

CHAPTER 6

EFFECTS OF SIN

[For bibliography, see beginning of ch. 5]

Immediate effects of sin on humanity

WCF 6:6, WLC 27-29, WSC 19

Alienation, guilt, misery, wrath of God, death

—See discussion in ch. 4, “Immediate Consequences of Adam’s Fall”

Spread of sin to all mankind

Isa 53:6, all have gone astray

Isa 64:6, all righteous deeds as filthy rags

Rom 3:19, whole world guilty before God

Gal 3:22, Scriptures conclude all under sin

Jas 3:2, in many things we all offend

1 John 1:8, if we say we have no sin

1 John 5:19, whole world lies in wickedness

Only exception—Jesus Christ, the only sinless human;

Cf. WSC 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 [rules out Jesus], sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.

Original sin

Definition

WCF 6:3-4, WLC 25, WSC 18

Consists in original guilt for Adam's first sin, and in original corruption of nature, inherited through parents.

Earlier reformers (e.g., Calvin), inherited depravity alone

Later, both guilt and depravity (Westminster standards); cf. WSC 18:

“Q. 18. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

“A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.”

Scriptural evidence

[Cf. Hodge 2:237]

Gen 8:21, every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood

Ps 51:5, a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me

Ps 58:3, from the womb they (the wicked) are wayward

Prov 22:15, folly bound up in the heart of a child

Cf. Eph 2:3, by nature children of wrath

Cf. Hodge 2:198-200, for biblical examples of children suffering for sins of parents (*contra* “unfair” argument)

Definition of imputation

Scriptural meaning of term impute

חָשַׁב *hāšab*, think, account, regard, reckon

Gen 15:6, he credited it to him (Abram) as righteousness

Lev 7:18; 17:4; Num 18:27, 30, guilt or sacrifices credited

2 Sam 19:19 (Heb. 20), Shimei—not hold me guilty

Job 19:11, he counts me among his enemies

Job 41:27 (Heb. 19), leviathan—iron he treats like straw

Ps 32:2, whose sin the Lord does not count against him

Ps 106:31, it was credited to him (Phinehas) as righteousness

Prov 27:14, blesses . . . will be taken as a curse

λογίζομαι *logizomai*, count, account, regard, reckon

Luke 22:37, he was numbered with the transgressors

Rom 2:26, regarded as though they were circumcised

Rom 4:3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24, “credited, count” —sins and righteousness

Rom 6:11, count yourselves dead to sin

Rom 8:36, we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered

Rom 9:8, regarded as Abraham’s offspring

1 Cor 4:1, regard us as servants of Christ

2 Cor 5:19, not counting men's sins against them

2 Cor 10:2, people who think we live by the standards of this world

Gal 3:6 (and Rom 4:3ff; Jas 2:23), Abraham . . . it was credited to him as righteousness
(quoting Gen 15:6)

2 Tim 4:16, may it not be held against them

ἐλλογέω *ellogeo*, charge to account

Rom 5:13, sin is not taken into account when there is no law

Phlm 18, charge it to me

NOTE—Either good or bad may be imputed, and the thing imputed may or may not be consistent with the person's previous or present character. *Impute* is not the same as *infuse*, but refers to the person's standing in the mind of another.

Theological definition of imputation

1. Imputation of sin

God officially recognizes us as sinful and guilty, with a judicial obligation to satisfy divine justice; cf. ch. 5, *reatus actualis*, “actual (imputed) guilt.”

The basis of this imputation is not stated by the term itself. It might be the actual sinfulness of the person, or the person's guilt derived from the sin of his representative.

2. Imputation of righteousness

God officially recognizes his people as righteous, with a judicial right to his promised blessings.

The basis of this imputation is the righteousness and substitutionary atonement of Christ (cf. Rom 3:23-26; 4:5; 5:8-9).

(For more information, see later, “Justification”)

Origin of imputed sin, Adam's sin

1. Imputation limited to human race, not from angels
2. Adam's sin is pictured in Scripture as the source of sinfulness and guilt for the entire human race (Rom 5:12-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22)
3. Sinfulness and guilt begin at conception, and are universal—evidence of their origin with Adam's sin (cf. above, ch. 3, "Scriptural Evidence for the Covenant of Works")
4. The principle of the solidarity of the race is familiar throughout Scripture, with examples in families, tribes, nations
5. Rom 5:12-19 especially emphasizes Adam's responsibility for imputed sin.

¹²Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because ["so that"] all sinned — ¹³for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come. [qualified in next verses]

¹⁵But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

¹⁹For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made ["were constituted] sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made [will be constituted] righteous.

v. 12, through one man

v. 14, death results from Adam

v. 15, the trespass of the one man

v. 16, one man's sin . . . one sin

v. 17, the trespass of the one man . . . death reigned through that one man

v. 18, one trespass

v. 19, disobedience of the one man

Syntactical construction of Romans 5:12-19

(Cf. John Murray, *Imputation of Adam's Sin*, pp. 7-8)

12 Διὰ τοῦτο ὡσπερ¹ δι' ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως² εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διήλθεν, ἐφ' ᾧ³ πάντες ἥμαρτον·

13 ἄχρι γὰρ νόμου ἁμαρτία ἦν ἐν κόσμῳ, ἁμαρτία δὲ οὐκ ἐλλογεῖται μὴ ὄντος νόμου, 14 ἀλλὰ ἐβασίλευσεν ὁ θάνατος ἀπὸ Ἀδὰμ μέχρι Μωϋσέως καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς μὴ ἁμαρτήσαντας ἐπὶ τῷ ὁμοιώματι τῆς παραβάσεως Ἀδὰμ ὅς ἐστιν τύπος⁴ τοῦ μέλλοντος.

15 Ἄλλ' οὐχ ὡς τὸ παράπτωμα, οὕτως καὶ τὸ χάρισμα· εἰ γὰρ τῷ τοῦ ἐνὸς παραπτώματι οἱ πολλοὶ ἀπέθανον, πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ δωρεὰ ἐν χάριτι τῇ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐπερίσσευσεν. 16 καὶ οὐχ ὡς δι' ἐνὸς ἁμαρτήσαντος τὸ δῶρημα· τὸ μὲν γὰρ κρίμα ἐξ ἐνὸς εἰς κατάκριμα, τὸ δὲ χάρισμα ἐκ πολλῶν παραπτωμάτων εἰς δικαίωμα. 17 εἰ γὰρ τῷ τοῦ ἐνὸς παραπτώματι ὁ θάνατος ἐβασίλευσεν διὰ τοῦ ἐνός, πολλῷ μᾶλλον οἱ τὴν περισσεΐαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης λαμβάνοντες ἐν ζωῇ βασιλεύουσιν διὰ τοῦ ἐνός Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

18 Ἄρα οὖν ὡς⁵ δι' ἐνὸς παραπτώματος εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς κατάκριμα, οὕτως καὶ δι' ἐνὸς δικαίωματος εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς δικαίωσιν ζωῆς· 19 ὡσπερ γὰρ διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἁμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν⁶ οἱ πολλοί, οὕτως καὶ διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἐνός δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί.

¹ starts comparison

² “and thus”; does not close comparison; would expect οὕτως καί (cf. v. 15)

³ lit. “upon which” = “so that”—expresses result, better than “because”

⁴ clarification follows

⁵ fully constructed comparisons in vv. 18-19

⁶ “constituted” better than “made”

Nature of mankind's union with Adam

—This question closely linked to realism-traducianism-creationism debate; cf. ch. 2, section “Origin of the Soul”

Realistic union

1. Definition

Adam included all human nature within himself. Each person now is an individualized part of human nature. Each person thus was present with Adam, took part in his sin, and is guilty for that participation.

View seeks to defend God's justice and shield him from charge of arbitrary justice

Held by W. G. T. Shedd; sympathetic discussion by Berkouwer, *Sin*, ch. 13

2. Difficulties

- 1) Still a problem for arbitrariness, since persons not individualized in Adam, not able to decide individually
- 2) Was Jesus' human nature present in Adam? If so, it would share his pollution and guilt.
- 3) Does not follow parallel between Adam and Christ in 1 Cor. 15 and Rom. 5

Seminal union

1. Definition

Adam is the natural root of mankind, thus it is natural that his sin would be passed down to his descendants. Cf. principle of Abraham and Levi in Heb. 7:9-10.

View of Augustine, Calvin; cf. WCF 6:3, “They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation.”

2. Difficulties

- 1) For arbitrariness, same difficulty as realistic view argues against
- 2) Other sins of Adam and of other ancestors not imputed to posterity

Representative union

1. Definition

Also called federalism

Adam was mankind's representative in the covenant of works. By God's ordination, his descendants were to share his blessing or guilt. Applied to the probationary period only.

God's judgment on Adam's sin includes two parts: (1) guilt for that particular sin imputed to all descendants, (2) polluted nature transmitted to all descendants. Mediate view denies #1; cf. next section.

View of more recent Reformed writers, Hodge, Murray. Cf. WLC 22, "The covenant being made with Adam, as a public person . . .," and less precisely in WSC 16.

2. Main difficulty

Must wrestle with the arbitrariness accusation; cf. Berkouwer, ch. 14, "Federalism"

But note, for verses such as Deut 24:16; 2 Chr 25:4; compare other verses, such as Exod 34:7; Num 14:18; Deut 5:9.

3. Advantages

- 1) Closest view to parallel between Adam and Christ, especially in Rom 5:12-19
- 2) Explains why each individual guilty for only his own sins and for sin of Adam (not of other ancestors)

Nature of imputation

Imputation of pollution (sinful nature) and its resulting guilt

General agreement among Reformed theologians on fact of this imputation

Some disagreement on mode of this imputation:

Creationists—imputed individually after creation of soul, as judgment for sin of Adam

Traducianists—imputed mediately through pollution of parents, the whole process being a judgment for sin of Adam, as well as a natural consequence

Imputation of guilt for Adam's first sin

1. Considerable difference of opinion on this point

Reformed writers differ. See, for example, how later writers have categorized Jonathan Edwards (Berkouwer, p. 454):

Edwards—mediate: Cunningham, Hodge, Bavinck

Edwards—immediate: Warfield, Murray, Berkouwer

2. Mediate imputation

Sometimes called realistic or seminal view

Individuals held responsible and guilty for their own pollution and sin. The corrupt nature derived from Adam is the grounds for God's condemnation.

View of La Place; cf. Cranfield on Rom 5:12

3. Immediate imputation

Sometimes called federalist view

Can work with either traducianist or creationist views

Individuals held responsible and guilty for original sin of Adam as their representative, and in addition for their consequent corrupt nature, pollution, and sin. Their corruption is actually a judgment against them for Adam's sin.

View of Hodge, Murray, Hoekema (uses term “direct imputation”)

Cf. WCF 6:3, “the guilt of this sin was imputed . . . to all their posterity”; and WLC 22 and WSC 16, “all mankind . . . sinned in him”

4. Teaching of Rom 5:12-19

See esp. Murray, *Imputation of Adam’s Sin* (cf. chart of Greek of Rom. 5)

- 1) Death and condemnation, result of one sin of one man, Adam
- 2) Men constituted sinners; cf. Hodge on Rom 5:19 (Gk. καθίστημι *kathistemi*, better translated “constituted” than “made,” pp. 173-76)
- 3) Emphasis on death without personal sin (cf. children)
- 4) Parallel to Christ: our justification rests on his act of righteousness, not our own infused righteousness

Summary of federalistic traducianist vs. creationist explanations of guilt and corruption

Federalistic Traducianist:	Guilty	Immediately because of Adam’s sin Also because of own corruption
	Corrupt	Mediately through their parents
Federalistic Creationist:	Guilty	Immediately because of Adam’s sin
	Corrupt	Immediately (by fiat) because guilty of Adam’s sin

Total inability (or “total depravity”)

WCF 6:4, 9:3, WLC 25, WSC 18

Cf. Canons of the Synod of Dort, Third Head, “The Corruption of Man,” in Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* 3:587-88 (ET); Murray 2:ch. 9

Definition

Note esp. WCF 9:3, “Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation, so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”

Total inability, or total depravity, does not mean that the person is as bad as he can possibly be. Rather, it means that his entire person is affected and defiled by sin. All aspects of his life—heart, mind, will, body—are corrupted by sin. He is not able to desire genuinely to come to God or to do good works. The apparently good works he may do are actually undertaken for wrong motives, not the glory of the true God.

For the will’s relation to the nature, see above, ch. 4.

Biblical support for the bondage of the will in the state of sin

[Cf. Erasmus, who wrote the *Freedom of the Will* against Luther’s views; and Luther’s reply, the *Bondage of the Will*]

John 6:44, “No one can (δύναμαι *dunamai*, “is able to”) come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (ἔλκω *helko*, “draw, drag, draw out [a sword]”)

Rom 3:10-12, “As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.’” (quoting Ps 14:1-3; 53:1-3)

Rom 5:6, “When we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”

Rom 8:7-8, “Because the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can (*dunamai* again) it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”

1 Cor 2:14, “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Eph 2:1-3, “You were dead in transgressions and sins, . . . gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts (lit. τὰ θελήματα *ta thelemata* [the things willed] of the flesh and of the mind). Like the rest, we were by nature (φύσει *phusei*) objects of wrath.”

Objections to doctrine of inability

[Outline of Murray 2:86-89]

- 1) Difficult to reconcile with commands of God; shouldn't they presuppose human ability? (cf. John 10:25-26, "you do not believe because you are not of my sheep")
- 2) Inconsistent with the use of means
- 3) Encourages delay and hinders evangelistic spirit

Murray deals adequately with these objections. Note his conclusion: "This doctrine does not hinder evangelism. One of the greatest hindrances to the spread of the gospel is the lack of it. It is only on the presupposition of total depravity and complete human impotence that the full glory and power of the gospel can be declared." (See also John Gill, *The Cause of God and Truth* [an excellent and classic defense of Calvinism].)