

# **A Body of Divinity**

Vol. 4

A Body of Divinity

**A BODY OF DIVINITY:**

**WHEREIN THE DOCTRINES OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION ARE  
EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED.**

**BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF SEVERAL  
LECTURES ON THE ASSEMBLY'S  
LARGER CATECHISM.**

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WITH NOTES, ORIGINAL AND  
SELECTED,

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NOW IN PRESS

THE *DOCTRINES* OF THE CHRISTIAN  
RELIGION EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED.

Quest. CXXXVII., CXXXVIII., CXXXIX.

*QUEST. CXXXVII. Which is the seventh Commandment?*

*ANSW. The seventh Commandment is, [Thou shalt not commit adultery.]*

*QUEST. CXXXVIII. What are the duties required in the seventh Commandment?*

*ANSW. The duties required in the seventh Commandment, are, chastity in body, mind, affections, words, and behaviour; and the preservation of it in ourselves and others; watchfulness over the eyes, and all the senses; temperance, keeping of chaste company, modesty in apparel, marriage by those that have not the gift of continency; conjugal love, and cohabitation, diligent labour in our callings, shunning all occasions of uncleanness, resisting temptations thereunto.*

*QUEST. CXXXIX. What are the sins forbidden in the seventh Commandment?*

*ANSW. The sins forbidden in the seventh Commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts, all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections, all corrupt or filthy communications, or listening thereunto; wanton looks, impudent, or light behaviour; immodest apparel; prohibiting of lawful, and dispensing with unlawful marriages, allowing, tolerating, keeping of stews, and resorting to them; intangling vows of single life; undue delay of marriage, having more wives or husbands than one, at*

the same time; unjust divorce, or desertion; idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, unchaste company, lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancings, stage plays, and all other provocations to, or acts of uncleanness, either in ourselves or others.

This Commandment respects, more especially, the government of the affections, and the keeping our minds and bodies in such an holy frame, that nothing impure, immodest, or contrary to the strictest chastity, may defile, or be a reproach to us, or insinuate itself into our conversation with one another. And, in order thereunto, we are to set a strict watch over our thoughts and actions, and avoid every thing that may be an occasion of this sin, and use those proper methods that may prevent all temptations to it. Therefore we ought to associate ourselves with none but those whose conversation is chaste, and such as becomes Christians, to abhor all words and actions that are not so much as to be named among persons professing godliness. As for those who cannot, without inconveniency, govern their affections, but are sometimes tempted to any thing that is inconsistent with that purity of heart and life, which all ought religiously to maintain, it is their duty to enter into a married state; which is an ordinance that God has appointed, to prevent the breach of this Commandment. And this leads us to consider the sins forbidden therein, together with the occasions thereof.

I. Concerning the sins forbidden in this Commandment.  
And,

1. Some are not only contrary to nature, but inconsistent with the least pretences to religion; which were abhorred by the very Heathen themselves, and, by the law of God, punished with death; which punishment, when it has not been inflicted, God has, by his immediate hand, testified his vengeance against sinners, by raining down fire and

brimstone from heaven, as he did upon the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, Lev. xviii. 22,—25. chap. xx. 13, 15, 16. Rom. i. 24, 26, 27, 28. Gen. xix. 24. These sins are called in this answer, incest, sodomy, and unnatural lusts. To which we may add, offering violence to others, and thereby forcing them to do what they could not even think of, but with abhorrence; this is called rape; and, by the law of God, the guilty person was punished with death, Deut. xxii. 25.

2. There are other sins, whereby this Commandment is violated; which, though more common, are, nevertheless, such as are attended with a very great degree of guilt and impurity. These are either, such as are committed by those who are unmarried, *viz.* fornication, or by those who are married, as adultery; the latter of which, by the law of God, was punished with death, Lev. xx. 10. as contained in it several aggravating circumstances; inasmuch as hereby the marriage contract is violated; that mutual affection, which is the end of that relation broken; and thereby the greatest injury is done to the innocent as well as ruin brought on the guilty. However, both these sins agree in this, that they proceed from a corrupt heart; as our Saviour says, Mat. xv. 19. and argue the person that is guilty of them, alienated from the life of God. And to this we may add,

3. That, another sin forbidden in this Commandment is, polygamy, or a having more husbands, or wives, than one, at the same time; together with that which often accompanies it, *viz.* concubinage. It is beyond dispute, that many good men have been guilty of this sin, as appears by what is recorded, in scripture, concerning Abraham, Jacob, David, &c. and we do not find that they are expressly reprov'd for it, which has given occasion to some modern writers, to think that it was not unlawful in those ages, but was afterwards rendered so by being prohibited under the gospel-dispensation<sup>u</sup>. This, indeed, cuts the knot of a very



considerable difficulty; but it contains another that is equally great; inasmuch as hereby it does not appear to be contrary to the law of nature; and therefore I would rather chuse to take another method to solve it, viz. that many bad actions of good men are recorded in scripture, but not approved of, nor proposed for our imitation. Of this kind I must conclude the polygamy and concubinage of several holy men, mentioned in scripture, to have been. And that it may appear that this practice was not justifiable, let it be observed,

(1.) That, some sin or other is often expressly mentioned, as the occasion hereof. Thus Abraham's taking Hagar, was occasioned by Sarah's unbelief; because the promise of her having a son was not immediately fulfilled, Gen. xvi. 1, 2. And Jacob's taking Rachel to wife after Leah, and his own discontent arising from it, was occasioned by Laban's unjust dealing with him, and his going in unto Bilhah, was occasioned by Rachel's unreasonable desire of children; and his taking Zilpah, by Leah's ambitious desire of having pre-eminence over Rachel, by the number of her children, chap. xxix, and xxx.

(2.) This was generally attended with the breach of that peace, which is so desirable a blessing in families, and many disorders that ensued hereupon. Accordingly, we read of an irreconcilable quarrel that there was between Sarah and Hagar; and Ishmael's hatred of Isaac, which the apostle calls *persecution*, Gal. iv. 39. And to this we may add, the contentions that were in Jacob's family, and the envy expressed by the children of one of his wives, against those of another; and the opposition which one wife often expressed to another as that of Peninnah, one of the wives of Elkanah, to Hannah, the other. Therefore we must conclude, that Isaac's example is rather to be followed in this matter, who had but one wife, and he loved her better

than many of the patriarch's did theirs; whose love was divided among several.

*Object.* 1. If polygamy was a sin against the light of nature, it is strange, that it should be committed by good men; and, that they should live and die without repenting of it, nor be, in the least, reprov'd for it; as we do not find that they were, in scripture.

*Answer.* It was indeed, a sin, which they might have known to be so, had they duly considered it, in all its circumstances and consequences; but this they did not; and therefore it was not so great a sin in them, as it would be in us, who have clearer discoveries of the heinous nature of it. Therefore, if we suppose they repented of all sin agreeably to the light they had, they might be saved; and this, though unrepented of, was no bar to their salvation, supposing they knew it not to be a sin; and God's not having explicitly reprov'd them for it, argues only his forbearance, but not his approbation of it.

*Object.* 2. It is farther objected, that God says, by Nathan, to David, *I gave thee thy master's wives into thy bosom*, 2 Sam. xii. 8. therefore, that which God gives, it is not unlawful for man to receive.

*Answer.* The meaning of that scripture in general, is, that God made him king; and then, according to the custom of the eastern kings, he took possession of what belonged to his predecessor, and consequently of his wives. Therefore God might be said to give David Saul's wives providentially, in giving him the kingdom; so that they were his property, that he might take them for his own, according to custom, if he was inclined so to do. And this the kings of Judah generally did; though it does not follow from hence that God approved of it; in like manner as tyrants may be said to be raised up by God's providence and permission; nevertheless, he does not approve of their tyranny.

All that we shall add, under this head, to what has been suggested, concerning the disorders that polygamy has occasioned in families, is, that it is contrary to the first institution of marriage. God created but one woman as an help-meet for Adam; though, if ever there were any pretence for the necessity of one man's having more wives, it must have been in that instance, in which it seemed necessary for the increase of the world; but he rather chose that mankind should be propagated by slower advances, than to give the least dispensation, or indulgence to polygamy, as being contrary to the law of nature, Gen. ii. 22,-24. And the prophet, in Mal. ii. 15. takes notice of God's *making but one*; though he had *the residue of the Spirit*; and therefore could have given Adam more wives than one. And the reason assigned for this was, that *he might seek a godly seed*, i. e. that the children that should be born of many wives, might not be the result of the ungodly practice of their father, as it would be, were this contrary to the law of nature; which we suppose it to be. This I rather understand by *a godly seed*, and not that the character of *godly* refers to the children; for these could not be said to be godly, or ungodly, as the consequence of their parents having one or more wives.

There is one scripture more that I cannot wholly pass over, which, to me, seems a plain prohibition of polygamy, in Levit. xviii. 18. *Thou shalt not take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, besides the other in her life-time*. This respects either incest or polygamy; one of which must be meant by *taking a wife to her sister*. Now it cannot be a prohibition of incest; because it is said, *Thou shalt not do it in her life-time*; which plainly intimates, that it might be done after her death. Whereas it is certainly contrary to the law of God and nature, for a person to take his wife's sister after her decease, as well as in her life-time. Therefore the meaning is, Thou shalt not take another wife

to her whom thou hast married; by which means they will become sisters. And here is another reason assigned hereof, *viz.* the envy, jealousy, and vexation that would attend such a practice, as the taking another wife would be a means of vexing, or making her uneasy. And therefore the sense is, as is observed in the marginal reading; *Thou shalt not take one wife to another*; or, Thou shalt not have more wives than one. This is a plain prohibition of this sin; but whether some holy men, in following ages, understood the meaning of this law, may be questioned; and therefore they were not sensible of the guilt they hereby contracted. Thus we have considered some of the sins forbidden in this Commandment. Every particular instance of the breach hereof, would exceed our intended brevity, on the subject we are treating of. Therefore,

We shall proceed to consider the aggravations, more especially, of the sins of fornication and adultery; which may also with just reason, be applied to all other unnatural lusts; which have been before considered as a breach of this Commandment. And,

[1.] They are opposite to sanctification, even as darkness is to light, hell to heaven; thus the apostle opposes fornication and uncleanness, to it, 1 Thes. iv. 3, 7.

[2.] These sins are inconsistent with that relation, we pretend to stand in, to Christ, as members of his body; inasmuch as we join ourselves in a confederacy with his profligate enemies, 1 Cor. vi. 15, 16. And to this we may add, that they are a dishonour to, and a defilement of our own bodies, which ought to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, and therefore should be consecrated to him.

[3.] They bring guilt and ruin on two persons at once, as well as a blot and stain on each of their families, and a wound to religion by those who make any profession of it,

as it *gives occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*, Prov. vi. 33. 2 Sam. xii. 14.

[4.] They bring with them many other sins; as they tend to vitiate the affections, deprave the mind, defile the conscience, and provoke God to give persons up to spiritual judgments, which will end in their running into all excess of riot.

And to this we may add, that many sad consequences will ensue on the commission of these sins; as they tend to blast and ruin their substance in the world, Job xxxi. 9, 11, 12. debase and stupify the soul, and deprive it of wisdom, Hos. iv. 11. Prov. vi. 32. chap. vii. 22. wound the conscience, and expose the person who is guilty hereof, to the utmost hazard of perishing for ever, chap. vi. 33. chap. vii. 13, 19, 26, 27. And if God is pleased to give him repentance, it will be attended with great bitterness, Eccl. vii. 26.

II. We are now to consider the occasion of these sins to be avoided by those who would not break this Commandment, and these are,

1. Intemperance, or excess in eating or drinking; the former of which is a making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; the latter confounds and buries the little reason a person was master of, and makes him an easy prey to temptation. This was Lot's case, who kept his integrity in Sodom; yet being made drunk by his daughters in Zoar, he committed the abominable sin of incest with them, Gen. xix. 31.

2. Idleness, consisting either in the neglect of business, or indulging too much sleep, which occasions many temptations. Thus David first gave way to sloth, and then was tempted to uncleanness; and it is observed, that *at the time when kings go forth to battle*, 2 Sam. xi. 1, 2. and he ought to have been with his army in the field, he tarried at

Jerusalem, and slept in the middle of the day; for *in the evening tide he arose from off his bed*; And the heinous sin he was guilty of, which was the greatest blemish in his life, ensued hereupon.

3. Pride in apparel, or other ornaments, beyond the bounds of modesty, or for other ends than what God, when he clothed man at first, intended; when our attire is inconsistent with our circumstances in the world, or the character of persons professing godliness: This God reproves the Jews for, when grown very degenerate, and near to ruin, Isa. iii. 16, &c. *seq.* And Jezebel, when Jehu came in quest of her, *painted her face, and tired her head*; but this did not prevent his executing God's righteous judgments upon her. All these things are mentioned as the sins for which Sodom was infamous; and gave occasion to those other abominations, which provoked God to destroy them, Ezek. xvi. 49. And to this we may add,

4. Keeping evil company: Thus it is said of the lewd woman, *she hath cast down many wounded*, Prov. vii. 26. This will hasten our own ruin; especially if we associate ourselves with such persons out of choice: for it is a sign that our hearts are exceedingly depraved and alienated from God: Nevertheless, if Providence cast our lot amongst bad company, we may escape that guilt and defilement, which would otherwise ensue, if we bear our testimony against their sin, and are *grieved* for it, as Lot was for the filthy conversation of the Sodomites, among whom he dwelt, 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. Moreover, the frequenting those places where there are mixed dancing, masquerades, stage-plays, &c. which tend to corrupt the principles and practices, and seldom fail of defiling the consciences, and manners of those who attend on them: These are nurseries of vice, and give occasion to this sin, and many others, Prov. vi. 27, compared with 32.

As for the remedies against it, these are, an exercising a constant watchfulness against all temptations thereunto, chap. viii. 9. avoiding all conversation with men or books which tend to corrupt the mind, and fill it with levity, under a pretence of improving it: But more especially a retaining a constant sense of God's all-seeing eye, his infinite purity and vindictive justice, which will induce us to say as Joseph did, in the like case, *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God*, Gen. xxxix. 9.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Quest. CXL., CXLI.

*QUEST. CXL. Which is the eighth Commandment?*

ANSW. The eighth Commandment is, [*Thou shalt not steal.*]

*QUEST. CXLI. What are the duties required in the eighth Commandment?*

ANSW. The duties required in the eighth Commandment are, truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts, and commerce between man and man; rendering to every one his due; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof; giving, and lending freely, according to our abilities, and the necessities of others; moderation of our judgments, wills, and affections, concerning worldly goods; a provident care and study to get, keep, use, and dispose those things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our condition; a lawful calling, and diligence in it; frugality, avoiding unnecessary lawsuits, and suretyship, or other like engagements; and an endeavour, by all just and lawful means, to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.

This Commandment supposes, that God has given to every one a certain portion of the good things of this world, that he may lay claim to as his own; which no other has a right to. The general scope and design thereof, is to put us upon using endeavours to promote our own and our neighbour's wealth and outward estate. As to what concerns ourselves, it respects the government of our affections, and setting due bounds to our desires of worldly things, that they may not



exceed what the good providence of God has allotted for us, in order to our comfortable passage through this world. Thus Agar prays, *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me*, Prov. xxx. 8.

As to what respects our endeavours to gain the world; it requires a due care and diligence, to get, and keep a competency thereof; that we may not, through our own default, expose ourselves to those straits and necessities which are the consequence of sloth and negligence, chap. xxiii. 21. chap. xxiv. 30, 31. God may, indeed, give estates to some without any pains, or care to get them, Deut. vi. 10, 11. yet, even in this case, sloth is a sin which brings with it many hurtful lusts, that render riches a snare, and hindrance to their spiritual welfare: Therefore they, who are in prosperous circumstances in the world, ought not to lay aside all care and industry to improve, what they have to the glory of God. But, on the other hand, they who are in a low condition, ought to use a provident care and diligence, in order to their having a comfortable subsistence therein. Accordingly this Commandment obliges us to use all lawful endeavours to promote our own and our neighbour's wealth, and outward estate.

I. To promote our own wealth and estate. This we are to do,

1. By frugality in our expences, avoiding profuseness; and that, either in giving away our substance to unfit objects, to wit, those who are in better circumstances than ourselves, who ought to be givers rather than receivers, Prov. xxii. 16. or else in making large contributions to support a bad cause, and in consuming our substance on our lusts. Likewise when we are unwarily profuse in those expences, which would be otherwise lawful, did they not exceed our circumstances or income in the world, which contains a disregard of the future estate of our families, and taking a method to reduce ourselves and them to poverty, 1 Tim. v.

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