

## 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 # 94.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #94. *Is there any use of the moral law to man since the fall?*

A. Although no man, since the fall, can attain to righteousness and life by the moral law;<sup>1</sup> yet there is great use thereof, as well common to all men, as peculiar either to the unregenerate, or the regenerate.<sup>2</sup>

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Question 1—*Prior to the fall, could man attain to righteousness and life by the moral law?*

*Answer*—Yes. Rom. 10:5. The tenor of the covenant under which man was placed in at first was, in its sum and substance, a promise of righteousness and life by the keeping of the law, Lev. 18:5; Neh. 9:29; Gal. 3:12. Eternal life was promised to man in the estate of innocency, Gen. 2:17. Therein only he was able to render sinless obedience, which was the condition thereof, Luke 10:27, 28.

Question 2—*Can any man, since the fall, attain to righteousness and life by the moral law?*

*Answer*—No. Rom. 3:20. Since the fall, it is impossible for man thus to obey, Rom. 8:3. It does not matter how perfect any future obedience, because the nature of the required obedience is perfection, which cannot be sinless once sin has been committed, Jas. 2:10. It would be a reflection upon the justice and holiness of God to conclude that he will accept an imperfect obedience instead of perfection, Num. 23:19. Therefore, any right to life is not to be expected from our imperfect obedience, Gal. 2:16.

Question 3—*Does the moral law yet have great use common to all men?*

*Answer*—Yes. 1 Tim. 1:8. This use is called the *absolute* use. It respects that which obtains in the case of every state of man (*i.e.*, innocence, fallen, regenerated), although, since the fall, its *absolute* use appears only in the prism of fallen and redeemed men. It is a unique, full and certain rule of what things ought to be done towards both God and man, Matt. 22:37-40. There is no work which may truly and properly be called good and acceptable to God but that which agrees with and is prescribed by this law, Rom. 12:2; Ps. 119:66; 1 John 3:4. Thus, whatever is neither commanded nor forbidden by the moral law is to be considered in its own nature indifferent and left to the freedom of man, Acts 5:4; 1 Cor. 7:25, 37; unless it has been restricted by some positive law, Gen. 2:17; Lev. 19:19. Furthermore, it ought to be restricted by consideration of our neighbor, Rom. 14:19; 15:2; 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23.

The *absolute* use is rooted in the perfection of the law, Ps. 19:7; 119:96. This perfection is demonstrated: 1.) From its equity, wherein it stands in no need of correction. There is no case so special, no circumstance so extraordinary as to escape either a general or particular rule contained in this law, Ps. 19:9; Rev. 16:7. 2.) From its regal majesty, because the greater the equity of a law, the greater the sway of that law. Thus,

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 8:3; Gal. 2:16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. 1:8.

the law of nature, being the fountain of all other law because it is most equitable, is most majestic, Jas. 2:8. This moral law, belonging to the supreme king and lawgiver, who alone can bind and loose men's consciences, partakes of this regal majesty, Jas. 4:12. And, this moral law judges all other laws and is judged by none, Job 38:2; 1 Sam. 25:10. 3.) From its universality and extent, embracing all duties of man, both internal and external, speaking to the soul no less than the body, Ps. 119:96; Heb. 4:12. 4.) From its immutability, because it remains forever and shall not be destroyed, Ps. 119:89; Matt. 5:18. 5.) From its holiness, because it is a most clear image of God (representing his own mind). Thus, the word of God is said to be most pure, Ps. 119:140; and the commandments of the Lord are said to be most pure, Ps. 19:8.

Question 4—*Does the moral law have peculiar use for both the unregenerate and the regenerate?*

*Answer*—Yes. Deut. 17:11; Ex. 18:20. This is called the *relative* use of the law wherein is expressed its *relation to man* in his several estates.

For the unregenerate, still in a state of sin and misery, the use of the law, being made weak in the flesh, is not given for life, Gal. 3:19. It is added "for transgression" in several ways: 1.) For conviction, by bringing a knowledge of sin and guilt, Rom. 3:20. 2.) For restraint, restraining and checking men in their sinful courses, 1 Tim. 1:9. Which, like a bit, instead of quelling rebellion, it increases and irritates the perversity of the graceless sinner, Rom. 5:20; 7:13. 3.) For condemnation, denouncing upon the sinner the divine malediction, 2 Cor. 3:9; Rom. 4:15.

For the regenerate, restored to a state of grace, it has various uses *before* and *after* conversion. Before, it serves: 1.) To convince him of his sin and misery in himself, Rom. 7:7. 2.) To lead him to seek a remedy outside of himself in Christ, Gal. 3:24; Rom. 10:4.

Whereas, after conversion, the moral law becomes a standard and rule of the most perfect life, to which he knows he is called by Christ and which he ought diligently to pursue, 1 Tim. 1:5. To such, the law does not bring condemnation, Rom. 8:1, because their sins are forgiven, Ps. 32:1.