

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 17. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

Scripture References: Rom. 5:12. Gal. 3:10. Ps. 40:2. Rom. 6:23.

Questions:

1. What do we call the estate of mankind before the fall?
The estate of mankind before the fall is called the estate of innocence, the estate of original righteousness.
2. Why is man's state, by the fall, called an estate of sin?
Because man is now under the guilt of sin, which has dominion over him.
3. Why is man's state, by the fall, called an estate of misery?
Because, according to the penalty of the law, death and the curse involve him in all manner of misery.
4. Why is sin mentioned before misery in describing the estate into which mankind fell?
Because sin came first, and misery followed afterwards as the result of sin. Sin is the cause of misery; misery is the effect of sin.
5. How did man come into this state of sin and misery?
Man came into this by the abuse of his free will, by disobedience. The scripture tells us that mankind destroyed himself. (Hos. 13:9).
6. What happened to man in the Garden because of his sin?
Man's heart changed and man's abode changed. The heart became evil and man was forced to leave the place of perfection (the Garden) and was cast into the world where evil was.
7. How does the Scripture describe man's state of sin and misery?
Scripture describes it by "darkness", "condemnation and wrath", and by "death".
8. What popular false religion of this day denies the teaching of sin and misery?
The religion of Christian Science denies the reality of sin and misery.
9. Can man help himself out of this state of sin and misery?
No, man is totally unable to help himself out of this state. His very nature is "enmity against God" and he can not save himself from this state.

SIN AND EVASION

Our thesis in this discussion is: The sin in the Garden of Eden was entirely the fault of man, God was in no way the author of the sin of man. This is taught in the Word of God and could be summarized in the following manner: (1) God created man perfectly holy, with no defect or tendency to sin. (2) The trial placed before man was one he could keep, it was perfectly easy and could hardly be considered any restraint at all. (3) God did not withdraw from man during the moment of temptation. God was present with him and all man had to do was call upon God. The fall of man was the consequence of a curiosity on the part of man, not of want of ability to keep the simple test God had placed upon him. And yet Adam sinned. Not only did he sin but there was on his part the attempt to evade responsibility for what he had done. So it is with man today. Whenever man sins there is usually an attempt on the part of man to evade. (Proverbs 28:13-14)

A former teacher in college, a very wise man, said many times: "One of the greatest difficulties on the part of a Christian is his refusal to be honest with himself in regard to sin." This teacher's word to us time and time again was to face ourselves and never try to evade responsibility for sin. It is supposed that mankind came by this ability to evade responsibility honestly since it all started with Adam. However true that may be, this has ever been one of the prevalent ways on the part of man to disregard his relationship and accountability to God.

The prayer the Christian needs to make is "Search me, O God and try my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me." This prayer needs to be consistently on the lips of the Christian. And when the Spirit convicts of sin the Christian must be honest about it before God and never seek to evade the responsibility involved. "My fault!" is the confession cry of the Christian. Then, and only then, will the Christian be in right relationship with God and able to be used by God in a mighty way, all to His glory. (I Jn. 1:1-10)

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