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## MAN IN RELATION TO GOD

### Man in the Image of God

Regarding this subject, there are differing views. The early Church Fathers agreed that the image of God in man consisted in man's rational and moral characteristics and his capacity for holiness. Irenaeus and Tertullian drew a distinction between image and likeness, the former being in the bodily traits, and the latter in the spiritual nature of man. Clement of Alexandria rejected the bodily aspect and regarded the image as belonging to the characteristics of man, and that likeness is to be understood as the qualities which are not enlisted but may be cultivated or lost.

The Reformers rejected the distinction between image and likeness, and considered original righteousness as included in the image, and belonging to man's nature in its original condition. Luther restricted the image to original righteousness, and when it was lost the image of God was lost in its entirety. Calvin viewed the image as extending to everything in which the nature of man surpasses that of all other species of animals. John Brown said of the image: *Even since the fall, men somewhat resemble God in spirituality, intelligence and immortality of the soul; Gen 9: 6; James 3: 9. But nothing of that original moral wisdom, righteousness and holiness in which the image of God properly consisted, is to be found in them, till it is restored in regeneration.* He appears closer to Calvin's position but falls short of it. Turretin, rejected the image being perceived as man being somewhat a shadow of the Divine. He regarded Christ as the true image of the invisible God. He also rejected the image as belonging to the body or externals in which man resembles God, yet he did admit that there are, *Rays of its glittering, because man's immortality extends to the body. The image consists of gifts bestowed upon man by creation. These were not only essential or only accidental, but both at the same time: internal as well as external, by which he was placed in such a degree of nature, perfection and authority that no visible creature was either more like or closely allied to God. It consists in three things most especially: (a) In his nature; (b) rectitude of nature; (c) the happy state founded on both. Antecedently in nature (as to the spirituality and immortality of the soul); formally in rectitude or original righteousness; consequently in the dominion and immortality of the whole man (which was the brightness of that shining image and the rays striking out in all directions which illumined the whole man.*

Image and likeness are used synonymously and interchangeably in the Scriptures as the following passages reveal: Gen 1: 26, *And God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.* Gen 9: 6, *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man.* 1 Cor 11: 7, *For man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of man.* Col 3: 10, *And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.* James 3: 9, *Therewith bless we God, even, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.*

What does the image of God in man consist in? Is it lost in its entirety or are there still traces of it? If the image is restricted to true knowledge, righteousness and holiness then it is completely lost, but that view leads to insurmountable difficulties. How can passages, some of which we have quoted, continue to recognize the image of God in man after the fall? The unlawful killing of a human being is a serious crime all because it is an attack on the image of God in man. If the image is entirely lost, how then is the unlawful killing of a human being so serious a crime? Capital punishment was introduced by God after the flood, and even Christ's sacrifice did not bring about any change in this matter - it was never repealed. Even the apostle Paul refused not to die if he had done anything worthy of death. This implies that he recognized that a particular crime was punishable by death, and the fact that he was willing to comply with that if deserved, and raising no objection against this form of punishment, one can conclude that he acknowledged its continuity from the days of Noah. But if the image was lost in its entirety then this form of punishment becomes redundant.

That the image consisted in true knowledge, righteousness and holiness is not in doubt, and neither is it in doubt that all these were lost: but in addition to these, the image also belonged to the natural constitution of man, to his intellectual powers, rational and moral powers, natural affections, and the conscience. The traces left in man still represents His image. However, unaided by the help of God, man could never recover himself spiritually, and will forever otherwise remain in bondage to sin. To the body the image extends in the sense that it is the instrument by which the soul finds expression. The image is restored when the sinner is brought into union with Christ. Christ redeemed not only the soul, but the body also, and in glory the body will be spirit controlled.

Furthermore, it can be argued that when God breathed into Adam the breath of life it is said that man became a living soul. Whilst the soul can exist without the body, yet what constitutes man is incomplete until soul and body are together. It was man who was made in the image of God.

Dabney, denies that the image consisted of what was essential to man's nature, because in losing the image man would then have ceased to be. The Roman Catholics' prevailing view is that God at creation endowed man with certain natural gifts such as spirituality of soul, freedom of will, immortality of the body, and that these are natural endowments and as such constitute the natural image. However God adjusted these natural powers by placing lower powers in subordination to the higher ones and the harmony established was called natural righteousness. But there remained in man a natural tendency for the lower appetites and passions to rebel against reason and conscience. This tendency is called concupiscence which is not in itself sin, but becomes so when consented to by the will. To keep the latter in place God added original righteousness which was the likeness of God in man, but although this was lost by sin, it did not disrupt the essential nature of man. The Reformers regard the loss of original righteousness as the loss which belongs to the very nature of man in its ideal state. Whilst he did not cease to be man when it was lost, he ceased being the ideal man.

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## COVENANT OF WORKS

The Covenant of Works has also been called a Covenant of Life, a Covenant of Eden and a Covenant of Nature. The latter two were dismissed as inappropriate. Whilst it has become known as a Covenant of Works, it can also be appropriately regarded as a Covenant of Life because continuation of perfect obedience to God would have meant life to both Adam and his descendants.

It is argued that since the word covenant does not appear in the first few chapters of Genesis that there was no Covenant of Works. But this is a ludicrous assertion simply because all the elements that enter into covenant making are actually present. There is no mention of the Covenant of Works among the early Church Fathers, although references are made to some things associated with it. Augustine does refer to the relation in which Adam originally stood to God as a *testamentum pactum*. The Scholastics and the Reformers reveal all the elements associated with the Covenant. Paul draws a parallel between Adam and Christ so that Adam's state of integrity was viewed as a Covenant by him. In Bullinger's *Compendium of Christian Religion*, federal representation is evident; but it is Olivanus who is regarded as the founder of federal theology. In Scotland there was important material on this subject and amongst it was Fisher's Marrow of Modern Divinity. Kuyper and Bavinck led the way in the Netherlands.

The objection was raised that there is no promise stated in Genesis 2: 15-17, but simply a threat. It is quite inconceivable how some have no problem in identifying the threat but not the promise. Surely from the threat if disobedient one concludes, that inversely, continued obedience meant the opposite - life.

The Covenant of Works must be seen as an act of grace and condescension on God's part. Although Adam's holiness was mutable, yet that temporary perfect obedience was accepted as a ground for God to communicate Himself to him, and assuring him of communion with him. There was no mediator required in this Covenant because man was sinless and holy, and therefore no obstacle to God dealing directly with him.

There was no promise of mercy under the natural relation of man to the law, if he transgressed. The Covenant modified that situation as Dabney says: *First a temporal probation was accepted in place of an everlasting exposure to the fall under the perpetual legal demand; Second, The principle of representation was introduced by Him while the risques of probation were limited to one man acting for all instead of being indefinitely repeated forever in the conduct of each individual. Third, a reward for the probationary obedience was promised .....transferring man from the position of servitude to that of a son, and surrounding him forever with the safeguards of the divine wisdom and faithfulness, making his holiness indefectible.* (Lectures in Systematic Theology p302).

It is appropriate at this juncture to say a little on the will. The subject can be handled narrowly or broadly. Some divines confined the powers of the soul to the understanding and the will, whilst others to the intellect, sensibility and will. The former includes moral affections desires and the will, but the latter excludes them from it. To the former inclination is the principal characteristic of voluntariness, but

to the latter volition is the principal characteristic.

Kant defines the will as the faculty of desire. 'Understanding is the cognitive faculty of the soul. It comprises the intellect and the conscience and there are also the prescient and the perceptive powers. The intellect perceives what ought to be done, and the conscience commands what is to be done but they never do anything themselves. The intellect never loves or hates, neither desires nor is averse. The conscience approves or disapproves, but approbation is not love and desire, nor is disapprobation hatred and abhorrence.'

To the will then as a faculty of the soul belongs the power of self-determination, inclination, desires, the choice or rejection of moral and religious objects and ends. Because the instinctive and natural desires are vitiated and corrupted by sin they focus on the temporal and not on the eternal. It is worth noting in the passing the various Scripture terms employed in defining sin: *kardia* is used for either heart or will. It includes the inclination together with the moral desires and affections in passages such as Rom 1: 24, *Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:* Rom 10: 9 –10, *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation:* 2 Cor 9: 10, *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.* From these passages it appears that in Biblical psychology the will comprehends the heart. This being so it comprises all the moral activity of the soul which is revealed in loving, desiring, purposing and repenting besides of course inclining.

*Thelma* denotes inclination and desires, in distinction from volition, as we have it in the following passages, Matt 6:10, *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven:* Matt 7: 21, *Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven:* Rom 2: 18, *And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law.*

*Boule/Boulemai* denote volition in distinction from inclination and desire in the following passages, Lu 23: 51; Acts 18: 15; Acts 25: 22; 2 Cor 1: 15; Heb 2: 17. Jonathan Edwards viewed the inclination as the central action of the will.

In concluding these few remarks on the will before moving on to Adam as he was created in holiness, it would be appropriate to conclude with a quote from Shedd, *In saying, however, that the 'constitutional' desires are voluntary, the writer (Jonathan Edwards), abolishes the distinction commonly made between the two. The "love of children" and "the love of society" are not voluntary but natural and instinctive. They belong to the fixed constitution of man and not to his changeable will. Hence they were not reversed by the fall of man. They are not moral and responsible. They do not deserve praise and blame. They exist in the unregenerate as well as the regenerate.* (Dogmatic Theology p534)

Adam was created in a state of positive holiness - the seed of sin was not in him. 'However he was not indefectibly and immutably so. The fall of the will is possible when voluntary self-determination is both a finite and dependent power in man or angel.' When the terms of the Covenant of Works are examined, perseverance in holiness was made to depend on Adam's own decision. In the Covenant of Grace the believer's perseverance is assured when it is infallibly secured by the operation of the Holy Spirit. It is said that the *possibilitas peccandi* or, power to originate sin, belonged to Adam's will because of its finiteness, This creates a problem, because Christ's human will was finite, and does that mean that in his will as man there was the power to originate sin? **There was not the least possibility for He was ...*holy, harmless and undefiled and separate from sinners.*** However, if the power to originate sin had not been in Adam's will how could he have fallen? It follows then that the use of this power was left entirely to himself. He could have believed God and continued and persevered in holiness, or believe Satan and apostatize and lose holiness. Shedd says, that *The power to originate sin was not requisite in order to make Adam a free agent but to make him a probationary agent.* Adam's holiness was different from angels because they are kept by the power of God, and therefore there is not the least possibility that they will fall, whilst without this keeping they would. The possibility of sinning can be seen as an evil in itself. It is indeed a great mystery that one who was holy could be tempted to sin, and the mystery is even greater when the Saviour's temptations are considered.

Adam, whilst sinless, was immortal in the sense that he was not subject to the law of death. During his rectitude he was able to enjoy unhindered access to every tree of the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and this appears to have included the tree of life which was regarded as a sacramental pledge of the promised result, and this can obviously be proved from the fact that immediately he sinned, the partaking of this seal was forbidden - to have done otherwise would have been inconsistent with man's state of things. It has to be observed that the fruit of the tree of life did not produce immortality, but was instead a symbol or a pledge of it.

The Pelagians object that a state of holiness not primarily chosen by the will could not be meritorious. According to this position the soul of Christ would not have had a positive righteousness by nature. The obligation to love God was not created by positive precept only, but the fact that the creature derived everything from God besides the relation in which he stood to his creator, must also be brought into account. On the other hand it must not be overlooked that the obedience of man could never make God a debtor, because the power to do good is all of God for without Him he could not do anything.

The law of God in Adam's heart was not in the present form of the Moral Law, because in its present form it presupposes sin, but not so when he entered into Covenant. It is obvious that the negative commandment was added to bring home to Adam the seriousness of the matter.

The Arminians claim that the Covenant was wholly abrogated when Adam fell, because it would be futile to be in Covenant with fallen creatures. But the objection is based on relationship, and God's claim on the creature as binding. Every sinner in the

world is under the consequences of this broken Covenant. To obtain life through the Covenant of Works perfect personal obedience was required. Adam failed, but the consequences of the fall, and the requirements of that Covenant, rest on all human beings and are accountable to God, and cannot extricate themselves from it until the individual becomes united to Christ. In another sense Christ was under this Covenant, to work out a righteousness which would find acceptance with God, and also to remove the debt incurred. By doing both, a new way was opened up, but that is to be considered at a later stage.

As already said, Adam had a mutable will and hence the temptation was necessary to test him whether of his own free will he would continue in a state of obedience to God, or depart from it. The life promised applied to both soul and body, and by that was meant the perpetual happiness of his entire nature. There is no life out with God - it is a mere existence. But neither can any exist without God, for all his creatures are dependent on him, but only His own acknowledge this. The condition of the Covenant was a reasonable one, for Adam had power to continue to do good, and equal power to choose otherwise. But having sinned he lost the power to choose what is spiritually good, and in this area his will, and that of his posterity, went into bondage to sin.

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## MAN IN THE STATE OF SIN

### Origin of Sin

The origin of sin was not a natural or rational act but unnatural and irrational. Charnock regarded it as wilful and wanton in a high degree because it was committed in circumstances that made it easy not to commit it. Indeed Adam's temptation was much weaker than that which his posterity are faced with. He had power to continue in holiness. 'The intrinsic and inmost character of sin is its culpability. It is the product of free agency.' Some theologians explain the origin of sin as having been through the understanding, rather than the will. The tempter addressed the temptation to the understanding - ...*ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil*. But this ought to have been repelled by an act of the will. 'Free will is able to reject seeming good as well as real good, but can decide against a false judgment as well as against a true one.' Shedd says, *Adam started the wicked inclination itself ex nihilo, by a causative act of self-determination. It was an act of origination not of selection or choice. If the first sinful act were one of choice between good and evil, this would require an existing indifference toward both and the absence of inclination. But if it was a self-determining and causative act, this would be compatible with an existing holy inclination.* In regeneration there is a holy disposition or inclination originated by the Holy Spirit which expels the existing sinful disposition. In apostasy, as in Adam's case, a new sinful inclination expelled the existing holy inclination.

Anselm denominated sin *essentia* and denied that it is *substantia*. Others prefer to speak of it as habit, and indeed the unregenerate days are regarded as a time when the person sinned habitually, and that habit was not broken until he repented. Reformed theologians prefer to regard sin as a habit. If it is a *habitus* inhering in the will, and infecting the understanding, it is not 'a strict nonentity.' Turretin says, *To commit sin is not to do nothing. To do evil is to do something.* The heathen violate the unwritten law. The difference between violating it and the written law is one of degrees. Indeed none is without excuse.

This subject was not dealt with specifically by the early Church Fathers, although a little of it appears in the writings of Irenaeus. However, in the little that is said it appears that the origin of sin is identified with Adam's first transgression. This fails to recognize and tackle the problem about sin's origin. The Gnostic view, that the soul became polluted when it was brought into contact with the body, because they regarded matter as evil, would have made Adam's soul evil the moment it made contact with the body. The creation of Adam is not to be understood as first a body being created and lying lifeless until God breathed into it the breath of life. The creation of body and soul must be understood as having taken place simultaneously. Supposing sin had been contracted when soul and body were united it would add another dimension to the problem, and that is that the ethical and voluntary character of sin would be denied.

The Greek Fathers failed to give much attention to the connection between Adam's sin and that of his descendants, but the Latin Fathers were absolutely clear on this matter. The eastern Church eventually denied any vital connection between Adam's

sin and that of his descendants: but in the west Augustine's position on this subject was adhered to, that all mankind are guilty and polluted in Adam. This is the teaching of the Westminster Shorter Catechism Q/A 16; *Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression? 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.*

God cannot be regarded as the author of sin because some of the angels and mankind in Adam sinned: Deut 32: 4, *He is a rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.* Job 34: 10, *Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.* Psalm 92: 15, *To shew that the Lord is upright: he is a rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.*

It is obvious from the Scriptures that the angels fell before man, otherwise Adam and Eve could not be tempted, for no sinful creature would have existed to tempt them to evil. The creation of the angels, which we have already referred to in the lecture on creation, appears to have been within the six days, and according to Genesis 1: 31, even the angels that fell could not have sinned before the sixth day, because God viewed everything He had created and He said of it that it was very good. This statement would not have been made if by that time the angels had sinned. According to John 8: 44, Christ said of the devil that he was a murderer from the beginning. By beginning is meant the beginning of history, therefore the sinning of the angels must have taken place sometime after the sixth day, but supposing it were possible to identify the exact time when they fell, it would not in any way unravel the mystery of sin's origin.

The origin of sin in mankind is no mystery - it came through Adam's disobedience in eating of the forbidden fruit. For reasons known to God this particular tree was singled out by Him as the one used in testing Adam. It is amazing indeed that the very one created in the image of God opposed God when tempted, and responded to the dictate of his own will against God's. It is relatively easy to say that Satan sowed in Adam seeds of distrust, which is true, but this only adds to the mystery that one who was holy would for a moment contemplate the suggestion to distrust God. Although the woman sinned before Adam, yet sin could not be imputed to his descendants but through him, because he was the federal head, and the Covenant was made with him and his posterity in him. By that one act communion with God was immediately severed, the image was lost partially or in its entirety, depending on the definition of the image of God in man that is accepted. The curse rested on Adam and all his posterity by ordinary generation. It is vitally important always to stress the word, ordinary, in this connection.

Some of course regard the narrative of the work of creation, and the sin of our first parents as an allegory: and others, among them Barth regard it as a myth, and that attributing speech to the serpent to be nothing more than figurative language.

There are a number of different words for sin in the Scriptures. The following are just

some examples that might be of help, with the meaning attached to each: *chetta'th* – to miss the mark, because there is a derivation from the right way; *Avil* - want of integrity and rectitude, and departure from the way appointed; *Pescha* - revolting and refusing to submit to authority; *Resha* - a wicked departing from law; *ma'al* - *treason*. Sin includes guilt and pollution, guilt being the state that deserves condemnation and expresses the relation sin bears to justice.

The Roman Catholic view of sin, according to the Council of Trent, is that real sin is a conscious act of the will. Whilst accepting that disposition and habit are contrary to the will of God, and are of a sinful character, yet fail to call them sin in the strict sense of the term. According to them the indwelling concupiscence which lies behind sin overcame man in paradise, and this explains the loss of original righteousness, which is not regarded by them as sin but the fruit of it. The sinfulness of Adam's descendants is only a negative condition consisting of the absence of something that ought to be present, and identified as original righteousness, which is not essential to human nature. It is just what was superabundantly added to man's natural constitution, whose loss took nothing away from his nature. This is contrary to the Reformed position. Turretin calls potential guilt the intrinsic ill desert of an act or state. Actual guilt is obligation to punishment. *Guilt thus defined is obviously not of the essence of sin but is a relation viz to the penal sanction of the law. For if we suppose no penal sanction attached to the disregard of moral relations, guilt would not exist though there was sin.*

Pelagians did not regard Adam's fall as directly affecting his posterity. According to them, infants are born in the same state as Adam was prior to sinning - a state of innocence, but not of positive righteousness. Therefore there was no federal transaction, and no imputation and hence no propagation or inherited depravity.

Though man's depravity is total it does not mean that conscience is destroyed. The Westminster Confession of Faith states that Adam became wholly defiled in all his faculties and parts of soul and body, yet conscience remains. According to Dabney, the seat of this moral *habitus* is strictly speaking in the moral propensities, and since these give active direction to all the faculties it is right to say that they are morally defiled. The memory became a store of corrupt images.

There is opposition to God from childhood. The Pelagian view that the infant is in a state of innocence when born, similar to Adam's before the fall, is totally unscriptural. David confesses to having contracted guilt in the womb, because God imputes sin to all of Adam's posterity, even from the womb. The view a person holds on original sin will determine his system of theology in its entirety. If he believes in total depravity and federal representation he will also hold to supernatural regeneration, unconditional election, the two natures of Christ, the need for an atonement for sin, the personality of the Holy Spirit and perseverance of the saint. If on the other hand a person embraces a position similar to the Pelagians then repentance, faith and all the essential graces will all be traced to the human will as their source.

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## TRANSMISSION OF SIN

### **The Universality of Sin**

The universality of sin does not need to be proved - it is too obvious at any level of society, among all kinds of people and in all nations, and can be seen at every stage of development in the history of the human being. It is evident in the role of the conscience in accusing the offender of wrongdoing, and equally so in the vain attempts among the heathen in the past in making some atonement to their gods, thereby acknowledging that their conduct was offensive.

The following passages from the Scriptures are only a few among many that could be quoted, state that sin is universal: Ps 51: 8, *Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*; Ps 143: 2, *And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified*; Ecc 7: 20, *For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not*; John 3: 6, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*; Gal 3: 22, *But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe*; Eph 2: 3, *Among whom also we had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others*.

### **Connection of Adam's Sin with Mankind**

The denial by Pelagians and Socinians that there is a connection between Adam's sin and his posterity is emphatic. The most they are prepared to concede is that Adam's evil example led to imitation of the sinful life that he lived after the fall. The earlier Arminians admit that mankind inherited an inability from Adam, but that they were not responsible for that inability.

The **Realistic Theory** is the earliest attempt to explain the transmission of sin to Adam's posterity. According to this theory human nature constitutes not only generically but also numerically a single unit. Adam possessed the whole human nature, and in him it became completely corrupt by his own voluntary disobedience to the command God gave him, and thus sinned against Him. Hence this universal nature became corrupt and guilty in Adam. By this theory all sinned in Adam before the individualization of mankind. It was received by the early Church Fathers, the Scholastics, and nearer our time, by Shedd.

What objections can be raised? First, according to it, souls would have to be regarded as a general spiritual substance in Adam, and that would imply that the substance of soul is of a material nature. Second, it fails to protect personality. Every individual is conscious of being a separate personality. Third, it fails to explain why mankind are held responsible for Adam's first sin only, and not for the rest of his sins, which one would expect according to this theory. Fourth, it fails to explain how Christ's human nature was not held responsible along with the rest of mankind, because His human nature, sin excepted, was the same as the rest of mankind, and the nature that sinned in Adam, and hence He had to contend with all the infirmities which sin brought into it.

### **The Covenant of Works Theory**

The other explanation for the transmission of sin is that it came through the Covenant of Works, because of a twofold relationship as natural head, and as representative head. In his natural relationship Adam was the father of mankind - he and Eve are frequently referred to as our first parents. If he sinned he would become subject to corruption and be punished for it, but the sin would remain his alone and could not be put to the account of his posterity. This does not make much sense. But to the natural relationship God added a covenant relationship and this is what accounts for the element of representation thus making him, not only a natural, but also a federal head. In this federal relationship a probationary period was required which had a fixed time limit the outcome of which, depending on Adam's behaviour, would result in either a permanent state of holiness, or one of punishment. This explains why only Adam's first sin corrupted the human race, and not all of his sins.

### **The Theory of Mediate Imputation**

This theory denies that the guilt of Adam's first sin is directly imputed. Corruption is said to be derived by natural generation, and only in the inherent depravity they share with Adam are they considered guilty. They are not born corrupt because they are guilty, but they are considered guilty because they are corrupt, and therefore their legal status is based on their condition. This theory fails to provide any objective ground for the transmission of Adam's guilt and depravity to all his descendants by ordinary generation.

### **The Westminster Confession of Faith**

According to A. A. Hodge in commenting on the relevant section of the Confession of Faith regarding this subject, by the word guilt is not meant the personal disposition which prompted the act, nor the personal moral pollution which resulted from it, but simply the just liability to the punishment which sin deserved. In Chapter 6 and section 3 and 4 of the Confession of Faith it states: *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. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.*

To impute, whether it be sin or righteousness, implies to lay to ones charge or credit as a ground of judicial punishment or justification. It is in this sense that it is used in the Scriptures. The first Adam imputes sin to all his descendants by ordinary generation, and the last Adam imputes righteousness to all who believe. Righteousness was imputed to Abraham because he believed - believing was not the ground of his justification but rather its instrumental cause. *The guilt of Adam's first sin consists of the want of original righteousness, corruption of the whole nature which is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.* The Articles of the Synod of Dort affirm that moral depravity is inflicted upon all Adam's descendants at birth, by the just judgment of God. But David goes a step further back and acknowledges that it was not at birth but within

the womb that sin was contracted: Ps 51: 5,.....*in sin did my mother conceive me.*

## **SIN IN THE LIFE OF THE HUMAN RACE**

### **Historically**

The early Church Fathers did not say anything definite on this subject, but the Greek Fathers did refer to a physical corruption in the human race derived from Adam. This physical corruption did not involve sin, nor guilt, and neither did it interfere with the freedom of the will directly, but only indirectly. Pelagianism eventually took over, and denied emphatically all original sin. In the Latin church, Tertullian maintained that the propagation of souls induced the propagation of sin and thus original sin is hereditary but only in the sense that sinful taints which exclude some good, is sin.

It was Augustine who brought the doctrine of original sin forward, and taught that the nature of man both physical and moral is corrupted by sin and cannot do otherwise but sin. This original sin is a moral punishment for Adam's sin. Anselm's view was in harmony with that of Augustine's, and the Reformers accepted the latter's position. Calvin however differed from Augustine stressing that original sin is not something purely negative, and is not limited to the sensuous nature of man.

### **Two Elements of Original Sin**

Guilt implies the relation sin bears to justice, and hence the guilty stand in penal relation to the law. Turretin said of guilt that there is a potential guilt which is the intrinsic moral ill desert of an act or state. This attaches permanently to sinful deeds which cannot be removed by forgiveness or justification. Man's sins remain inherently ill deserving even after he is justified; but guilt can be transferred from one to another through satisfaction. Original pollution implies absence of original righteousness, and the presence of positive evil. To original pollution guilt is attached. The Manichaeans claimed that corruption is a substance infused into the soul, but if this were true the substance of the soul would need to be replaced when the person is regenerated. The substance of the soul did not undergo a change. Original sin then is not merely a negative but is also an inherent positive disposition towards sin. Inherited pollution pervades every area of our being and is rightly called total depravity. Care has to be exercised when reference is made to this subject. It does not mean that the person is as depraved as he can be, for if that were true then a person would not be capable of waxing stronger and stronger in sin. Total implies that every aspect of human nature has been affected by it. Unregenerate man is not capable of doing anything that is spiritually good. John 5: 42, *But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you;* Rom 7: 18 - 23, *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.* 2 Tim 3: 2 - 4, *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers,*

*incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded,*

*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.*

Are we to understand by total depravity the total inability to do any good? It would be wrong to claim that man in a fallen state is incapable of doing good, but one has to be specific about what is meant by good. He is able to perform natural good, civil righteousness and at least externally, religious good. Life on earth would be unbearable if people were totally incapable of showing kindness and doing good to one another; if civil obedience did not exist, and everyone became a law unto himself, and crime was the norm. Religiously, many show respect for the church and what it represents, attend services, are financially supportive and observe the Sabbath day, to mention but a few examples of the good fallen man is still capable of doing. At a later stage when dealing with common grace this subject will be expanded on and the reality of what is said here will be apparent. However, he is totally unable to do what is spiritually good, or any act that meets God's approval and answers to the demands of His holy law, and make the glory of God the principal end of what he does. His natural propensity is toward sin and all that is carnal.

Jonathan Edwards drew a distinction between natural and moral good. Man in a corrupt state is still in possession of all the natural faculties that are required for doing spiritual good, but lacks the moral ability. But corruption of sin has brought the will into bondage and is incapable of doing anything that is spiritually good. Corrupt man is oblivious of his total depravity which has affected all his faculties, and therefore it is not as simplistic as limiting the effects of original sin to moral inability.

### **Original Sin and Human Freedom**

Is total depravity so extensive that the will is completely denied any freedom? If this were so, then the good which man is capable of doing, which we have made a few remarks about, would not be possible. It would also denude man of being responsible for his actions. The will continues to have freedom, but what is the nature of that freedom and how extensive is it? There is liberty which is absolutely essential to a free agent. It has to be borne in mind that the fall did not remove any constitutional faculties that constitute him a free agent - the conscience, reason, ability to acquire knowledge and the freedom of choice are all there. He has lost the freedom of choosing what is spiritually good, and the ability to do what is according to the preceptive will of God, so that the bondage of the will is in this connection. To modern liberalism the idea of the will being in bondage is absolutely reprehensible. There are objections raised to the doctrine of total depravity. First, that it is inconsistent with moral obligation, and therefore that a man cannot be held justly responsible for anything for which he has not the required ability. Second, that it leads to fatalism - that there is no point in using means, and no point in trying to accomplish a particular end if it cannot be done. Third, that it encourages delay in conversion - the person waits passively. The fact is that Adam is the one responsible for original sin which brought among other things inability to choose the spiritual good, thus leaving man answerable to God for even his inability. It is intriguing the use people make of means in every other area of life - the persistent pain must be investigated and so the doctor is approached, but when it comes to using means in

the spiritual realm there is in many instances a fatalistic attitude evident and a passive

waiting.

### **The Unpardonable Sin**

Christ spoke of this sin in Matt 12: 31, 32, *Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.* The passages in Heb 6: 4-6 are also referred to as dealing with the unpardonable sin. This however is hardly so, for what is being emphasized there is the dire consequence of abandoning the gospel privileges and forsaking the means of grace appointed by God and returning to Judaism. That situation is not much different from the consequences of being brought up where gospel ordinances abound but the person despises and neglects them.

What is the unpardonable sin? No one is competent to answer this question with absolute certainty. Jerome and Chrysostom were of the view that it is the sin that could only be committed when Christ was on earth, in that the miracles were performed through the Holy Ghost, and yet that his enemies ascribed them to Satan. Augustine, Guthrie and Chalmers believed that it was impenitence persisted in to the end of life in this world. It appears from the emphasis Christ placed on it that it is some specific sin. We know from Eph 4: 30, that there is a sin against the Holy Spirit that is pardonable - grieving the Holy Spirit, and in 1 Thess 5: 19, a quenching of the Spirit. The unpardonable sin appears to be the malice, and wilful rejection and slandering against the testimony of the Holy Spirit, respecting the grace of God in Christ. His malicious foes attributed it out of hate and this was done contrary to the conviction of the mind, to illumination, and the verdict of the heart. They attributed to Satan what was clearly the work of the Holy Spirit. This kind of Spirit can be shown in any generation and therefore this sin must not be restricted to the time of Christ's humiliation, and especially the manner in which his enemies dealt with Him.

### **The Punishment of Sin**

In Chapter 6 and Section 6 of the Confession of Faith, it is stated, *Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death with all miseries spiritual, temporal and eternal.* Sin is a heinous attack on the authority, righteousness and holiness of God, and a revolt against Him as the Lawgiver. Every sin in thought, word and deed is committed in the first place against God. That is the order in which David placed this matter in Ps 51: 4, *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.* David had sinned against others, but was first and foremost accountable to God. It is to the One against whom we have ultimately sinned that we are to come with our confessions and the earnest desire to be pardoned, and He alone is able to forgive.

It is argued that sin carries its own punishment, which is true. The respectable law

abiding, hardworking, faithful husband and loving father, will reap fruit which will be distinct from the experiences of the habitual gambler, drunkard, violent and unfaithful husband, and cruel father. In the case of the latter there will be miseries for himself and his family that will, in some cases at least, commensurate with his lifestyle. Furthermore, it does not follow that pardon and justification can remedy some aspects of the consequences of a morally reckless life. If on account of the life the person lived he lost an eye, or a limb, the new life in Christ is not going to restore an eye or limb. However God in His sovereignty can overrule in such a way that such disabilities can be turned into a blessing.

There is also positive punishment attached to transgression. A few examples from both the Old Testament and the New Testament will suffice. Under the Ceremonial Law the adulterer and adulteress, the Sabbath breaker and one guilty of witchcraft knew in advance of their committing these sins that the punishment would be death. It is also evident in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah that God's judgment came upon them. In the New Testament there are a number of instances such as Judas Iscariot committing suicide; Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-10) in lying to the Holy Spirit were struck dead; Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13: 8-11) was struck with blindness; and King Herod (Acts 12: 21-23) was smitten by the angel of the Lord and died. On the other hand, regarding the person who was born blind it was the belief of the people that this was the consequence of the sin of one or both of the parents. Christ refuted this and reminded them that those who were killed, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, were not killed because they were more sinful than others. However, it would be completely unscriptural to dismiss any connection between some calamities, or even what happens to an individual, and the judgment of God. Indeed, the Lord's longsuffering is absolutely amazing: *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.* Lamentations 3: 22-23. Sin will be punished everlastingly in hell.

Punishment is a debt due to the essential justice of God. Too often punishment is viewed as vengeance. That vengeance belongs to God and not to man is true, but God at all times acts according to justice even when eventually righteous judgment falls on His enemies. Turretin said, *If there be such an attribute as justice belonging to God, then sin must have its due which is punishment. Justice requires the punishment of the transgressor.*

God's holiness reacts against sin, and the consequence is punishment. There were those who were of the view that punishment was only meant to reform the sinner, and therefore that anger was not present but love. Indeed there is a great deal of preaching at the present time, and from it one would conclude that sin, justice, and God's anger are irrelevant and an anachronism, and what matters is that God loves you. They fail miserably to distinguish between the love of benevolence and that of complacency. They are also guilty of belittling the seriousness of sin, and how detestable it is to an infinitely holy God; and that God is angry with the sinner until he repents and resorts by faith to Him who by his sacrifice expiated sin and propitiated God, and failing to do so the wrath of God will abide upon him. God can indeed reform the life of a person through punishment, but punishment can never change a person to being a new

creature in Christ Jesus. That God is angry with the sinner is stated in many passages,

of which the following are only a few examples: Ps 5: 5, *The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity*; Nah 1: 2, *God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies*; Rom 1: 18, *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness*; Heb 10: 26-27, *For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries*.

There is yet another theory regarding punishment, that its function is to be a deterrent. It would be unrealistic to think that when the people saw what befell Achan and his family, that it would not cause them to be afraid of the punishment God can inflict on the wrongdoer. However, it must not be understood as the ground for inflicting penalty. There is no justice in punishing the individual solely for the good of society. The punishment Adam was threatened with, and which was eventually executed, was death, and that death can be summed up as separation from God. There have been those who regarded physical death as a natural consequence of man's constitution, and that this would have happened even if man had not sinned. The Scriptures are abundantly clear on this point, that death was the result of sin, and therefore if man had not sinned he and the entire human race would have lived forever: Rom 5: 12, *Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed on all men, for all have sinned*; Rom 6: 23, *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*. Separation from God meant immediate spiritual death. This is present in the conscience as a constant reminder - guilt and the fear of punishment - because by nature we are both unrighteous and unholy. Communion with God was thus severed the moment Adam sinned.

Another consequence is the present suffering in this life. All manner of suffering is caused by sin entering into the experience of mankind. God's people are not exempt from suffering just because their sins are pardoned and they are justified by faith. Their suffering, with the blessing of God, will be turned to their advantage, indeed all things work together for their good, so that with the Psalmist they are able to say, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes*. Psalm 119: 71.

There is also the physical death. When God's threat of death to Adam is referred to, it is more often perceived of as the physical rather than the spiritual death - the former is a consequence of the latter. The physical death can be defined as the separation of soul from the body until the physical resurrection of the body.

Finally, and more fearfully, is the eternal death which some regard as the completion of the spiritual death, when God's goodness and all temporal benefits are withdrawn forever -in the case of the reprobates - and the full wrath of an angry God is poured out on them, and they will be shut in hell forever, where ....*their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched*. The sufferings and death of Christ, and the eternal suffering in hell of those lost, solemnly remind us of how serious sin is. If sin could have been

atoned for some other way God would not have subjected His Son to the woe He

endured.

