

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 # 143 & 76.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #143. *Which is the ninth commandment?*

A. The ninth commandment is, *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*¹

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #76. *Which is the ninth commandment?*

A. The ninth commandment is, *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*²

Question 1—*Why is this the ninth commandment?*

Answer—If we remember the warning of John the Baptist to the soldiers, it will appear that deceit is the second way in which men offend in the things of this life, Luke 3:14. So, after the concern of theft, Ex. 20:15, there remains a concern for faithfulness toward the outward estate of others, Ex. 20:16. Just as we are forbidden to exhibit faithlessness with respect to the outward estate of the Lord, which is His name, Ex. 20:7; 2 Chron. 6:6; this command mirrors that concern in our neighbor, Ps. 101:7. Indeed, there is vanity attached to the use of deceit to the prejudice of the outward estate of others, Prov. 21:6.

Question 2—*What is the scope of this commandment?*

Answer—Although this command does have some reference toward our neighbor's good name and credit, Prov. 22:1; yet, its words, Deut. 5:20; are the words of civil courts, herein lands and possessions are more often brought into question than their names, Ex. 23:1.

This ninth commandment would have us deal truly and sincerely in all things concerning our neighbor's goods, whether his outward estate and worldly riches, or his name and credit—which Jesus calls faithful, or faithfulness, Matt. 25:21. It refers to a truth and constancy in all our bargains and agreements and is a special note of those who shall dwell in the tabernacle of the Lord, Ps. 15:2. The word truth (אֱמֻנָה) sets forth both faithfulness, and truth, Ps. 111:7, 8. It is contrary to all kinds of falsehood, such as:

First, the using of any open untruth or lie, Eph. 4:25. Lying is the cursed work of the devil and those who lie are likened unto him, John 8:44. Lies are like weapons of war aimed against others, Jer. 9:3-5; and through the use of lies men are often brought to like bloody results, Hos. 4:2.

Second, the use of any fraud or deceit, Ps. 10:7. Deceit is a demonstration by the mouth of a lack of steadfastness in heart, Ps. 5:9; 55:21. It is the fruit conceived in iniquity, and brought forth to undermine the truth, Ps. 7:14.

Third, the use of slander, or backbiting, which assails another's good name often shrouded in secrecy and treachery, Jas. 3:6, 7; Prov. 10:18.

Additionally, it should be noted that lying, which is properly the telling of an untruth with intent to deceive, is not to be justified in any case, Prov. 12:19. God's approving of Rahab

¹ Ex. 20:16.

² Ex. 20:16.

in hiding the spies was because of her faith, though weak, in spite of her lie, which was her sin and weakness, Jas. 2:25.

Again, this command does not condemn irony, which is using language literally untrue, especially when it is used with the design to be correctly understood, and without any deception, 1 Kings 18:27.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that this command holds forth virtue profitable to ourselves as well as our neighbors because truth is a virtue whereby we are brought to know what is true, and to utter things known as they are, Prov. 12:17.

Question 3—*What special virtues are to be studied in regard to this command?*

Answer—This commandment stands in need of particularly two virtues, prudence and simplicity, both of which Christ requires mixed in all of those who belong to Him, Matt. 10:16. So, too, the apostle expects of the Romans, Rom. 16:19.

Prudence is a virtue to discern and judge of things aright, whereunto we attain by searching out the things which it behooves us to know, Job 29:16. The opposite care of which is condemned in the judges and rulers of the earth, Ps. 82:5.

Simplicity is that virtue of dealing sincerely in the things we discern and judge of, Zech. 8:16. The contrary of which is: 1.) Every unjust sentence whereby sound judgment is corrupted into perverse dealing, Amos 5:6, 7. 2.) Giving sentence for reward, or bribery, Isa. 1:23.

Question 4—*Wherein is the evil of lying displayed?*

Answer—The evil of lying appear is several things: 1.) It is a perversion of the power of speech, Rom. 15:6. 2.) It is in actual opposition to the God of truth, Jas. 3:14. 3.) It is irreverence to God, who is witness and judge, Eccl. 5:2; 1 Thess. 4:6. 4.) It destroys confidence in society, Lev. 19:11. 5.) It is usually injury and injustice to our fellow-men, Jas. 3:9. 6.) It is the effect of the lack of brotherly love, 1 Cor. 13:6.

Question 5—*Must we speak all the truth all the time?*

Answer—If discretion keeps the key of the door of our lips, we will not be like those who cannot rest until all the truth that is in is out, Prov. 14:33. Prudence often dictates that some things be kept from view, Prov. 12:23; especially if they tend to the harm of ourselves or our neighbors unjustly, Prov. 17:9. In this, the words of Doeg the Edomite stand condemned for the unjust bloodshed they wrought, 1 Sam. 22:22. Yet, we must never speak any thing but truth, 2 Cor. 13:8.

Again, should we, with Pilate ask, what is truth?, we must stay for the answer, John 18:38. After all, it is the mark of the righteous that they study to answer, Prov. 15:28. Truth consists in a double harmony—1.) The harmony of the tongue with the heart, Ps. 15:2; for the tongue must be a faithful interpreter of the heart, otherwise it is a false tongue, Ps. 120:3. 2.) A harmony of the tongue with the thing itself, John 8:32; because our misapprehensions of the truth do not change the character of lies, 2 Thess. 2:11.