

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTIONS # 24 & 14.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #24. *What is sin?*

A. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature.¹

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #14. *What is sin?*

A. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.²

Question 1—*What is the law whereof sin is a transgression?*

Answer—The law is any law given by God whereby he lays any duty upon any of the children of men, whether it is the natural law which is written on the hearts of all men, Rom. 2:15; or the revealed law and will of God, written in the Bible, Rev. 22:18, 19; whether it is the law strictly so called, John 1:17; or the gospel, whose great command is to believe in Christ, John 3:18. The transgression of this command to believe is the great sin in those who are hearers of the gospel, 2 Thess. 1:8. The law of which sin is a transgression is any law or command of God which he obliges men to obey, Matt. 19:17. This law consists in:

First, there is a law engraven upon the hearts of men by nature, which was in force long before there was any law promulgated from Mount Sinai, Rom. 1:19. This is the light of reason, and the dictates of natural conscience concerning those moral principles of good and evil, which have an essential equity in them, and shew man his duty to God, to his neighbor, and to himself, Acts 24:16. There is a law in all men by nature, which is a rule of good and evil, Phil. 4:8. They have notions of right and wrong in their consciences, which is evident by those laws which are common to all nations for the preservation of human society, the encouraging of virtue and discouraging of vice, Rom. 1:20, 27. Every person born into this world brings with them a law in their heart, Eccl. 3:11; when reason clears up itself from the clouds of sense, they can distinguish between good and evil, between things which ought to be done, and things which ought to be avoided, John 8:9; Acts 23:1. Every man has, by nature, a legal indictment and a legal execution within themselves, Rom. 2:14, 15.

Second, there is another law given by Moses to the nation of the Jews, which was composed of ceremonial rites, judicial processes and moral duties, John 7:19. This was divided in a threefold law: 1.) The ceremonial law, which was a certain system of divine positive precepts, with relation to the external worship of God, Lev. 1:1-13. It was wholly taken up in enjoining those observances of sacrifices and offerings, and various methods of purifications and cleansings which were typical of Christ, and of that sacrifice of his which alone was able to take away sin, Heb. 10:1-4; Col. 2:16, 17. 2.) The judicial law

¹ 1 John 3:4; Gal. 3:10, 12.

² 1 John 3:4.

consisted in those institutions which God prescribed the Jews for their civil government, Ex. 22:1-15. Unlike other nations, the laws for their religion and civil government were both divine, and both immediately from God, Isa. 33:22; accordingly, all actions and suits between party and party were to be tried and determined by this judicial law, Deut. 24:10-13; Num. 35:11, 12. 3.) The moral law which is a system or body of those precepts which carry an universal and natural equity in them, being so conformable to the light of reason, the dictates of conscience, and the natural law, that we must need subscribe to the justice and righteousness of them, Ex. 20:3-17. This law continues in its full force and power, obliging the conscience as a standing rule of obedience, Matt. 5:17.

Question 2—*Wherein does the nature of sin consist?*

Answer—It consists of a want of conformity unto the law of God, or a disconformity unto it, Gal. 3:10, 12. The law of God has set a mark for man, and, as the word *sin* signifies, men transgress by not hitting the mark, whether swerving from the right line, or going off the way, it is a going aside, Ps. 14:3. This universal conformity that is required consists of a twofold conformity: 1.) A conformity of heart, reaching to the inner man and touching his whole soul and mind, Mark 12:30. 2.) A conformity of the life both in words and deeds, as the law requires some things, and forbids other things in heart and life, Ps. 24:3, 4.

There are several things that should be noted about sin: 1.) Sin has no positive being, it is a lack of perfection, a defect, an imperfection in the creature, 1 John 3:4. 2.) Original sin is truly and properly sin, being the corruption of every man by reason of the imputation of Adam's sin, Rom. 5:12. This sin of our nature places man in a state of want of conformity from the law of God which requires all moral perfection in us, Matt. 5:48. By reason of Original sin, instead, men have a bent of soul contrary to the law, Rom. 8:7. 3.) The first motions of sin, and the risings of that natural corruption in us, even before the completion with the consent of the will to evil is lust, which is distinguished from consent and execution of sin, and is truly and properly sin, Rom. 6:12; this lust is condemned by the law, Rom. 7:7. 4.) All consent of heart and delight in motions towards things forbidden by the law of God are sins, Matt. 5:28.

Question 3—*Wherein does the evil of sin lie?*

Answer—*First*, the evil of sin is principally to be discovered in the wrong that is done to God being contrary to: 1.) The nature of God which is altogether holy, Ps. 51:4. 2.) The will and law of God, which is a revelation of his nature toward his creation, 2 Sam. 12:9, 10, 13, 14.

Second, there is an evil of sin in the wrong done to ourselves, Prov. 8:36. Because: 1.) It leaves a stain and spiritual pollution on the soul, whereby it becomes filthy and brings with it the loathing of God, Isa. 1:15; and it also brings shame and confusion on the sinner himself, Gen. 3:7. 2.) It brings a guilt, whereby the sinner is bound over to punishment, according to the state in which he is, until his sin is pardoned, Mic. 7:18; Ps. 25:11.

Sin, being a transgression of the law, contains many other sins: 1.) It is rebellion against the majesty of God, Ps. 12:4. 2.) It is contrary to the unspotted holiness of God, Rom. 7:12. 3.) It vilifies the wisdom of God, which prescribes the law to men, Ezek. 18:29. 4.) It is high contempt and horrid abuse of the divine goodness, Isa. 1:2. 5.) In it the sinner promises himself peace and safety notwithstanding the vengeance of God against sin, Deut. 29:19. 6.) It denies the omniscience of God, Ps. 94:7. 7.) It bids defiance to the divine power, Rom. 2:6.