

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 # 123 & 63.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #123. Which is the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment is, *Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*¹

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #63. Which is the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment is, *Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*²

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

Answer—Standing at the head of the second table, this command transitions us from our duty to God to our duty to man; thus, it makes mention of the filial relation because: 1.) It is the first human relation into which we enter, and ordinarily it continues longer than any other, Prov. 1:8. At birth, we enter the rank of sons and daughters, and we continue under parental authority as long as father and mother are spared to us, in time becoming parents ourselves, 1 Tim. 5:3, 4. Scripture nowhere recognizes freedom from filial duty because of age or the forming of other ties, Gen. 43:1-14; John 19:26, 27. 2.) This relation includes all others—the family when modified and enlarged becomes the state, Gen. 12:2; as well as the church, Ps. 78:5-7; Tit. 1:4. 3.) It is the most perfect type of our relation to God, most absolute, loving and abiding—beginning at first with entire submission but, as we develop in our faculties, we render more intelligent and loving obedience, Gal. 4:6.

This command also brings in the mother so that children might not disregard her upon the account of her weakness or subjection to her husband, 1 Pet. 3:7; Col. 3:18. She suffers most in the birth and bringing up of the children and, yet, is most ready to be despised of them, Prov. 23:22; 30:17. In this way, God meets with the distemper of those who would diminish the respect and duty they owe to their mother, Lev. 19:3; Prov. 15:20.

Question 2—*What is meant by the honour that we are required to give our superiors by this command?*

Answer—By *honour* is meant all the inward regard and esteem, manifested by outward tokens of respect, Rom. 13:10; reverence, Mal. 1:6; and obedience, Heb. 13:17. Children ought to use humble obedience towards their father and mother, bearing a reverent mind towards them, Prov. 20:20; ready to assist and aid them, Eph. 6:5; and willing to do after their commands according to their duty, 1 Tim. 6:11; Col. 3:20. Further, they are to delight in their company and instructions, Prov. 10:1; 15:5; 17:2; cheerfully bearing with their infirmities and providing for them as they become old and infirm, Gen. 47:12.

That which procures honour from one person to another is when something of eminence, excellency, or worth, is discernable in them, Acts 10:25.

¹ Ex. 20:12.

² Ex. 20:12.

The rule, by which this honour is to be measured and obedience and submission are to be gauged is the law of God, Rom. 3:20. This is not, however, the measure of our ability to obey, Jer. 31:18, 19. When anything is enjoined contrary to the law of God, the fixed rule is to obey God rather than men, Acts 4:19; 5:29. Children are only to obey their parents in the Lord, Eph. 6:1. Any child who loves father or mother more than God, who is to be esteemed above all men, is not worthy of the Lord, Matt. 10:37. On the other hand, those who disregard the lawful commands of their parents are cursed, Deut. 27:16.

Question 3—*Why is this command called the first commandment with promise?*

Answer—Because this is the first commandment of the second table, Eph. 6:2, 3. In the second publication of the law, Moses reveals the spirit of the promise, Deut. 5:16. For this reason, *that it may go well with thee*, it stands as the foundation of obedience to all the other commands of the second table respecting our relations to men, Rom. 13:7-9; thus, it has a promise annexed to it, to show its dignity above them, Deut. 4:40.

Question 4—*How may the duties belonging to these various relations be performed?*

Answer—These duties are performed by exercising those graces respecting men in general, and fulfilling the duties belonging to our particular stations, Matt. 7:12.

The graces to be exercised towards men in general are: 1.) Temperance, whereby we restrain fleshly desires in order to study duty and keep ourselves mindful of heavenly things, 1 Cor. 9:25. 2.) Meekness, or calmness of spirit under provocations and injuries, whereby become more Christ-like, 1 Pet. 2:23. 3.) Humility, whereby we learn not to meddle outside of our own affairs, cheerfully giving to each man his due honor, Eph. 5:21. 4.) Gentleness, whereby we exercise lenity towards others, whereby we seek to consider, bear with, and put the best construction upon the tempers, words and actions of others, 1 Cor. 13:4-7. 5.) Goodness, or believing good of, and wishing and doing good to, and rejoicing in the welfare of others, 1 John 3:17. 6.) Peaceableness, which is a readiness to part some degrees of our right for the sake of peace, and to exert ourselves to make or maintain peace between others, Gen. 13:8, 9. 7.) Brotherly kindness, which consists in our love to, and familiarity with the saints, on account of Christ's image in them, Ps. 119:63.