

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 # 132.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #132. *What are the sins of equals?*

A. The sins of equals are, besides the neglect of the duties required,¹ the undervaluing of the worth,² envying the gifts,³ grieving at the advancement or prosperity one of another;⁴ and usurping pre-eminence one over another.⁵

Question 1—*Why do the sins of equals commence with neglect of duties?*

Answer—The duties of equals proceeding from the principle of mutual honor, 1 Pet. 5:5; its neglect demonstrates a failure to exercise that proper love which is to characterize that relation, Rom. 13:8.

Failure to have the due regard and dignity of others, 1 Pet. 2:17; particularly in this relation amongst equals, amounts to a self-despising and loathing, Gal. 5:13-15. It erodes that “golden rule” which forms the intent of the divine law regarding humanity, Matt. 7:12; hence, this principle of moral, or ethical, reciprocity is the chief note of the second table of the Ten Commandments, Mark 12:31.

Failure to give honor one before another, displays a lack of brotherly love that denotes one is “kindly affectioned,” (φιλόστοργοι), Rom. 12:10; and it often results in an attempt to exercise a tyrannical lordship over those whom we are commanded to serve, contrary to the example of Christ, Matt. 20:25-28. This only produces pride of mind and that vainglory from which comes strife and division in the body, Phil. 2:3; Jas. 4:1; Prov. 13:10. Unity flows from equality, or the lack of distinction, 1 Cor. 12:12, 13; whereas the purpose of distinction is to serve that which holds the many together, the body, 1 Cor. 12:14-26.

Failure to rejoice in the advancement and gifts of others, Rom. 12:15, 16; Phil. 2:4; is indicative of both a lack of natural affection (ἀστόργους), Rom. 1:31; as well as a disposition to envy, Jas. 4:5; and both are contrary to that natural bond which is to be found in the relation of equals, Zech. 11:14. It bespeaks an inordinate affection, a carnal concern, set upon oneself, Col. 3:5; 1 Cor. 3:3.

Question 2—*What is the first way in which we sin actively against our equals?*

Answer—We sin actively when we undervalue the worth of those who are our equals, because we reveal that we possess an unnatural disposition (ἄστοργοι), 2 Tim. 3:3. So, our failure to appreciate the worth of others should not be understood to be merely a lack of concern but an express denial of any natural bond, Matt. 19:19. We undervalue the worth of our equals whenever: 1.) We entertain unjust and unfriendly quarrels, which are contrary to that brotherly love required, 1 Cor. 6:5-8. 2.) We endeavor to make breaches

¹ Rom. 13:8.

² 2 Tim. 3:3.

³ Acts 7:9; Gal. 5:26.

⁴ Num. 12:2; Est. 6:12, 13.

⁵ 3 John 9; Luke 22:24.

amongst those who are inclined to live peaceably by slandering, tale-bearing, or other disruptive and divisive behavior, Ps. 15:3; which is reckoned among those things the Lord hates, Prov. 6:19. 3.) We insult, or take occasion, to expose the weaknesses or infirmities of our brethren, not considering that we are liable to the same, 1 Pet. 4:8; Rom. 2:1. Rather, we ought to endeavor to bear one another's burdens and regain those who err from the truth, Gal. 6:2; Jas. 5:19, 20. 4.) We endeavor to ensnare or entice others to sin, which Solomon warns against, Prov. 1:10, 15.

Question 3—*What is the second way in which we sin actively against our equals?*

Answer—The second way we sin against our equals is when we are moved by envy against them, which is contrary to that charity which ought to move us in this relation, 1 John 3:16. Solomon complains of that common sin of men whereby they are possessed with envy against their neighbor because of his advancement or gifts, Eccl. 4:4; which, the apostle tells us, is no better than a hatred (often accompanied with malice) born of and rooted in an evil and sinful resenting of the good providence of God, Tit. 3:3. It represents a vain glory contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, Gal. 5:26. Through envy, men are often moved to commit heinous and aggravated sins against those who are their equals, Acts 7:9.

This envy is also manifest in that grieving whereby men refuse to acknowledge or accept the advancement or prosperity one of another, Num. 12:2. Instead of perceiving the building of the body, they recoil in pride of mind against the providence of God, 1 Cor. 3:7. Quite often, the Lord makes those moved with envy to fall before those whom they envy, Est. 6:12, 13. It was the sin of envy that moved the Jews to hand Jesus over to be crucified by the Romans, Matt. 27:18.

Question 4—*What is the third way in which we sin actively against our equals?*

Answer—Again, we sin against our equals when we affect, or usurp, pre-eminence over one another, 3 John 9. This is a sin which brought in much strife and contention amongst the apostles, Luke 22:24. It is sharply condemned by Christ as being a desire unbecoming Christians and one which Jesus expressly associates with satanic temptation and lack of faith, Luke 22:25-32. It is the duty of Christians to recognize the exercise of all just and lawful authority, Matt. 10:40; 3 John 8; but none ought to seek pre-eminence except through meekness and lowliness in serving one another, Matt. 23:8-12.