

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 # 95.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #95. *Of what use is the moral law to all men?*

A. The moral law is of use to all men, to inform them of the holy nature and the will of God,¹ and of their duty, binding them to walk accordingly;² to convince them of their disability to keep it, and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives;³ to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery,⁴ and thereby help them to a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ,⁵ and of the perfection of his obedience.⁶

Question 1—*Does the moral law inform all men of the holy nature and the will of God?*

Answer—Yes. Lev. 11:44, 45; 20:7. The Old Testament holds forth our earliest notion of law signifying it is an *instruction* or *doctrine*, Job 22:22. As subject matter, it respects an obligation to do what is being taught, Gen. 26:5. The Hebrew term for *law*, (תּוֹרָה—*torāh*), is derived from the word meaning to *throw* or *cast*, (יָרָה—*yārāh*), which in its causative form (*i.e.*, Hiphil) means to *teach*. Thus, the law is an appointment for teaching or instructing—a law commanded by the Lawgiver, whose very giving commands our obedience, Isa. 33:22 (“our lawgiver;”—מִהַקְקִיבוֹ—*from the word meaning to cut in, inscribe, or decree*, קָטַף, *hāqatq*). The divine perfections are stamped upon the law in legible characters, Rom. 7:12. These perfections also enjoin our obedience, 1 Pet. 1:15, 16; and threaten our disobedience, Rom. 1:18. Whilst this law enjoins nothing but our duty, there is nothing enjoined that does not prove to be to our benefit; in this, we see the inherent goodness of the Lawgiver, Ps. 19:10, 11.

Question 2—*Does the moral law inform them of their duty in such a way as it binds them to it?*

Answer—Yes. 1 Tim. 1:5. It enjoins in such a way that men’s consciences are bound so that they may not live presumptuously to their own destruction, Rom. 2:15. In this the great care and goodness of God is displayed in the instruction contained in this law, Micah 6:8. The knowledge of this charts the safe course to avoid ruin by failing to yield proper obedience, Jas. 2:10, 11. Furthermore, it engages us to seek that blessedness connected with strict obedience, Prov. 28:18.

Question 3—*Does the moral law convince men of their disability to keep it and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts and lives?*

Answer—Yes. Rom. 3:20. The law, being spiritual, convinces us that we are carnal and sold under sin, Rom. 7:14. Indeed, the apostle assures us he would not know sin

¹ Lev. 11:44, 45; 20:7, 8; Rom. 7:12.

² Mic. 6:8, Jas. 2:10, 11.

³ Ps. 19:11, 12; Rom. 3:20; 7:7.

⁴ Rom. 3:9, 23.

⁵ Gal. 3:21, 22.

⁶ Rom. 10:4.

without the law, Rom. 7:7. Sin is so entwined in the nature of man that he is unable to know himself in the depth of his depravity, Ps. 19:11, 12.

Question 4—*Does the moral law serve to humble men in a sense of their sin and misery?*

Answer—Yes. Rom. 3:9, 23. When faced with the demand for perfect obedience, we are lead from the holiness and purity of the law to the corruption of our nature by reason of sin and humbled with a sense of our utter inability to perform what is commanded, Rom. 5:20. Thus, we are lead to perceive in ourselves the desert threatened upon those that do not keep the law, Rom. 7:9; Gal. 3:10.

Question 5—*Does the moral law point men to the need they have of Christ?*

Answer—Yes. Gal. 3:21, 22. Finding ourselves condemned by the law, and recognizing that righteousness is not to be obtained by our obedience, we are turned out of ourselves to seek it elsewhere, Luke 18:18-22; Rom. 3:20-22. It is the recognition not simply of our inability to keep this law, but a sense that we are culpable and deserving of condign punishment which identifies those who make proper use of Christ, Luke 23:39-43.

Question 6—*Does the moral law make clearer the nature of that obedience rendered by Christ?*

Answer—Yes. Rom. 10:4. The apostle tells us that Christ is the end (τέλος—*telos*) of the law. This means that Christ is the scope, purpose and final end, but also, that he is the very end proposed and intended in the law. This is because the law, as issued forth from the Godhead (*i.e.*, the Divine nature), is a shadow and not the very image whereby all things would be perfected, Heb. 7:19; 10:1. That image is revealed in Christ and his gospel, 2 Cor. 4:4; because Christ is that image by virtue of his office, Col. 1:15. Our need of Christ is confirmed by the concomitant recognition that he alone has fulfilled that perfection of obedience necessary because the law could not fulfill itself, Rom. 8:3, 4.