

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 # 129.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #129. *What is required of superiors towards their inferiors?*

A. It is required of superiors, according to that power they receive from God, and that relation wherein they stand, to love,¹ pray for,² and bless their inferiors;³ to instruct,⁴ counsel, and admonish them;⁵ countenancing,⁶ commending,⁷ and rewarding such as do well;⁸ and discountenancing,⁹ reproving, and chastising such as do ill;¹⁰ protecting,¹¹ and providing for them all things necessary for soul¹² and body:¹³ and by grave, wise, holy, and exemplary carriage, to procure glory to God,¹⁴ honour to themselves,¹⁵ and so to preserve that authority which God hath put upon them.¹⁶

Question 1—*Wherefrom, according to the catechism, does the power, or authority, of superiors proceed?*

Answer—So far from occasioning the pride of heart that is natural to fallen man, the power (ἐξουσία), or authority, which relates to the relation wherein they stand is from God, Rom. 13:1; Matt. 28:18; 1 Cor. 4:7. Whatever his servant has to do, he must, in doing it, bear the image of God for whom he acts, *cf.* Matt. 8:9. It is monstrous even to imagine that the Most High has impressed his sanction upon every kind of human authority, however immoral, profane, blasphemous, requiring of the unhappy and *tempted* subject of such dominion, not merely a peaceful subjection to irresistible power, but a conscientious reverence of its officers and agents, as his ministers, Rev. 13:2. We are not left to adopt any such revolting conclusion, Rom. 13:4. The scriptures are plain, 1 Pet. 2:14. They define, as we have already remarked, the ends of civil authority,—the good of society, and God's glory; they fix the character of its officers—able men, Ex. 18:21; just men, 2 Sam.

¹ Col. 3:19; Tit. 2:4.

² 1 Sam. 12:23; Job 1:5.

³ 1 Kings 8:55, 56; Heb. 7:7; Gen. 49:28.

⁴ Deut. 6:6, 7.

⁵ Eph. 6:4.

⁶ 1 Pet. 3:7.

⁷ 1 Pet. 2:14; Rom. 13:3.

⁸ Est. 6:3.

⁹ Rom. 13:3, 4.

¹⁰ Prov. 29:15; 1 Pet. 2:14.

¹¹ Job 29:13-17; Isa. 1:10, 17.

¹² Eph. 6:4.

¹³ 1 Tim. 5:8.

¹⁴ 1 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 2:3-5.

¹⁵ 1 Kings 3:28.

¹⁶ Tit. 2:15.

23:3; 2 Kings 23:3. They prescribe many of its laws, and enjoin upon it special duties, Deut. 17:19. Therefore, every ordinance of God, in its institution, is like himself, and only as it bears his image in its constitution and administration, can it possibly be required of us to yield it that high regard, and hearty acquiescence, and conscientious obedience, which is due to those to whom so high and important trusts are committed, Acts 4:19.

Question 2—*Wherein stand the duties of superiors to their inferiors?*

Answer—These duties stand in the following: 1.) Being possessed of the right disposition (*i.e.*, love) toward those who are inferior, Col. 3:19; Tit. 2:4. Without this disposition of love, or charity, this relation will stand to no profit for either superior or inferior, 1 Cor. 13:3. 2.) A realization that our help is not in ourselves or our own power, Ps. 121:2. Which, when properly acknowledged, leads to seeking the welfare of inferiors from the Almighty by prayer, Job 1:5; the neglect of which is sin in the superior, 1 Sam. 12:23. 3.) An owning of the responsibility to turn the position and authority of superiority to the benefit and comfort of the inferior, which is conferred as and by blessing, Gen. 49:28; 1 Kings 8:55, 56. It is a great indication of superiority to utilize authority for blessing of inferiors, Heb. 7:7.

Question 3—*Wherein does this love, prayer and blessing of inferiors by their superiors most appear?*

Answer—These appear most when superiors: 1.) Endeavor to promote both the spiritual as well as worldly advantage of their inferiors by instruction, Deut. 6:6, 7. Youth, and other inferiors, are slow to realize the precarious position of their lives and the deleterious effects of actions taken in ignorance and sin, Job 20:11. 2.) Are careful to give counsel to their inferiors, Prov. 15:22. Furthermore, with regard to counsel itself, wisdom is superior to foolishness and a multitude to one individual in Prov. 24:6. 3.) Put themselves out to admonish, or impart understanding (νοουθεσία), to those under their care, Eph. 6:4; 1 Thess. 5:12. To leave souls without admonition (ἡμεῖς) is not good, Prov. 19:2.

Positively, this is accomplished by superiors: 1.) Countenancing, or accepting, of the persons of those who are obedient inferiors, 1 Pet. 3:7; whereby the inferiors are made to know they are recipients of the blessing, or favor, of the superior, Prov. 16:15. 2.) Commending, or praising, whereby obedient inferiors hear rehearsed the approbation of their behaviors, 1 Pet. 2:14; Rom. 13:3. 3.) Rewarding, or honoring, those inferiors who do well thereby rendering a fit recompense for their obedient and cheerful submission to just and legal authority, Est. 6:3.

Negatively, this is accomplished by superiors: 1.) Discountenancing, or refusing to accept, of the persons of disobedient inferiors, Rom. 13:3, 4; whereby the wicked are made to feel their non-acceptance, Ps. 80:16. 2.) Reproving, or condemning, whereby the wicked are made to understand the heinousness of their actions, Eph. 5:11. 3.) Chastising, or recompensing dishonor, upon those working iniquity, Prov. 29:15; 1 Pet. 2:14. The contrary which exhibits all that is contrary to that love required, Prov. 13:24.

Question 4—*Why is all of this required of superiors?*

Answer—These things are required because in so doing the superior accomplishes that which: 1.) Protects those who are inferiors, Job 29:13-17; Isa. 1:10, 17. And that with regard to both body, 1 Tim. 5:8; and soul, Eph. 6:4. 2.) It exhibits that grave, wise, holy and exemplary carriage desirable in any that bear rule, 1 Tim. 3:2; Isa. 16:5. This brings glory to God, 1 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 2:3-5; honor to the superior, 1 Kings 3:28; and, all tends to preserve that authority which God has put upon them, Tit. 2:15.