
THE FALL: ORIGINAL AND ACTUAL SIN

Doctrine of Humanity
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WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

- 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.

THE NATURE OF SIN

- Probation was symbolized in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil
 - Many different views have been offered regarding the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.
 - Some see that the knowledge of good and evil would be attained by eating its fruit.
 - Others see that by eating of the tree, and thereby disobeying God, Adam would place himself into God's place, in a sense becoming the arbiter of good and evil.
 - Geerhardus Vos and Meredith G. Kline argue that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is the instrumental means appointed by God to test Adam's kingly and priestly ability to decipher good and evil *as an obedient creature*.
 - These considerations inform our understanding of the threatened sanctions. Given that Adam's sin happened under the absolute lordship of God and within an eschatological covenant, his disobedience is construed as absolute rebellion and warrant eschatological punishment/death.
- The threatened sanction (death) is both *eschatological* and *just*.
 - The threatened sanction is first *eschatological* (having to do with the end; it's final death).
 - The sanction threatened and symbolized in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil are the converse of the Tree of Life.
 - The blessing offered is the highest form of blessing. The creature is offered to commune with the Creator-God in glory forever.
 - The curse for disobedience is the mirror opposite: eternal punishment and the loss of glory.
 - When Adam eats from the tree, the Lord comes in judgment (Gen 3:8).
 - The description of sound of the Lord mentioned in Gen 3:8 is similar to the prophet's description of the "Day of the Lord."
 - Adam and Eve's response also indicates their terror of coming judgment.

- The threatened sanction is also *just*.
 - Adam’s obedience would have “merited” eternal life, because of the nature of the covenant God freely and graciously established.
 - If Adam could “merit” eternal life by obedience according to the terms of the covenant, he also can “merit” eternal death according to its terms.
 - And God is no less self-obligated to issue the curse for violating the terms than he is to grant the reward for keeping them.
 - The punishment for sin is just.
 - Still, when God comes in the garden to judge, he announces the curse but does not bring the *eschatological* judgment yet. Rather, he issues another promise of eschatological life to be merited by the eschatological son, Jesus Christ.

THE MYSTERY OF SIN

- The origin of sin is a profound mystery. We cannot deny that.
 - As creatures, we do not fully understand why God has allowed sin to occur.
 - We do, however, learn several truths in Scripture that must control our consideration of the mystery of sin and the so-called problem of evil.
- God has from eternity ordained whatsoever comes to pass.
 - Ephesians 1:11—In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.
 - But this seems to generate a problem.
 - If God is all good, he would not want sin.
 - If God is all powerful, then he would not allow sin.
 - Evil exists.
 - Therefore, the argument concludes that God is either limited in goodness or power.
 - Scripture does not allow us to compromise God’s sovereignty. What then about his goodness? That brings us to the next Scriptural principle.
- God is not the author of sin.
 - James 1:13—Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.
 - WCF 3:1—“God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: (Eph. 1:11, Rom 11:33; Heb. 6:17; Rom 9:15, 18) yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, (James 1:13, 17; 1 John 1:5) nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established. (Acts 2:23; Matt 17:12; Acts 4:27–28; John 19:11; Prov 16:33)”
 - It is true to say both that God ordains whatsoever comes to pass and that God is not the author of sin. These do not *ultimately* contradict one other (Romans 9:13–24; Acts 2:23; Luke 22:22; Deuteronomy 29:29).