

Week Nine, Wednesday, December 1, 2021: “Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof”

WCF 6: The “T” in Tulip. The Fall is reason there is evil in the world and why we hurt each other.

James Benjamin Green writes, “The Standards treat [sin] with great fullness, and we should study it with great care. For according to our conception of sin will be our conception of grace. Grace is the remedy for the situation created by sin. If sin is a light matter, so is grace. No one ever thought much of grace who thought little of sin ... The inward and the negative sides of sin are too much ignored, too little regarded.”¹⁰⁴ Related to this, R.C. Sproul writes, “If you do not believe in God’s wrath, you cannot be a Christian. It is that simple. Divine wrath is integral to the classic biblical concept of faith. You cannot be a Christian if you do not believe in the cross, which is the purest demonstration of the reality of God’s wrath.”¹⁰⁵ Luke 7:47: forgiveness of sins causes love.

WCF 6:1: *Our first parents, being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit.(a) This their sin God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory.(b)*
(a)Gen. 3:13; 2 Cor. 11:3. (b)Rom. 11:32.

First, these were real people and it really happened: against Neo-orthodoxy (Karl Barth). The sin of our first parents was not believing and obeying God’s Word. Sin was believing and obeying Satan. This sin came through the test of the tree, free of other considerations, so Adam’s sin was insubordination.¹⁰⁶ Sproul explains, “The serpent’s seduction ... was his pretense of autonomy.”¹⁰⁷ Adam’s original sin, as too our sinful actions, was to have his own interpretation of reality. Notice the word “seduced”. Sin is seductive: run away from it. Sin is the source of all pain and problems for you and others. Also, “seduced” is not “coerced”: sin is something that fallen creatures choose to do, think, and speak. “Sin is an act and a state. It is not being and not doing what God requires. It is doing and being what God forbids.”¹⁰⁸ It is a matter of your heart (Col. 1:21, Mt. 15:19). Thus, it is a matter of a lack of love for (that is, hating) God (Ex. 20:5-6; John 14:15, 21). You do what is on your mind until you are given a new mind. Here the change must occur. Also, recognize that while the church is often lamentable, the world is FAR worse in all its thoughts, words, and actions (don’t be fooled). Yet God not only permitted the Fall (and its terrible effects), but purposed it in His eternal decree for His glory (in mercy and justice). While Satan thinks he began to win a war with God, in fact, he was just a pawn in God’s plan. Notice also something helpful to remember as we consider the problem of evil: “There is a biblical realism in this chapter and an absence of theorizing. The Confession does not deal with the origin of sin in God’s creation but the origin of sin in the human

¹⁰⁴ James Benjamin Green, *A Harmony of the Westminster Presbyterian Standards with Explanatory Notes* (? : Collins World, 1976), 46, 47.

¹⁰⁵ Sproul, 198.

¹⁰⁶ Clark, *What Presbyterians Believe*, 29.

¹⁰⁷ Sproul, 179. He explains on page 178 that the prefix *auto* means “self”, and *nomos* means “law”, “so *autonomy* refers to that which is a law unto itself and is therefore accountable to no one.”

¹⁰⁸ Green, 46.

race.”¹⁰⁹ Notice also that human corruption started with the Fall (it was not part of creation, all of which was good).

WCF 6:2: *By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, (c) and so became dead in sin, (d) and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. (e)* (c)Gen. 3:6-8; Eccl. 7:29; Rom. 3:23. (d)Gen. 2:17; Eph. 2:1. (e)Tit. 1:15; Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10-18.

Death is described as falling from original righteousness and communion with God. Fallen mankind was barred from God's immediate presence as a marred image of God, having lost perfect knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (Eph. 4:24, Col. 3:10). Life in sin is called death. “The Bible and Confession teach that man is not just sick in sin; he is dead in sin; and salvation rather than being compared with medicine is compared with a resurrection.”¹¹⁰ We are speaking spiritually, although the body is affected, as it too eventually dies. All of our soul and all of our body is defiled: total depravity. We are dead in sin, and dead men cannot awaken themselves (Eph. 2:1). Thus, our works outside of Christ are dead and no good (see chapter 16:7). Yet mankind is not depraved totally in *degree* but in total *extent* (we are a shattered image, but we still reflect imperfectly: see Gen. 9:6 and James 3:9). Man can get worse in degree. But the extent of his position before God is totally ruined; this should inform our understanding that we have free will, but our will is totally corrupt outside of Christ and so we freely choose wickedness. We have an innate inability that causes us to choose only evil unless we are regenerated. Life is to be revived in righteousness and true and holy communion with God through Jesus in our soul and body: “This bleak picture of human nature is given not to drive us to utter despair, but to drive us to Christ.”¹¹¹

WCF 6:3: *They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, (f) and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation. (g)* (f)Gen. 1:27,28 and Gen. 2:16-17 and Acts 17:26 with Rom. 5:12,15-19 and 1 Cor. 15:21-22, 49. (g)Ps. 51:5; Gen. 5:3; Job 14:4; Job 15:14.

All people go back to Adam and Eve. No racism is allowed (Acts 17:26). All were born *after* their sin/the Fall. Adam was our legal representative in obedience and original righteousness, but then in disobedience and “Original Sin” (origin of our sinfulness); this is the doctrine of Federal Headship/Representation (Rom. 5:12). We fell in him. So we are both guilty in our position before God and corrupt in our nature. Guilt was imputed by God to us upon our federal head, Adam, through whom our corrupt nature is then conveyed. Innocence and righteousness is restored to us by having it imputed (credited) by God to us through Jesus, the Second Adam. Thus, we are saved by faith in Christ’s work, not our works (Gen. 15:6, Hab. 2:4; Rom. 5:17, 19). The fallen and corrupt nature was passed from our first parents to all humanity; thus, the standards teach “traducianism”, and not

¹⁰⁹ Ward, 63.

¹¹⁰ Clark, *Ibid*, 28.

¹¹¹ Spear, 42.

“creationism”¹¹²: our corrupt souls, just as our bodies, are “conveyed” by “ordinary generation”, that is, human procreation or propagation. God once created humanity in the beginning. He now uses the secondary causes spoken of in chapter 5:2. He also creates good, not evil.

WCF 6:4: *From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, (h) and wholly inclined to all evil, (i) do proceed all actual transgressions. (k)* (h)Rom. 5:6; Rom. 8:7; Rom. 7:18; Col. 1:21. (i)Gen. 6:5; Gen. 8:21; Rom. 3:10-12. (k)James 1:14-15; Eph. 2:2-3; Matt. 15:19.

Why is mankind so bad? He fell in Adam. But we weren't made this way. “Original Sin” is the basis of all our “actual sins”. We are born in sin. This is against Pelagianism and semi-pelagianism (more on this in the section on Free Will). Also against Rome: we were not created neutral. We lost original righteousness in Adam. We are now all born bad, so infants too are not innocent nor good-natured. Also, this is against evolution: man continues to regress from his original state (morally), and not progress (ethically). When witnessing, don't point to the Ten Commandments first to tell someone he or she has sinned and thus is a sinner. We sin because we *are* sinners, and we all know it. Point to one's corrupt heart and guilty conscience. Then point to all their sins as the proof of it, but not the first cause or basis of their guilt: “In all genuine conviction of sin, the great burden of pollution and guilt is felt to consist not in what we have done, but in what we are—our permanent moral condition rather than our actual transgressions.”¹¹³ No one is “basically good”. Bad things happen to us all because we are all bad people (John 3:36b). Thus our only hope from our conception (Ps. 51:5) is to be born again. As well, Christ saves us because He was NOT born in Adam. His Father was God.

WCF 6:5: *This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; (l) and although it be, through Christ, pardoned and mortified, yet both itself and all the motions thereof are truly and properly sin. (m)* (l)1 John 1:8,10; Rom. 7:14,17-18,23; James 3:2; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20. (m)Rom. 7:5,7-8,25; Gal. 5:17.

Corruption of nature remains in Christians. This explains why we still sin. This is against “Perfectionism”. And it is why we long for spiritual bodies. While our corrupt nature in our bodies continues, our souls are no longer guilty: the effect (guilt) of our sinful nature has been “pardoned and mortified”. Hallelujah! We must grow in sanctification, but this new spiritual nature (regeneration) and pardoning (justification) is the basis of how we can. “Thank God there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. But there is the continual struggle against sin.”¹¹⁴

WCF 6:6: *Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, (n) doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner; (o) whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, (p) and curse of the law, (q) and so made subject to death, (r) with all miseries spiritual, (s) temporal, (t) and eternal. (u)*

¹¹² “Creationism” here is not referring to the debate about literal 24-hour periods and a young earth, but the idea that each person receives a soul at the point of their being conceived by God “creating” a soul in them at that time, rather than their soul being derived from the souls of their parents (the teaching of traducianism, from the Latin *traducianus*, meaning transmission or transfer).

¹¹³ A. A. Hodge, 116.

¹¹⁴ Clark, *Ibid*, 31.

(n)1 John 3:4. (o)Rom. 2:15; Rom. 3:9,19. (p)Eph. 2:3. (q)Gal. 3:10. (r)Rom. 6:23. (s)Eph. 4:18. (t)Rom. 8:20; Lam. 3:39. (u)Matt. 25:41; 2 Thess. 1:9.

J.I. Packer profoundly describes sin as “...an energy of irrational, negative, and rebellious reaction to God’s call and command, a spirit of fighting God in order to play God.”¹¹⁵ David Dickson further impresses us with sin’s root in irreverent, ungodly rebellion: “... every sin is against the supremest Law-giver, against his holiness and goodness, against his infinite majesty, and floweth from a formal or virtual contempt for God ...”¹¹⁶ More properly defined, sin is breaking God’s Law through commission or omission (WLC 24; SC 14-15; 1 John 3:4; James 4:17). “As omission it is a coming short. As transgression it is an overstepping.”¹¹⁷ Every sin deserves death. Van Dixhoorn explains the Confession’s intent here: “There are distinctions between the gravity of sins [see WLC 150-152], but in reminding us of the Scriptures’ teaching that every sin deserves death, the Westminster divines are also arguing against one of the most famous distinctions in the history of sin. Sadly, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that some sins are mortal (or deadly), and others are only venial (or not so consequential). How flawed this understanding of sin is! ... The truth is that every sin is a mortal sin.”¹¹⁸ We are morally accountable to the Holy Creator. The curse of God’s Law for sin is death and all its miseries: spiritual, temporal, and eternal. The WLC Q&A 29 particularly teaches against annihilationism. We suffer here, and we will suffer there as our just punishment from God for rebellion against Him in our nature and actions unless the Mediator intervenes on our behalf. Jesus forgives us the guilt of original sin and actual sins, and gives us a new nature spiritually as His holy, righteous, and knowledgeable image. God’s Law still applies to living our lives in thanksgiving and love (against antinomianism). When we sin actually, though we are positionally forgiven, it still is terrible: “Perhaps the most wicked thought of all, is that which suggests that sin is somehow less heinous if it is committed by the Christian.”¹¹⁹ See Rom. 6:1-2, 15 and WLC 150-151

Some closing thoughts by Thomas Watson in his *Body of Divinity* on this topic:

[Adam’s] teeth watered at the apple, and ever since it has made our eyes water ... Learn from Adam’s fall, how unable we are to stand in our own strength. If Adam, in the state of integrity, did not stand, how unable are we now, when the lock of our original righteousness is cut. (131) ... [Sin] is a defiling thing. Sin is not only a defection, but a pollution. It is to the soul as rust is to gold, as a stain to beauty. It makes the soul red with guilt, and black with filth. Sin in Scripture is compared to a ‘menstruous cloth,’ Isa xxx 22, and to a ‘plague-sore.’ I Kings viii 38. ... Sin stamps the devil’s image on a man. Malice is the devil’s eye, hypocrisy his cloven foot. It turns a man into a devil. ... Is it not sad to grieve our Comforter? ... there is the heart of a rebel in every sin. (133) ... Sin brings a sting in the conscience, a curse in the estate; yet men love it. A sinner is the greatest self-denier; for his sin he will deny himself a part in heaven. ... There is more evil in a drop of sin than in a sea of affliction. (136) ... how thankful should you be to God, if he has taken away your sin! ... God takes

¹¹⁵ J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1993), 82. He goes on to say, “Sin may be comprehensively defined as lack of conformity to the law of God in act, habit, attitude, outlook, disposition, motivation, and mode of existence.”

¹¹⁶ Dickson, 44.

¹¹⁷ Green, 46.

¹¹⁸ Van Dixhoorn, 94.

¹¹⁹ Williamson, 61.

away the guilt of sin by pardoning grace, and the power of sin by mortifying grace. (137) ... If our nature was thus weak when it was at the best, what is it now when it is at the worst? If Adam did not stand when he was perfectly righteous, how unable are we to stand when sin has cut the lock of our original righteousness! ... Adam being left to himself, fell. Oh then, what will become of us, how soon fall, if God should leave us to ourselves! A man without God's grace, left to himself, is like a ship in a storm, without pilot or anchor, and is ready to dash upon every rock. (138) ... The subtlety of Stan's temptation ... He dealt all along as an impostor; he ushered in his temptation by lies. (139) ... by unbelief they made God a liar ... Unthankfulness ... is the epitome of all sin. (140) ... Men roll sin as honey under their tongue ... Though they are tired of committing sin, yet they sin. (144). ... Who would have thought to have found adultery in David, and drunkenness in Noah, and cursing in Job? If God leave a man to himself, how suddenly and scandalously may original sin break forth in the holiest men on the earth! (146) ... God leaves original corruption to make us long after heaven, where there shall be no sin to defile, no devil to tempt. (147) ... God has left original sin in us ... as a thorn in our side to humble us [WCF 5:5]. (148) ... sinners are willing to be slaves, they will not take their freedom; they kiss their fetters ... Improve the gospel. The gospel proclaims a jubilee to captives. Sin binds men, but the gospel looses them ... Acts xxvi 18. (150) ... Trouble is the vermin bred out of the putrid matter of sin ... There had never been a stone in the kidneys, if there had not been first a stone in the heart ... Sin dug Adam's grave. (152) ... Sin has brought trouble and a curse into the world: Christ has sanctified the trouble, and removed the curse. Nay, he has not only freed believers from misery, but purchased for them a crown of glory and immortality. (153)

Reading Assignment for Wednesday, December 8, 2021: "God's Covenant with Man"

- WCF chapter 7 and corresponding Scriptures
- LC 30-36 and corresponding Scriptures
- SC 20-21 and corresponding Scriptures
- "In Defense of the Covenant of Works," Jack Kinneer: <https://puritanchurch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CovenantofWorks.pdf> (this is a direct link: it is available on our website on this page under "Covenant and Its Implications": <https://puritanchurch.com/about/doctrine-and-practice/doctrine-the-things-we-are-to-believe-concerning-god/>).

Suggested Readings (first three related to this week; next two related to next week)

- "Traducianism", Gordon H. Clark: <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=56>
- "God and Evil [The Problem Solved]", chapter 5 in *Religion, Reason, and Revelation*, Gordon H. Clark
- *Perfectionism*, B.B. Warfield.
- *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan.
- "Covenant Confusion," Richard Phillips, see J. Kinneer link above, same section at www.puritanchurch.com
- "Mono-covenantalism", Jack Kinder: <http://www.viewcrestchurch.org/omfiles/MonoCovenantalism.pdf>
- <https://www.placefortruth.org/blog/martin-luther-and-stinking-at-satan>, Grant Van Leuven (just ran as of today's date)