

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTIONS # 23 & 17.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #23. *Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?*

A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.¹

(Shorter Catechism)

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

A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.²

Question 1—*What do we mean calling the apostasy from God “the fall”?*

Answer—The apostasy of man from God is denominated the fall because man is not now where God set him at his creation, Hos. 14:1. At his first creation, God placed man upon the high pinnacle of holiness and happiness, Eccl. 7:29. From this vantage, he was endowed with the image of God and given dominion over the creatures of the earth, Gen. 1:26. From this place, by his sin, man has fallen and lost his original advantage, Lam. 5:16. This fall has brought all mankind into a corrupted estate wherein death, temporal and spiritual, reigns over all, Jesus Christ only excepted, Rom. 5:17. By reason of this sin, man now finds himself in the depths of a horrible pit wherein he is, as it were, stuck as in thick sticky clay, Ps. 40:2. This pit is one wherein is to be found no spiritual hope or relief, Zech. 9:11.

Man has come into this estate by the abuse of his free will whereby he has become a self-destroyer, Hos. 13:9. Thereby Adam cast all his offspring into the same corrupt and self-destroyed condition as himself, Gen. 5:3. Thus, all men, Jew and Gentile, are in this self-destroyed condition, Rom. 3:9; which, as Paul affirms, is the result of Adam’s transgression, Rom. 5:19. Therefore, no flesh, no child of Adam, shall be justified by the works of the law, Rom. 3:20. What is needed is a new birth, regeneration, to be found in Christ rather than Adam, John 3:3; Gal. 2:16.

Question 2—*Why is it called an estate of sin?*

Answer—It is an estate of sin because man, by the fall, has come under the guilt of sin, Rom. 3:19. By one man’s sin, Adam, all mankind has been made subject to the guilt of that sin by an immediate imputation, Rom. 3:23. Being accounted sinners, men are held guilty before God and come under his curse, Gal. 3:10. Being in an estate of sin, not yet under grace, man has not only lost dominion over the creature, but sin now has dominion over him, Rom. 6:14. Thus, the grace of God, in order to work in men, must subdue and remove sin and its dominion from the people of God, Mic. 7:19.

Question 3—*Why is it called an estate of misery?*

Answer—It is an estate of misery because, according to the penalty of the law, death and the curse have involved mankind in all manner of misery, Rom. 5:12. Misery is the nature consequence of sinning, Ezek. 18:4.

¹ Rom. 5:12; 3:23.

² Rom. 5:12.

The state of sin is placed before the state of misery because there could be no misery, if there were no sin, Rom. 6:23. According to Scripture, sin is the procuring cause of all misery, Eccl. 8:6. It is sin that has placed mankind under the power of Satan, Rom. 7:14; who is the “prince of the power of the air,” Eph. 2:2. In this way, God has made sin to be the cause and procurer of its own punishments, Jer. 2:19.

By nature, man, who was free before the fall, is now, since the fall into sin, become enslaved, Isa. 52:3. Now, man is made subject to the devil, Heb. 2:14, 15. The devil rules all the powers and faculties of the sinner: 1.) The understanding, blinding men with ignorance, 2 Cor. 4:4; then ruling over them with rigor, John 12:31. 2.) The will, which, though he cannot force it, he can, by temptation, draw it, John 8:44. Which course he pursues with diligence and such efficacy that sinners are taken at his will, 2 Tim. 2:26; and all the world lies in his power, 1 John 5:19.

The misery of the sinner’s estate is like that of the prodigal, who went into a far country, wasted his substance, began to be in want, and was sent to feed swine, Luke 15:13-15. Again, misery is the natural result of sin, Prov. 13:21. Into this estate, man brought not only himself but all of the creatures, Gen. 3:17; Rom. 8:20, 22.

From this terrible estate, man is no more able to free himself than a new-born infant, cast into the open field, is able to help itself, Ezek. 16:4, 5. Nor does fallen man have any desire and will to be helped out of this state of sin and misery because his nature is enmity with God, Rom. 8:7. He is not interested in the way of salvation proposed in the Gospel, Ps. 81:11. Therefore, man rejects the only help that is of God’s appointment, John 5:40.

Question 4—How is this fallen estate described in Scripture?

Answer—The Spirit of God, speaking in Scripture, describes this fallen estate as one that is a state of darkness, because it has extinguished all spiritual light in man, Eph. 5:8. Man, in this fallen estate is blinded spiritually and, consequently, his understanding is darkness, Eph. 4:18; from which he will only be delivered by grace, Col. 1:13.

It is an estate of distance from God, Eph. 2:13. This distance is not simply the distance of the creation from the Creator, but that added alienating distance of sin, Ps. 73:27. This distance, too, can only be remedied by the grace of God, Isa. 57:19.

It is an estate of condemnation and wrath, John 3:18, 36. Man, by sin, fallen into this estate has not only become liable to the wrath of God, but he lives in a continual state of provoking this, Rom. 1:18. This is also removed by grace alone, Rom. 5:9.

It is an estate of bondage, or captivity, Isa. 49:24, 25. By reason of this fall, all men are brought into a state of weakness and vulnerability before all kinds of temporal and spiritual evil, Isa. 42:22; Matt. 12:29. From these evils, men are only kept by the power and grace of God, Ps. 124:6, 7.

Finally, it is an estate of death, both spiritual and legal, Eph. 2:1. It is this, and all the other liabilities of this estate, that Jesus Christ has come to remove, John 10:10.