

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 # 91 & 39.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #91. *What is the duty which God requireth of man?*

A. The duty which God requireth of man, is obedience to his revealed will.¹

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #39. *What is the duty which God requireth of man?*

A. The duty which God requireth of man, is obedience to his revealed will.²

Question 1—*What is meant by “duty”?*

Answer—By “duty” is here meant that which a man owes to God or ought to do for God, Eccl. 12:13. The word “duty” connotes an obligation—something *due* as a debt. An orthodox faith (as inculcated in the first part of the catechisms) *and* an obedient life is the whole duty of man, Jas. 1:26; Rom. 2:13. The Lord himself appeals to a sense of duty when commending obedience to his commands, Lev. 18:5. It is this same assumption behind Paul’s admonition to believers to seek holiness when he declares it a “reasonable service,” Rom. 12:1, 2. This rationality is grounded in duty by the Saviour, Luke 17:10. In other words, it is the rational disposition of creatures utterly dependent to render what is obliged, Micah 6:8. The obligation incurred is not of a temporary but of a permanent state of affairs, Acts 17:28. This obligation is only increased in those who are the subjects of redemption, Tit. 2:11, 12; Luke 6:46. Furthermore, this is a constant and universal obligation, 1 Sam. 15:22.

Question 2—*Why may God require anything of man?*

Answer— Among the reasons that ought to induce us to understand the ground upon which God may require obedience are: 1.) Because all men are the servants, children, and subjects of God they are all equally bound to obey him, a fact recognized by the heathen, Rom. 2:14,15. 2.) He made, preserves, and redeems us, Ps. 100:2, 3. 3.) He is the supreme sovereign Lord and lawgiver, both to the irrational and rational creature, Job 38:33; Jas. 4:12; Isa. 33:22. 4.) Because this is the chief end for which men are created, Ps. 86:9. 5.) His glorious excellencies ought also to move us to obedience, Isa. 1:2; Acts 17:25. To these his redeemed may add especially, 6.) We ought to accept this because of his love to sinners in Jesus Christ, 1 John 4:19; 2 Cor. 5:14. To his elect people he promises a working of effectual obedience, Ezek. 36:27.

Question 3—*What is meant by obedience?*

Answer—We mean doing what he commands entirely from a regard for his authority. Regard for the authority of God is the very *form* of all true obedience, Deut. 12:32; 13:18. This entails going in the way God commands either in a way of

¹ Rom. 12:1, 2; Micah 6:8; 1 Sam. 15:22.

² Mic. 6:8; 1 Sam. 15:22.

commanding or forbidding. The characteristics which God requires in man's obedience are: 1.) It must be sincere, Ps. 18:23; Rom. 6:17; Josh. 24:14. God weighs the actions of men by the affections, Heb. 11:17; Num. 14:40 *compared* 14:42, 44. 2.) It must be constant, Ps. 119:44. God is unchangeable and so should be our obedience, Prov. 23:17. To that a blessing is promised, Ps. 106:3. 3.) It must be tender in avoiding coming too near the borders of wickedness, 1 Thess. 5:22; Jude 23. God is a jealous God observing the slightest look, Ezek. 6:9. 4.) It ought to be devout and fervent, Rom. 12:11. 5.) It needs to be a ready obedience, Ps. 18:24. We are not called to dispute but to obey, Ps. 119:60; Gal. 1:16. Therefore, it must be free and cheerful, Isa. 1:19, and with delight, Rom. 7:22. 6.) It must be a universal obedience, Ps. 119:6. All of God's commands have the same divine stamp, if you break one you are guilty of breaking all, Jas. 2:10, 11. Thus, those who neglect to teach the whole law are guilty of a breach of the whole law, Matt. 5:19. 7.) It must be an absolute obedience free of all contradiction, Heb. 11:8. We are under no unlimited obedience to any man on earth, Matt. 23:9. This kind of obedience is due to none but God alone, Acts 4:19; 5:29. 8.) It must be perfect, Matt. 5:48. This is the requirement. Yet, we are faced with this truth; there is no man that renders such obedience, Eccl. 7:20. Thus, 9.) All obedience ought to be rendered in and through Jesus Christ, Eph. 1:6. Since the Fall of man no obedience can be rendered in an acceptable way apart from Christ, 1 Pet. 2:5. As such it must be rendered from a principle of love to God, as a reconciled Father; not from a slavish fear and dread of the wrath of a sin-revenging Judge, Ps. 130:4.

Question 4—*What is meant by God's "revealed will" and from what is it to be distinguished?*

Answer—To reveal means to make known what has previously been secret. Thus, by "revealed will" is meant the scriptures whereby God makes known the rule of our obedience, 2 Tim. 3:16; Isa. 8:20. It is contrasted to the "secret will" of God in his purpose or decree respecting all that comes to pass, Eph. 1:11. The "secret will" is not the rule of our conduct nor is it the gage of our duty, Deut. 29:29.