

## 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 # 125.

*(Larger Catechism)*

Q #125. *Why are superiors styled Father and Mother?*

A. Superiors are styled *Father* and *Mother*, both to teach them in all duties toward their inferiors, like natural parents, to express love and tenderness to them, according to their several relations;<sup>1</sup> and to work inferiors to a greater willingness and cheerfulness in performing their duties to their superiors, as to their parents.<sup>2</sup>

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Question 1—*What is significance of styling superiors by the name of Father and Mother?*

*Answer*—Calling superiors by the name of *Father* and *Mother* is to draw them to a willing fulfilling of all their duties towards inferiors, Matt. 7:9-11. Superiors are to occupy their respective stations and exercise their gifts on behalf of others, especially inferiors, Rom. 15:1; thus, Job in his prosperity was a common father to all under him, Job 29:11, 16.

Styling them by these names ought to recall the fundamental natural relations existing between all men, Gen. 3:20. Common nature ought to beget common sympathy, Heb. 2:14-18. All men, by nature, face a common existence with its difficulties and fears, Eccl. 9:2.

Furthermore, like Mordecai, all superiors ought to seek opportunities to exercise their positions in a paternal fashion exhibiting natural affection, Est. 2:7; Gen. 48:5. It is ennobling for superiors to exercise humility in the face of their inferiors, Phil. 2:5-9; Heb. 1:4.

Question 2—*What should this teach them?*

*Answer*—It should teach them the need to perform all duties toward inferiors with that love and tenderness becoming parents, Col. 3:21.

This is because: 1.) Parents share the same nature as their children, in closer familial affinity, which should beget deeper sympathy, Ps. 103:13. 2.) This also leads to a deeper interest in matters of discipline, Prov. 3:12. Superiors which fail to administer chastisement in due course fail to behave as parents, Heb. 12:7, 8. 3.) They should instruct their inferiors to help them perceive that their own welfare and security is to be found in a way of obedience, Prov. 4:1-4. Disobedience brings with it God's curse and a bad conscience, Prov. 13:15.

Question 3—*What are those several relations contemplated?*

*Answer*—The various relations are of several sorts: 1.) Natural, such as between parents and children, Lev. 19:3. 2.) Political, such as between rulers and subjects, Mark 11:10. 3.) Contractual, or by agreement, such as between masters and servants, Col. 3:22.

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. 6:4; 2 Cor. 12:14; 1 Thess. 2:7, 8, 11; Numb. 11:11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 4:14-16; 2 Kings 5:13.

A first relation pertains to families, or actual parents, whose behavior requires both the resolve necessary to superiors together with a sense of *noblisse oblige* which reflects that natural affection existing in the bosom of a parent, Eph. 6:4. Godly parents should be moved by a consideration of eternal truths and consequences, Prov. 19:18.

A second relation pertains to those in the church by ecclesiastical office, by virtue of which they are superiors and, therefore, as parents, 2 Cor. 12:14. Thus, when ministers, who, in some respects, are superior in office to others mix their reproofs with tenderness and compassion towards the souls of men under their care, they are accounted as nurses, 2 Thess. 2:7, 8. So, the apostle acknowledges the authority as parental in nature, 2 Thess. 2:11. Faithful ministers function analogously in the spiritual birth of those over whom they command respect, Gal. 4:19. It also pertains to those in civil authority, magistrates, whose close connect to a people ought to be parental in nature, Num. 11:11, 12. Those magistrates which study most the highest interests of a people are fulfilling their office as superiors worthy of parental respect, Isa. 49:23.

A third relation pertains to those who enter into any contractually, or covenantally, based relation, Eph. 5:22, 23. This would include matters of business or economic endeavor, Hos. 10:4.

Question 4—*What should this work in inferiors?*

*Answer*—These titles ought to work in all inferiors a twofold sense regarding duty:

*First*, it should instill in them a willingness to yield the due obedience as a proper register of the honor and esteem in which they are to hold their superiors, 1 Cor. 4:14-16. Willingness is the response of reasonable creatures who are humble enough to accept their estate in life, Phil. 2:3; as well as those who perceive that in the keeping of the law there is great reward, Isa. 57:20, 21.

*Second*, it should evoke a cheerfulness in the yielding of obedience, 2 Kings 5:13. Those who have a proper estimation of their status and relations recognize that simple obedience is the easiest and most profitable course for inferiors, Prov. 3:17. Those who struggle against this command of yielding cheerful obedience to the lawful commands of superiors accuse the Lord of lying, 1 John 5:3.