

### **Shorter Catechism Q.13-19**

Q. 13. Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created?

A. Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God.

Q. 14. What is sin?

A. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.

Q. 15. What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?

A. The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, was their eating the forbidden fruit.

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.

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

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

Q. 18. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

Q. 19. What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?

A. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

### **Review:**

The catechism follows a traditional division of theology into faith and love. Faith concerns who God is, what he decrees, and how he executes those decrees in the works of creation and providence. Last week you considered the special providence of God exercised toward mankind in the covenant of life.

In our culture, we tend to use the creation account to debate evolution. Over the weeks, I hope you have seen how many other uses God intends. Seeing God's dealings with Adam and Eve in the covenant of life is yet another example. That account shows Adam as a public person entering into a kind of relationship with God which we call a covenant. As with any other covenant, it comes along with blessings, curses, promises, and sacraments.

### **This Week's Observations:**

### **Estates Generally Considered:**

Let's start by noticing that Q.13 says that the human race did not continue in the estate in which they were created. The word 'estate' is important. 'Estate' refers to someone's standing, condition, status, or place in life. We studied the original state of mankind in Q.10. Mankind existed as man male and female, after God's own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures. According to Q.13 the human race did not continue in that state. As Q.15 says, "...our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created." Did only Adam and Eve fall from that state? No. As Q.15 says, "...all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression." Now, to what new state, condition or status did humanity now inhabit? Q.17 answered this question saying, "The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery." Q.18 and 19 provide us with more information on this estate.

Before we look at those details, let us notice the further use of the word 'estate' in the catechism. You should find that it structures all of God's work with humanity. Notice, first, that God does not leave mankind in the estate of sin and misery, but determines to move them into an estate of salvation: Q. 20. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery? A. God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into **an estate of salvation** by a Redeemer. In other places, They will call the estate of salvation by the name of the state of grace. Notice, second, that at death believers move into a state of intermediate glory: Q. 37. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, **and do immediately pass into glory**; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their gravest till the resurrection. Notice, finally, that the final state of believers is full glory: Q. 38. "At the resurrection, **believers being raised up in glory**, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity."

So far, we have looked upon what that Church titles the fourfold state of humanity.

If you did more research you would find the estates of the angels and of Christ. The Westminster Confession and Catechisms will teach that angels fell from their original estate becoming devils. Christ moves from one estate to another: "Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, **both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.**"

### **Estate of Sin and Misery Detailed**

The Sinfulness of this estate is summarized in 3 main parts—guilt, loss of original righteousness, and corruption of whole nature. Traditionally the church pictures these three parts as the fruits of the first sin.

#### **Guilt**

Through Adam, humanity is guilty. The Scriptures speak about this in different ways. Here are a few:

1. To be under sin:
  - a. "What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin." (Romans 3:9, NKJV)

- b. “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.” (Romans 7:14, NKJV)
- 2. To be in sins:
  - a. “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!” (1 Corinthians 15:17, NKJV)
- 3. To become guilty before God:
  - a. “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” (Romans 3:19, NKJV)
- 4. A debtor to God:
  - a. “And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12, NKJV)

### Original Righteousness

In the creation account itself, you can witness the guilt by the description of Adam and Eve: “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?” So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”” (Genesis 3:7–10, NKJV)

Through Adam, humanity lost their original righteousness. ‘Original righteousness’ refers to the state in which God created man in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. Mankind conformed to God and his law. Their actual chief aim was the glory of God. In the estate of sin, mankind no longer has God as their chief good.

We must be careful here. We are not saying that mankind cannot strive for and achieve other goods. We are simply saying that humanity no longer does everything with reference to God and His glory. You can look around the whole world and find mankind achieving things of good use to themselves, their families, and nations. Mankind in an estate of sin, however, does not work for the highest good which is God's glory and to enjoy God forever.

### The corruption of his whole nature

The word ‘corrupt’ means to be altogether broken. We are not saying that human nature is utterly broken. We are simply saying that human nature is broken in each of its parts—intellect, will and emotions. Let’s look at a few Scriptures:

1. “And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.” (Genesis 8:21, NKJV)
2. Again, we are not saying that mankind has a broken nature in terms of farming, or carpentry, or providing for one’s family. This nature is broken in the sense communicated by Jeremiah 2:13. ““For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living

waters, And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.” (Jeremiah 2:13, NKJV)

3. This fundamental reorientation of mankind away from God is described as
  - a. Course of this world: “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” (Ephesians 2:1–3, NKJV)
  - b. Walking like Gentiles: “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” (Ephesians 4:17–19, NKJV)
  - c. Old Man: “But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:20–24, NKJV)
  - d. Sons of disobedience: “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.” (Ephesians 5:3–7, NKJV)

The misery of this estate is summarized in 5 sections.

1. Loss of communion with God
2. Under his wrath and curse
  - a. Liable to all the miseries in this life
  - b. Liable to death itself
  - c. Liable to the pains of hell forever