cf.* Gen. 1:26, 27. It indicates a concreated “straightness” which consists in an innate knowledge of that which is right (*i.e.*, an original righteousness, *cf.* Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24). We thereby understand that the *moral law* was so distinctly written in his heart and impressed in his nature, that it was equal to an express revelation, Gen. 2:7; 3:8. Being thus created in the “image of God,” Adam knew his duty fully, and he was perfectly disposed and able to perform it, 1 Tim. 2:14; Isa.

¹ Gen. 1:26, 27; Rom. 2:14, 15; 10:5; Gen. 2:17.

² Rom. 2:14, 15; 10:5.

45:12, 13. Thus, this moral law was revealed to Adam in the manner and object of his creation, in his nature and in his constant communion with God.

Question 3—*Was this rule given to all mankind in him?*

Answer—Yes, Rom. 2:14, 15. In this place we learn from the apostle three things: 1.) That *the Gentiles have not the law*; that is, the law of Moses, or written law, Ps. 147:19, 20; Eph. 2:12. 2.) Nonetheless, that they yet have a law within them, for they are *a law unto themselves*, Rom. 1:19, 32; 2:12. Now, this is the natural law which is all one with the *moral law*. However, this natural law is less clear and distinct than the written moral law, not because of any inherent defect in the revelation but because of the corruption of the nature through sin, Rom. 1:18; 8:3. 3.) We are told how they have this law. It is not through their own making or devising, nor is it a matter of tradition, but they have it by nature derived from Adam, Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45. The work of that law *is written in their hearts*. It is such a work that cannot be wholly erased, telling them what is right and wrong, their consciences bearing witness, Gen. 20:5; Rom. 1:19; John 8:9. From these we may deduce that there is nothing in the natural law, or law of nature, but what is a matter of *moral law*. It is called *law*, because it not only directs, but binds to *duty* (*cf.* 1 Cor. 9:21). By this *light* and *law* of nature is made known to all nations, in some measure, sufficient knowledge to leave the heathen without excuse for their disobedience, Rom. 2:12; Jude 10.

Question 4—*Was there another, special command given to Adam?*

Answer—Yes. Gen. 2:17. Besides the *moral law* given by way of natural law, there was a positive law given. Positive laws are those laws and institutions which depend solely upon the sovereign will and pleasure of God having no necessary reference to his nature or the nature of the creation. These he might not have enjoined if he had pleased, without making any change in his own nature or the nature of the creation. Of this sort of law was the command not to eat the forbidden fruit, Gen. 3:11. Among those laws that are counted positive are the laws concerning the external worship of God called ceremonial laws. These were designed to typify Christ as then to come, and to lead to a knowledge of the way of salvation through him, Heb. 10:1. Of these, it was predicted they should come to an end after the death of Christ, Gen. 49:10; Dan. 9:27; *cf.* Jer. 3:16; Gal. 5:1. Also, the judicial laws given by God for the government of the Jews, was partly founded in the law of nature and partly respecting them as a nation distinct from the others in covenant with God, Lev. 25:13; Deut. 4:41-44; 16:16; 33:10. As far as this law respects the peculiar constitution of the Hebrew nation, it is entirely abrogated; but, as far as it contains any statute founded in the law of nature common to all nations, it is still obligatory, 1 Pet. 2:13, 14; 1 Cor. 9:8-10. These laws, positive and mixed, differ from the *moral law* which is universal and unchangeable, Matt. 5:18.