

The First and Last Adams
“The Imputation of Adam’s Sin”

I Introduction / Review

- A. The Administration of God’s Justice: Investigated the question raised by I Cor 15:22: How can the moral actions of someone else count either for or against my moral and spiritual standing with God? → Moral Government strictly individualistic, or modified by a principle of representation.
- B. What biblical concept or idea establishes the ground or framework for the Adam / Christ representation? What is the Basis of Adam’s Representation.
1. Divine choice
 2. Headship of Human Race Is a Reality – what is it essentially?
 - 1) Natural headship – biological unity of human race - Acts 17:26. But this is insufficient for Adam to act as our representative. Note Eze 18:20 disallows mere biological headship as a basis for implicating another in one’s sin and guilt.
 - 2) Legal Headship is necessary – so that the moral implications of Adam’s representation may be legally and justly charged against those Adam represents.
 - 3) Typological relationship to Christ. Christ’s headship of the Redeemed is by virtue of covenant bond. The essence of our union with Christ is covenantal union. This union provides the legal framework for the Representation of Christ. By typological reasoning, we may infer such a covenantal headship with Adam.
 - 4) Hosea 6:7 – textual support for the covenantal union.
- Possible interpretations:
- “At Adam” – a place name – but totally unknown as a place of covenant breaking by Israel.
 - “Like men” – seems odd. Since only people can break covenants, why have a comparison of Israel and Judah breaking the covenant, and saying “like men they have broken the covenant” – for how else could they break the covenant?
 - “Like Adam” – to compare Israel and Judah’s rebellion and sin to Adam’s original sin makes sense.
 - The word “covenant” isn’t used in Genesis Three. Moses doesn’t use the term until it actually was used in human history – with Noah. The idea is there, nonetheless.

Summary: God’s own administration of justice has been modified with respect to the human race by the principle of Representation. This is why the moral actions of Adam, in his role as representative, involve the standing of the whole human race before God. Further the biblical relationship that involves the whole human race with Adam in his representative role is that of covenantal union. Adam is the original covenantal head of the human race, by God’s choice.

II The Imputation of Adam’s Sin – Analysis of Romans 5:12-19.

- A. Three-fold consequences of Adam’s sin:
1. Penalty (death to all men) – vs 12,15.
 2. Guilt (condemnation to all men) vs 16,18.
 3. Depravity (corruption to all men) vs 19.
- B. The Unique Constitution of Adam’s Sin
Thesis: The “all sinned” of vs 12 is to be understood as “all sinned in Adam”.
Reasons:

1. The universal reign of death of vs 12 is based on the fact that “all sinned.” *“death came to all men because all sinned”*
2. With equal clearness, vs 15-19 assert that the universal reign of death (and condemnation and corruption) is based on the one sin of the one man Adam.
Vs 15 – the many died by the trespass of the one man
Vs 16 – the judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation
Vs 17 – by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man
Vs 18 – the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men
Vs 19 – through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners
3. Both the “all sinned” of vs 12 and the sin of the one man Adam refer to the same fact, and not to different circumstances.
4. Consequently: this one event can be expressed in terms of singularity or plurality, as the sin of the one man Adam, or as the sin of all men. The only solution is to recognize some kind of solidarity between the one and the all. The formula “in Adam all sinned” (which parallels “In Adam all died” – I Cor 15:22), expresses this relationship and solidarity with precision. (Cf. Murray, Romans.)

III The Solidaric Relationship – Realistic or Representative in Nature?

Realistic View: the whole race of mankind was organically and seminally in Adam, the total life of humanity was then in Adam, the race only had its existence in him; its essence was not yet individualized, its forces not yet distributed, the powers which now exist in separate men were then unified and localized in Adam; Adam’s will was yet the will of the species; in Adam’s free act the will of the race revolted from and the nature of the race corrupted itself. Adam’s sin is imputed to us immediately, because it is our sin, too, for all men existed as one moral person in Adam.

Problems with Realistic View: 1) Chiefly there would be a disanalogy between the union believers have with Christ and mankind with Adam. There is no “realistic” union between Christ and the redeemed. 2) Scripture doesn’t provide any basis for the idea that the essence of all human nature was in Adam in an unindividualized form, specifically and numerically one. 3) Since Eve was an individual co-acting with Adam, and so the total sum of humanity was not contained in Adam, how is she accounted for on a realist’s grounds?

Representative Headship: Adam was the covenantal head of the human race, its legal representative, whereby God tested the human race representatively.

- Natural headship of Adam – biological head of the race.
- Natural organic unity of the race from Adam
 - This organic unity does not mean we have to see the human race as numerically and specifically one in Adam
- Representative headship of Adam is by God’s design and choice, something over and above the natural properties of human nature.
- The union of Adam and all mankind is covenantal – by God’s design and choice.

IV The Reality of Original Sin: Thus - besides being the natural head of the human race, Adam was the representative head. He acted representatively for us all, in the Edenic probation of the human race. By his fall, the guilt of his trespass is imputed to all mankind, and the corruption of his nature inherited by all. Thus each person, from conception on is imputed with Adam’s guilt, and is an heir of his corruption. Thus no one is born morally pure, but rather guilty and corrupt. The condemnation of us all is two-fold: original sin and actual sin.