

Studies in the Westminster Confession of Faith

Newtownabbey Free Presbyterian Church

Rev Brian McClung

14th September 2016

Chapter 6 Part 6

Romans 5:12-21

Chapter 6 - The Fall, Sin, and its Punishment.

Section III: They [ie. Adam & Eve] being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed,⁽⁶⁾ and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generations.⁽⁷⁾

Section IV: From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good,⁽⁸⁾ and wholly inclined to all evil,⁽⁹⁾ do proceed all actual transgressions.⁽¹⁰⁾

Scripture Proof Texts: (6) *Genesis 1:27,28; 2:16,17; Acts 17:26; Romans 5:12, 15-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21,22,45,49;* (7) *Psalms 51:5; Genesis 5:3; Job 14:4; 15:14;* (8) *Romans 5:6; 8:7; 7:18; Colossians 1:21;* (9) *Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Romans 3:10-12.* (10) *James 1:14,15; Ephesians 2:2,3; Matthew 15:19.*

These sections point out the consequences of the sin of Adam and Eve in regard to all their descendants. There is an important qualification included in section three. These consequences are restricted to those ‘*descending from them by ordinary generation.*’ This restriction is obviously introduced to exclude our Lord Jesus Christ, who, as man, was, according to His flesh, one of the descendants of Adam, but did not descend from him by *ordinary generation.* While the genealogy of Christ is traceable back to Adam, cf. *Luke 3:38*, His human nature was supernaturally safeguarded from any taint of sin, by the power of the Holy Ghost. In His birth, therefore, as well as in His life, Christ Jesus was *holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners, Hebrews 7:26.*

This section deals with the consequences of the Fall upon Adam’s descendants. This brings us to consider the important subject of Original Sin. The following five propositions are here taught:

1. Adam was both the natural and federal head of all mankind, descending by ordinary generation.
2. By virtue of this federal headship the guilt of Adam’s sin is imputed to all his descendants, and the penalty is also passes upon them.
3. As the guilt of Adam’s sin is charged to all his natural descendants, by virtue of this federal headship, so then the same moral corruption which followed in our first parents must, from their birth, follow all their descendants also.
4. All Adam’s descendants are therefore by ordinary generation are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil.
5. From this original corruption of nature proceed all actual transgressions.

1. Adam was both the natural and federal head of all mankind, descending by ordinary generation. This is a fundamentally important truth in seeking to understand the imputation of guilt and corruption to the human race. In God’s all wise purpose He constituted Adam a federal head and dealt with him as the moral representative of all his natural descendants. This truth is clearly emphasised in the Westminster Standards. For example in the answer to the Larger Catechism, question 22 it states: *The covenant being made with Adam as a public person, not for himself only, but for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.* Again in the answer to Shorter Catechism, question 16 it states: *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.*

[1] That Adam was ‘*a public person*’, can be proved from the following observations:

1) He was called by a generic name. He was called Adam, ie. *the man*. This name is associated with the ground. He is made from the clay. This word is also associated with the colour red. The clay from which Adam was made was reddish/brown in colour.

Quite often in the original language the word 'Adam' has the definite article attached to it. It could literally read: '*the man*', cf. *Genesis 2:15,16,18,19,20,22,23,25*.

2) Everything that God commanded, promised, or directed at Adam, also related to his descendants as much as to himself personally. Thus references to obedience, a cursed earth, the reign of death, painful child-bearing, and the subsequent promise of redemption through the Seed of the woman, were spoken with reference to his descendants as much as with reference to Adam and Eve.

3) The penalty denounced and executed upon Adam has also been executed upon all of his descendants. All are born spiritually dead, all will die physically, all are *by nature the children of wrath, Ephesians 2:2*.

4) The Lord Jesus Christ, in His representative nature, is likened unto Adam, cf. *1 Corinthians 15:45,47: And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven*. There were other men before and after Jesus Christ. This is only explainable if we see both Adam and Jesus Christ as representative men.

[2] God in His eternal purpose determined to make our character and destiny to depend upon the conduct of the first man Adam in his probation because:

1) As sovereign Creator, infinitely wise, righteous, merciful, and the Guardian of the interests of all His creatures, it seemed right in His eyes. Who are we to question an all wise God!

2) To constitute Adam as a representative man was necessary because the creature was not created/born all at once but in successive generations. Each individual, apart from the first adult man and woman would come into existence an unintelligent infant, from thence to develop gradually into moral agency and accountability. There were only three possibilities:

- a) The whole race must be confirmed in holiness and happiness without any period of probation;
- b) Each individual must face their own probation while groping their way from infancy into childhood;
- c) Or the whole race must have their trial in their natural head and root, Adam.

3) It was more to mankind's advantage than any other plan that can be imagined. Adam was most advantageously constituted and circumstanced in order that he should stand the trial safely. Incalculable benefits as well as risks hinged upon his action. If he had maintained his integrity for a limited period, all his race would have been born with an incontestable claim to eternal glory.

4) The covenant headship of Adam is part of a glorious constitution which culminates in the covenant headship of Jesus Christ. God foresaw the cross. He foresaw the means whereby sinners would be saved. It would be through the second man, the last Adam, representing His people in the Covenant of Grace.

We are not in a position to judge the propriety of the first of these possibilities, but we can easily see that the third is incomparably more rational, righteous, and merciful than the second.

Therefore, Adam's obedience would have been our obedience and we too would have reaped the blessings but also Adam's disobedience is our disobedience and we too will reap the consequences.