

# Instruction In The Westminster Standards

## The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

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### STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 16. Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?

A. The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression.

**Scripture References:** Acts 17:26. Gen. 2:17. Rom. 5:12. I Cor. 15:21.

#### Questions:

1. How many persons do we read of in Scripture that represent the human race?

We read of two who represent the human race. The first Adam and the second, Jesus Christ. (I Cor. 15:45)

2. What reason is given in Scripture that the posterity of Adam fell with Adam?

The reason is found in the covenant of works, in which life was promised upon condition of obedience, and was made with Adam. This was made not only for Adam but for his posterity.

3. Since the covenant was a covenant of works, does this mean that Adam could merit eternal life?

No, it does not mean that Adam could merit eternal life. It was still God's grace that would give eternal life, but a grace that would reward obedience.

4. Was it fair that Adam should represent his posterity?

Yes, it was fair since he was to be the common parent of all mankind, was created perfectly holy, with full power to fulfill the condition of the covenant.

5. How could all mankind be in Adam when he first sinned?

All mankind was in Adam in two ways: 1. Virtually, as a natural root and, 2. Representatively, as a covenant head.

6. What is meant by saying "all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him?"

The phrase "ordinary generation" is used to exclude Christ who descended as to his human body from Adam, but not by ordinary generation since he was conceived in the womb of a virgin by the power of the Almighty God overshadowing her.

7. I have always heard, "In Adam's fall we sinned all." Is this a good commentary on this question?

This is an excellent commentary. It should be understood by it that we are sinners first of all because Adam, our representative, sinned for us. Our corrupted nature is the result of our inheritance in Adam.

## A HARD LESSON

Time and time again we hear people say, "I do not think it is fair that God hold us responsible for Adam's sin!" Many people outside of Jesus Christ use this as one of their main excuses for refusing to come to Him. But whether we like it or not, the Bible teaches that God deals with humanity on the basis of the principle of representation.

This principle is sometimes a hard lesson for us to learn. For those of us saved by grace, saved by the "second Adam", it is not hard for us to accept the second representation. But sometimes even Christians wonder at the fairness of the first representation. This works at the mind of many Christians though very few will put it into words.

We must remember in this realm, as in all realms of our relationship with God, He is the Creator and Sovereign Lord, possessed of the right to require anything of His creatures in whatever way His wisdom might determine. His authority was, and is, unlimited. God could do anything to Adam personally, and with a view to his posterity, which was consistent with His own perfections. He is a law unto Himself and He acts according to His own will. At the same time, in His relationship with Adam in the Garden, He did not require anything of Adam that Adam was not able to bear.

This is the perspective that all God's children must learn. The recognition that He is Sovereign and we are not. The recognition that whatever method He might want to use to teach us our lessons, the method is fair and just, for He is the essence of fairness. Our business is not to complain but to obey, not to fret but to accept, not to murmur but to rest in our duty of decreasing, in all humility.

All of this is a hard lesson for us to learn. James put it very well when he said, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." Many Christians desire to go a long way in the Lord's work but do not do so because they have not learned to give God the complete right to any method, any means, any principle He might want to use with them. Some think so many times God is unfair, they refuse to let Him have His way with them, they refuse to submit to His authority and then wonder why He is not able to use them as they wish.

In all our thoughts and words, in all our actions and reactions, yea, in all areas of our lives we are accountable unto Him. And obedience to the Word of God transcends duty and privilege, attaining unto honor as He is thus glorified in our daily lives. (Deut. 11:1,13-19)

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