

The Imputation of Adam's Sin (Original or Universal Sin)

I. The Doctrine: the imputation of Adam's sin defined

Original Guilt

Inherited Corruption

The Q&A that follows Question 16 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Q. 11. Was it reasonable, that Adam should represent his posterity in the covenant of works?

A. Nothing could be more reasonable, seeing he was to be the common parent of all mankind, and was created perfectly holy, with full power to fulfill the condition of the covenant, and thus to entail happiness upon himself and his posterity. (The Shorter Catechism Explained)

Q. 17. How could Adam's posterity, being then unborn, fall in his first sin?

A. Because they were considered as "in him", 1 Corinthians 15:22 -- "In Adam all die."

Solidarity or Corporate Relationship:

Biblical examples:

II. The Development: the historical understanding outlined

Pelagianism:

Semi-Pelagianism:

Augustinianism:

III. The Defense: the Biblical case made

- A. Locus Classicus - the primary text (Romans 5:12-19)
- B. Two Representatives
- C. The imputation of sin
- D. The universality of sin

IV. The Destruction: the effects of original sin

- 1.
- 2.

Application:

Humility –

The grace of God –

Watchfulness –

DID ALL MANKIND FALL IN ADAM'S FIRST TRANSGRESSION?

By Thomas Watson

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. Romans 5:12.

Adam being a representative person, while he stood, we stood; when he fell, we fell, we sinned in Adam; so it is in the text, 'In whom all have sinned.'

Adam was the head of mankind, and being guilty, we are guilty, as the children of a traitor have their blood stained. 'All of us,' says Augustine, 'sinned in Adam, because we were part of Adam.'

How is Adam's sin made ours?

(1.) By imputation. The Pelagians of old held, that Adam's transgression is hurtful to posterity by imitation only, not by imputation. But the text, 'In whom all have sinned,' confutes that.

(2.) Adam's sin is ours by propagation. Not only is the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to us, but the depravity and corruption of his nature is transmitted to us, as poison is carried from the fountain to the cistern. This is that which we call original sin. 'In sin did my mother conceive me.' Psa 51:5. Adam's leprosy cleaves to us, as Naaman's leprosy did to Gehazi.

That we may further see the nature of original sin, consider,

[1] The universality of it. It has, as poison, diffused itself into all the parts and powers of the soul. 'The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.' Isa 1:5. Like a sick patient, that has no part sound, his liver is swelled, his feet are gangrened, his lungs are perished; such infected, gangrened souls have we, till Christ, who has made a medicine of his blood, cures us.

(1.) Original sin has depraved the intellectual part. As in the creation 'darkness was upon the face of the deep,' Gen 1:2, so it is with the understanding; darkness is upon the face of this deep. As there is salt in every drop of the sea, bitterness in every branch of wormwood, so there is sin in every faculty. The mind is darkened, we know little of God. Ever since Adam did eat of the tree of knowledge, and his eyes were opened, we lost our eye-sight. Besides ignorance in the mind, there is error and mistake; we do not judge rightly of things, we put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Isa 5:20. Besides this, there is much pride, superciliousness and prejudice, and many fleshly reasonings. 'How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?' Jer 4:14.

(2.) Original sin has defiled the heart. The heart is deadly wicked. Jer 17:9. It is a lesser hell. In the heart are legions of lusts, obdurateness, infidelity, hypocrisy, sinful estuations; it boils as the sea with passion and revenge. 'Madness is in their heart while they live.' Eccl 9:3. The heart is, *Officina diaboli*, 'the devil's shop or workhouse,' where all mischief is framed.

(3.) The will. Contumacy is the seat of rebellion. The sinner crosses God's will, to fulfil his own. 'We will burn incense to the queen of heaven.' Jer 44:17. There is a rooted enmity in the will against holiness; it is like an iron sinew, it refuses to bend to God. Where is then the freedom of the will, when it is so full not only of indisposition, but opposition to what is spiritual?

(4.) The affections. These, as the strings of a viol, are out of tune. They are the lesser wheels, which are strongly carried by the will, the masterwheel. Our affections are set on wrong objects. Our love is set on sin, our joy on the creature. Our affections are naturally as a sick man's appetite, who desires things which are noxious and hurtful to him; he calls for wine in a fever. So we have impure lustings instead of holy longings.

[2] The adhesion of original sin. It cleaves to us, as blackness to the skin of the Ethiopian, so that we cannot get rid of it. Paul shook off the viper on his hand, but we cannot shake off this inbred corruption. It may be compared to a wild fig-tree growing on a wall, the roots of which are pulled up, and yet there are some fibres of it in the joints of the stonework, which will not be eradicated, but will sprout forth till the wall be pulled in pieces. Original concupiscence comes not, as a lodger, for a night, but as an indweller. 'Sin which dwelleth in me.' Rom 7:17.