

## 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 # 126 & 64 & 65.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #126. *What is the general scope of the fifth commandment?*

A. The general scope of the fifth commandment is, the performance of those duties which we mutually owe in our several relations, as inferiors, superiors, or equals.<sup>1</sup>

*(Shorter Catechism)*

Q #64. *What is required in the fifth commandment?*

A. The fifth commandment requireth the preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to every one in their several places and relations, as superiors,<sup>2</sup> inferiors,<sup>3</sup> or equals.<sup>4</sup>

Q #65. *What is forbidden in the fifth commandment?*

A. The fifth commandment forbiddeth the neglecting of, or doing any thing against, the honor and duty which belongeth to every one in their several places and relations.<sup>5</sup>

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Question 1—*What is the purpose of God's appointing of several places and stations?*

*Answer*—Those notions that reject this appointment seek to introduce a principle of levelling against the divine will, Ps. 75:7. God is a God of order, not of confusion, 1 Cor. 14:33; therefore, He has placed all men in their several relations as superiors, Eph. 5:21; inferiors, 1 Pet. 2:17; and, as equals, Rom. 12:10. This order of relation serves:

*First*, To manifest the sovereignty of God that invests one man more than another with dominion and honor, though all are of one blood, 1 Cor. 4:7; Acts 17:26. He takes one piece of clay and fashions it so as to be set upon a throne, Dan. 2:21; Ps. 113:7, 8; He sets another piece of the *same* clay upon a dunghill, Dan. 3:28, 29. In this, He demonstrates that He alone is king of the world, and the fountain of all honor, Luke 1:52.

*Second*, To beautify the world, God, who has made the natural body of man not all one lump, but consisting of several members, some more, some less honorable, for the beauty of the whole, 1 Cor. 12:14-26; He has showed Himself wise in the governing of men, Job 5:8-16.

*Third*, It is necessary in this state of sin and misery, especially for the preservation of the world, Rom. 13:1-4; without rules and government in families, churches and states, this present estate would be like a ship without a pilot, in danger of shipwreck amongst many dangerous rocks, Jas. 3:4; Ps. 81:12.

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:17; Rom. 12:10.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 5:21.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. 2:17.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 12:10.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 15:4-6; Ezek. 34:2-4; Rom. 13:8.

For these reasons, everyone should be content with the place assigned by the Divine Providence, Eccl. 5:18, 19; Phil. 4:11, 12. Doing the duty of your place and relation will yield the greatest comfort and joy in life, Eccl. 9:10.

Question 2—*What is the necessity of performing of the relative duties in general?*

*Answer*—The conscientious performing of these relative duties forms a part of that personal and relative holiness required by the true religion, Rom. 6:22. True religion consists in faith, Heb. 11:6; which is comprehended under the first table of the law, Matt. 22:37, 38; and holiness, 1 John 3:2, 3; which comprehends the second table with this command at its head, Matt. 22:39.

*First*, This is necessary in respect of the command of God which has placed this fifth command at the head of the second table, Eph. 6:2. All of the commands of God carry within them the same stamp of the divine authority, Ex. 20:2.

*Second*, It is necessary to evidence us to be Christians indeed, for no man can be a new creature and neglect to make conscience of relative duties, 2 Cor. 5:17. Saving grace permeates all of our relationships, like leaven, and sets men aright in them, Rom. 13:7, 8. This appears because: 1.) Relative duties are an integral part of true godliness, which are part of the new man, Eph. 4:24, 25. A man who lacks relative holiness is no complete, or evangelically, complete Christian, 2 Pet. 1:7, 9. 2.) Relative holiness is an essential part of true godliness, Jas. 2:18. Personal holiness is demonstrated by relative holiness, Eph. 5:9.

*Third*, We prove our union with Christ through our conformity to Him, 1 John 2:16. But, He is a loving husband to His church, Eph. 5:25; a faithful servant to the Father, Isa. 50:5-7; an obedient child, Luke 2:51; etc.

*Fourth*, It is necessary to make us useful Christians otherwise we merely cumber the ground, Luke 13:7. Useless Christians are no better than vines, good for nothing but the fire, Ezek. 15.

*Fifth*, True religion consists in both personal as well as relative duties and without the latter the Christian is deformed in his walk, Prov. 26:7. Crooked professors always stand in danger of being led into destruction, Ps. 125:5.

*Sixth*, Relative holiness is necessary for personal holiness, 1 John 4:7, 8, 12, 20, 21. Relative holiness and personal holiness are best when joined together, 1 Pet. 3:7.

Question 3—*What are the consequences of the neglect of this performance?*

*Answer*—The neglect and unfaithfulness in duties of relative holiness is a violation of this command, whether against superiors, Matt. 15:4-6; inferiors, Ezek. 34:2-4; or, equals, Rom. 13:8. It carries the following consequences: 1.) It evidences a lack of sincerity on the part of those who profess the true religion and uncovers the unsoundness of your heart, Ps. 119:6. 2.) It makes one useless with regard to relatives because there is nothing more convincing and more likely to make others fall in love with religion than this, 1 Pet. 3:1. 3.) It does much damage to the cause of true religion in the eyes of an observing world, 1 Tim. 6:1. 4.) It fails to improve the use of time, wherein only do these relations obtain, Job 3:17-19. This warning ought to move us to usefulness on behalf of the true religion, Gal. 6:10. 5.) Undutifulness herein may ruin your relative, Eccl. 4:10; contrary even to the desire of the rich man in hell, Luke 16:28. 6.) This neglect will undoubtedly ruin you unless you get pardon and grace to reform, Heb. 12:14.