

# THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

## WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

### QUESTION # 26.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #26. *How is original sin conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity?*

A. Original sin is conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity by natural generation, so as all that proceed from them in that way are conceived and born in sin.<sup>1</sup>

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Question 1—*From whom is original sin conveyed and how?*

*Answer*—It is not the sin of immediate parents which is imputed to us as original sin, *cf.* Ps. 106:6; for they stand in the relation, not of federal, but of natural heads of their posterity, *cf.* Ex. 20:5. The sin that is conveyed to us by our immediate parents is that original sin of our first parents, whereby as we are born men, we are born sinners, Ps. 58:3. Thus, the guilt of Adam's first transgression, being conveyed to us with our being, Ps. 51:5; we are constituted habitual sinners, with a propensity of nature that is the consequence, Gen. 8:21. Therefore, every one that is born of sinful parents will, as soon as he is capable of sin, be prone to commit it, John 3:6.

The mode of effecting, or conveying, in *general* can be called the *transmission* or *derivation* of sin from one to all,—from Adam to his posterity, 1 Cor. 15:22. But in *particular*, in respect of the remote consequence, it is called *imputation*, Rom. 5:12; in respect to the cause at hand,—that is, the first man who perpetrated the first sin, the cause of original sin,—it is called *generation*, Job 4:17-19. *Imputation* is that God imputes the first actual sin of Adam to all his natural heirs, Rom. 5:19. Wherefore for this reason it is said to be imputed, because it had passed into act, and does not inhere to us as it did to Adam, Rom. 5:14. Yet, most deservedly is it imputed, because all sinned in him as in the stalk or root, *cf.* Heb. 7:9, 10. *Generation* is that Adam in generating propagates to his posterity the corruption of nature contracted from the first sin, Job 14:4.

This latter mode of propagation, *generally*, is the impure generation by which we are born corrupt and sinners from those who are corrupt and sinners, Eph. 2:3. It should seem no strange thing that like begets like, Gen. 5:3. The nature and condition of all those generating demands that those who beget must generate a species similar to themselves, as to the substance and accidents of the species and the law of generation established by God, no less after the fall as before it, Gen. 9:1.

*Specially*, this mode of generation contains three degrees of propagation: 1.) There is the conception of the body from an unclean seed, Lev. 15:16; Deut. 23:10. And, therefore, as is the material, such ought to be the product, Job 15:14. Thus, the tinder of sin is derived in the conception itself, and is impressed upon the fetus such that they draw from them not only the vitality of life but the corrupt impressions of the parents, sometimes even diseases, in the act itself, *cf.* Ex. 34:7; 1 Pet. 2:11. 2.) The propagation of the soul, created without any stain by God, but now coming forth not only lacking its original righteousness but clothed with the contrary habit of unrighteousness, Job 25:4-6. Although souls were not in Adam as to origin of essence, they can rightly be said to be in

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 51:5; Job 14:4; 15:14; John 3:6.

him as to origin of subsistence, being joined with the bodies as constituent parts of men who are the children of Adam and, therefore, in this respect guilty in Adam, as well, Gen. 46:26; Rom. 5:12. 3.) The union of the soul with the body by which what had been sin only by way of introduction and with regard to the root (*i.e.*, substantively) becomes so formally and completely, 1 Cor. 15:47-49. So great is the sympathy between the soul and the body that as the body is affected by the soul, *cf.* Gen. 2:7; so also the soul is affected by the body, *cf.* Luke 21:34.

Finally, this propagation of sin does not consist only in the guilt, or legal liability, of the first sin committed by Adam, but it also involves the participation of the whole nature in that sin whereby all men are constituted sinners indeed, Rom. 5:12-21. The fall of mankind was not imputed until it was confirmed by the federal head, Adam, *cf.* Gen. 3:6, 7; because it did not yet assume a *public* character, *cf.* Num. 30:8, 13. Therefore, Adam, acting formally, did impress upon that violation a public character as the federal, or covenant, head of mankind, *cf.* Gen. 2:17. Nevertheless, until such time, the woman was in the transgression, wherein we see that the original sin is not simply representative but is an imputation that is founded upon a real agreement in transgression, 1 Tim. 2:13, 14.

*Question 2—Are all who proceed from our first parents by way of natural generation conceived and born in sin?*

*Answer—*Yes, Ps. 51:5; man that is born of woman is born in sin and with every habit of sinning, Job 15:14-16. This results in a creature that stands in need of cleansing from iniquity, Ps. 51:7.

This doctrine is proved from several considerations: 1.) Scripture teaches that man, as soon as he has thoughts or imaginations, and not before, is filled with those which are evil, Gen. 6:5. This sin increases with the exercise of reason, Gen. 8:21. Furthermore, it is the source, or origin, of all actual sin, Ps. 58:3. 2.) Man is considered a transgressor from the womb, whereby it is to be understood that his sinful estate begins with his conception and birth, Isa. 48:8. Thus, Adam, having fallen, begets one like himself, Gen. 5:3.

In natural generation, there is, on the part of the male, a taking knowledge of the female, so that she conceives, or is made pregnant, Gen. 4:1. In this action, the woman takes knowledge of the man, Num. 31:17; and, by this knowledge, she is enabled to conceive, *cf.* Gen. 38:18. When God separated the woman from the man in the beginning, he separated that which belonged unto man from the man himself, Gen. 2:23; 1 Cor. 11:8, 9. Hence, the distinction of the sexes reflects an underlying reality concerning the nature of mankind, *cf.* Rom. 1:26. Thus, the substance, or nature, of man is wrought upon in the woman and derives its essence from the woman, in her womb, Ps. 139:13-16. In other words, the human nature, or substance, ordinarily lies dormant in the woman until such time as the man takes special notice to act upon that nature, *cf.* Song 3:4; 1 Chron. 7:23. To the man belongs that part of giving subsistence, or form, to the nature through the woman, Gen. 30:1; Jer. 20:14, 15; he imposes upon an indistinct nature the distinguishing impress of his own person, Deut. 5:9; and this establishes another distinct person, a child, *cf.* Gen. 21:5. Therefore, the man, who has actual subsistence, is by the woman, 1 Cor. 11:12; yet, this concrete being is normally the result of the activity of the man, *cf.* Luke 1:34.