

Each week of 2019 we will take a brief look at one or more questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. To read previous weeks' briefs go to [oakhillpca.com/wsc](http://oakhillpca.com/wsc)

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.*

The Fall of Mankind. It's not a popular topic and has been highly debated throughout the church age. Some have taught that we are born without sin, nothing is transferred from Adam. Some have sought to explain the transmission of sin through biological processes. Others have cried, "Unfair!" to the rendering of a guilty status on all humans for Adam's one sin.

The Catechism and Confession seek to help us understand the biblical teaching on the Fall of Mankind. Romans 5:18 & 19 says, "One trespass led to condemnation for all men...by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners." This is in the context where Paul says, "sin came into the world through one man" (v. 12) and "death reigned from Adam to Moses" (v. 14). The "one trespass" and "the one man's disobedience" is speaking about Adam's sin.

The Catechism explains this Scriptural reality by describing Adam as a *representative* for all mankind. God made the covenant of life (see Q. 12) with Adam with the view that Adam stood in the stead of all mankind. As Adam goes, so does everyone else. This is also called the *Federal Headship* view. God appointed Adam as the head of mankind. Since he failed, we all suffer the consequences.

Romans 5:18 is pretty plain in affirming this view ("one trespass led to condemnation for all men"), but we still may feel this is unfair. Let's keep in mind, though, that God will "render to each one according to his works" (Rom. 2:6) and "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (3:23). Every single human being voluntarily sins, therefore every human being brings the just penalty of condemnation on himself/herself. There is nothing to be gained by crying, "Unfair!"

More importantly, though, is that crying "unfair!" is accusing God of making a mistake. This was God's design (appointing Adam as representative for all), because God had a plan to appoint a second representative, an infinitely better one: Jesus Christ! If it's unfair to have Adam as our representative in sin, then it's unfair to have Christ as our representative in righteousness. The Catechism will direct our attention to this good news after it delves deeper into the consequences of the Fall.