

THE RESURRECTION OF A FRENCH HERESY: JOSHUA DE LA PLACE'S DENIAL OF THE IMMEDIATE IMPUTATION OF ADAM'S SIN TO HIS POSTERITY (2)

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IV. The Reformed Dogma of Original Sin

We have seen that the Roman Church, against which Calvin and the other Reformers contended, downplayed man's original corruption while confessing the imputation of Adam's sin. The Reformed do not espouse the theory of Realism but teach Federalism, that Adam was the legal or federal or representative head of all mankind.

Federalism is the teaching that God appointed Adam to be our representative in the Garden. The guilt of his sin is imputed or legally reckoned to our account, although we did not actually take the forbidden fruit with our own hands and eat it with our own mouths. Thornwell writes, "If Adam were the agent of us all, his act was legally and morally ours."¹ Norman Geisler, although not Reformed, is correct when he describes the situation with Adam as follows:

As our legal representative Adam sinned on our behalf and we received the legal consequences of his choice. In other words, Adam had the God-given power of attorney for the whole human race, and when he exercised it for ill the consequences of his sin were directly imputed to all of his posterity.²

Calvin's doctrine of original sin is not refined. William Cunningham writes, "The first Reformers did not speculate very largely or minutely upon the

¹ James Henley Thornwell, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner, 1974), p. 345.

² Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2004), p. 124. Geisler is an Arminian and, in fact, teaches the error that Christ, the Second Adam "revoked what Adam did, making every human being legally and potentially savable" (p. 125).

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more abstract questions directly comprehended under the subject of original sin.”³ Berkhof concedes that “the ideas of Adam as the representative of the human race and of the immediate imputation of his guilt to his descendants are not clearly expressed in their [i.e., the Reformers’] works.”⁴ Yet he calls De La Place’s view “something new in Reformed theology.”⁵ Bearing this in mind, we consider Calvin’s teaching in his *Commentary on Romans* and in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

Concerning Romans 5:12, Calvin writes against those “who contend, that we are so lost through Adam’s sin, as though we perished through no fault of our own, but only, because he had sinned for us.”⁶ Notice that Calvin does not deny that we are guilty of Adam’s sin, merely that that is the *only* ground of our guilt. We are guilty, writes Calvin, of both Adam’s sin and our own sins. Calvin’s interpretation of the verb “sinned” (in the aorist) in Romans 5:12 is unsatisfactory. He interprets it thus: “But to sin in this case, is to become corrupt ... we have all sinned; for we are all imbued with natural corruption, and so are become sinful and wicked.”⁷ Yet, at the same time, Calvin denies that the sin referred to is “actual sin,” “for if every one for himself contracted guilt, why did Paul form a comparison between Adam and Christ? It follows that our innate and hereditary depravity is what is here referred to.”⁸ Later Calvin teaches that Adam’s imputed sin is not the only ground of our guilt and condemnation before God—our hereditary sinful flesh is also a ground:

When he says, *by the offence of one, &c.*, understand him as meaning this,—that corruption has from him descended to us: for we perish not through his fault, as though we were blameless; but as his sin is the cause of our sin, Paul ascribes to him our ruin: our sin I call that which is implanted in us, and with which we are born.⁹

³ William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, vol. 1 (London, England: Banner, repr. 1969), p. 500.

⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner, repr. 2003), p. 238.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), p. 200.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

Again Calvin writes, stressing the fact that not by Adam's sin alone (imputed to us) do we die:

... by Adam's sin we are not condemned through imputation *alone*, as though we were punished *only* for the sin of another; but we suffer his punishment, because we also ourselves are guilty; for as our nature is vitiated in him, it is regarded by God as having committed sin.¹⁰

Calvin also writes on verse 19,

... we are guilty through the offence of one man, in such a manner as not to be ourselves innocent. He had said before, that we are condemned; but that no one might claim for himself innocency, he also subjoined, that every one is condemned because he is a sinner.¹¹

Later, we shall offer an exegesis of this crucial passage but suffice it to say at this point that Calvin's exegesis does not do justice to the aorist in verse 12, to the "one" sin throughout the passage or to the parallel between Adam and Christ. The editor of Calvin's commentaries writes that Calvin "explains this in a way that is not altogether consistent."¹² John Murray agrees. Calvin's exegesis, he writes, "is exegetically speaking similar to that of Rome," and adds, "while Calvin's view of original sin is thoroughly Pauline and biblical, yet, exegetically, he has not been successful in analysing the precise thought of the apostle in this passage."¹³ Martyn Lloyd-Jones is sharply critical of Calvin's view. Although he offers no reference from Calvin's works, he writes the following:

He says that all sinned means that all have sinned in the sense that all are sinful ... What about this explanation? I am afraid that we have to say that we cannot accept it in spite of John Calvin! We must not turn him into a pope!¹⁴

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 210; italics mine.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 202, n. 1.

¹³ Murray, *Imputation*, p. 18.

¹⁴ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter Five: Assurance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, repr. 1977), p. 205.

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Jenkins notices this and remarks in his apology for De La Place:

Inherent within this typically forthright appraisal is the tacit acceptance that the designation “Calvinist” should only be applied to that method of imputation described and advocated by De La Place. And one can only wonder why so few that own the name of Calvin are willing to accept the implications of Dr. Lloyd-Jones’ analysis.¹⁵

A few remarks can be made in Calvin’s defence. First, Calvin wrote this commentary in 1539, when he was just thirty years old. Second, Calvin did not develop the doctrine of the imputation of Adam’s sin because it was not a disputed point in his day. To try to find in Calvin a solution to the “mediate” versus “immediate” imputation debate is anachronistic. He never faced the issue. We could also add that to be a Calvinist does not mean to agree with Calvin’s exegesis on every point, but to confess the system of doctrine set forth in the Reformed Confessions (especially the *Canons of Dordt*) as a faithful summary of the Word of God. In his *Institutes*, Calvin does not address the issue either. He aims his polemical pen against the Pelagians who “chatter” that “Adam’s sin was propagated by imitation.” If the Pelagians are correct, exclaims Calvin, “then does Christ’s righteousness benefit us only as an example as set before us to imitate? Who can bear such sacrilege!”¹⁶ In the *Institutes*, Calvin makes little if anything of the imputation of Adam’s sin to all his posterity. Instead, Calvin concentrates on the propagation of a sinful nature. He writes,

Adam, by sinning, not only took upon himself misfortune and ruin but also plunged our nature into like destruction. This was not due to the guilt of himself alone, *which would not pertain to us at all*, but was because he infected all his posterity with that corruption into which he had fallen.¹⁷

It is not clear what Calvin means by that highlighted phrase. Does he mean that the guilt of Adam’s sin does not pertain to us and that we are therefore

¹⁵ Jenkins, *Saumur Redux*, p. 28; italics Jenkins’.

¹⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (USA & GB: The Westminster Press and S. C. M. Press, 1960), 2.1.6, p. 248.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.1.6, p. 249; italics mine.

not guilty of the sin of Adam at all? If he does mean that, we cannot agree with Calvin on this point.

Later in the same chapter, when discoursing on the transmission of original sin, Calvin writes, "It had been so ordained by God that the first man should at one and the same time have and lose, both for himself and for his descendants, the gifts that God had bestowed upon him."¹⁸ Again, not clearly distinguishing between original guilt and original pollution, as later writers have done, he writes,

For, since it is said that we became subject to God's judgment through Adam's sin, we are to understand it not as if we, guiltless and undeserving, bore the guilt of his offence but in the sense that, since we through his transgression have become entangled in the curse, he is said to have made us guilty. Yet *not only has punishment fallen upon us from Adam*, but a contagion imparted by him resides in us, which justly deserves punishment.¹⁹

Does Calvin mean here that we are guilty on account of Adam's sin in addition to the sin which resides in our own totally depraved natures? "Entangled in the curse" is not a precise theological description, but whatever he means by this, does he intimate that it has made us guilty before the "contagion" is imparted to us? In addition, Calvin writes that infants "carry their condemnation along with them" but that "they are not guilty of another's fault but their own" and their nature is "rightly considered sin in God's sight, for without guilt there would be no accusation."²⁰

Turretin writes concerning Calvin,

He does not mention imputation whenever he speaks of original sin, either because it had not yet been called into controversy or because he disputed against Albert Pighius ... where he was not to labor in proving imputation (which

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.1.7, p. 250.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.1.8, p. 251; italics mine.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

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alone the adversaries acknowledged) but only in asserting inherent corruption.²¹

He then quotes Calvin in several places, where Calvin teaches that the judicial ground of our being born totally depraved is the prior fault of Adam: “We say that God *by a just judgment* cursed us in Adam and *willed us to be born corrupt on account of his sin;*” “*one sinned; all are led to punishment;* nor is that all, but from the sin of this one, all have contracted contagion so that they are born corrupt;” “we are liable not only to temporal miseries but to eternal death, also [unless because] *on account of the guilt of one man,* God cast us together into a common guilt.”²²

In his replies against certain calumnies concerning the doctrine of providence, Calvin makes some statements which are relevant to this discussion. For example, he writes,

On account of the fault of one man, we are all involved in the guilt and desert of eternal death. One man sinned and we are all dragged to punishment. And not that only, but by the pollution of one we are all drawn into the contagion and infected with a deadly disease ... The fault of one man could have had nothing to do with us, had not our heavenly Judge been pleased to consign us to eternal destruction on the account!²³

Unsurprisingly, then, original corruption, not original guilt, receives the attention in the Reformed confessions because total depravity, not the imputation of Adam’s sin, was debated at the time they were framed. Herman Hoeksema writes, “The [Heidelberg] Catechism emphasizes the organic unity rather than the judicial or legal solidarity of the human race. The question of original guilt is left out of consideration and the fact of original corruption receives all the emphasis.”²⁴ Ursinus, in his *Commentary on the Heidelberg*

²¹ Turretin, *Institutes*, vol. 1, p. 627.

²² *Ibid.*; italics mine.

²³ John Calvin, *Calvin’s Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: RFP, 1979), p. 269.

²⁴ Herman Hoeksema, *The Triple Knowledge: An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: RFP, repr. 1990), p. 141.

Catechism, defines original sin in a twofold way: "Original sin is the guilt of the whole human race on account of the fall of our first parents" and it comprehends "exposure to eternal condemnation on account of the fall of our first parents and a depravity of our entire nature since the fall."²⁵ The same emphasis is found in the *Canons of Dordt*. The original text of *Canons III/IV:2* reads, "Man after the fall begat children in his own likeness. A corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring ... by the propagation of a vicious nature *by the righteous judgment of God*." Those last words were omitted in later versions. Homer Hoeksema views this as a very serious omission. He writes,

[This is] the one place in our confessions where the organic line is not followed exclusively in delineating the corruption of man. Here we have at least an indication of the judicial or legal ground of the depravity of the race; and we consider it a rather serious mistake that this expression was omitted in our official English version.²⁶

Heinrich Heppe quotes Riissen and Heidegger as representatives of the historic Reformed position:

We teach that Adam's actual sin is actually so imputed to all his descendants in the ordinary way, that on this account all are deemed criminals and either pay the penalty, or are at least considered worthy of punishment.²⁷

Adam's sin by which he ate the fruit of the forbidden tree (not the rest of the sins committed after the fall when he no longer played the role of a public person) is imputed to all to be sprung naturally from Adam unto condemnation because of their connection with him; i.e., although Adam's sin was not actually committed by them, it is ascribed to them, so that because of it or in respect of it they may undergo liability and pay the penalty or at least be held worthy of all punishments.²⁸

²⁵ Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, p. 39.

²⁶ Homer C. Hoeksema, *Voice of Our Fathers: An Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht* (Grand Rapids, MI: RFP, 1980), p. 441.

²⁷ Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), p. 332.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

V. Original Guilt and Original Corruption

The opinion of De La Place is that man is guilty only *because he is first corrupt*. “In other words,” writes Jenkins, “and this is the key that unlocks mediate imputation—our natural depravity *precedes* our guilt.”²⁹ De La Place, writes Jenkins, rejected “the idea that as we were all participators in Adam’s transgression, our guilt is established prior to any involvement in hereditary sin.”³⁰ Again, he writes that De La Place’s position is that “we are guilty because of our own sins, and not because the sin of Adam is imputed to us in *addition* to those sins.”³¹ Further, De La Place argues, “But if Adam’s guilt is immediately imputed then our condemnation obviously rests on something *apart* from our own defects and offences: we are being punished for something *other* than the iniquity of our own natures.”³²

The position of the immediate imputationists (the Reformed position) is that original guilt precedes corruption. In fact, we are born totally depraved as a punishment. Obviously, we are not born depraved as a punishment for *our* depravity, but we are born depraved *as a punishment for our prior guilt in Adam*. This must be the case. God does not punish those who are guiltless. Writes Hoeksema, “The corruption of the nature is punishment; one aspect of the punishment of death. That punishment is on account of original guilt. But original guilt, it must be remembered, is not propagated: it does not rest on the organic unity of the race. It is imputed.”³³ To this can be added a host of witnesses. Garrett writes, “Adam’s descendants are born with a depraved nature which always leads to sin and is sinful. This depravity, however, is the effect of the imputation and not its cause.”³⁴ Bavinck agrees: “Original pollution is a punishment of original guilt.”³⁵ Thornwell writes, “Either we are guilty of that act, therefore, or original corruption in us is simply misfortune and not sin. In some way or other it is ours, justly imputable to us, or we are not and cannot be born the children of wrath.”³⁶ Pink asks,

²⁹ Jenkins, *Saumur Redux*, p. 27; italics Jenkins’.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34; italics Jenkins’.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 45; italics Jenkins’.

³³ Hoeksema, *Voice*, p. 445.

³⁴ Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, p. 488.

³⁵ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), p. 108.

³⁶ Thornwell, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 343.

Why are we born with corrupt hearts? Such is more than a terrible calamity: it is a penal infliction visited upon us because of our prior criminality. Punishment presupposes guilt and the punishment is given to all because all are guilty; and since God accounts all guilty, then they must be participants in Adam's offence.³⁷

The mediate imputationists have a problem, therefore. How can we be born totally depraved, smitten with a nature which cannot do anything good and is thoroughly loathsome in God's sight *without any prior guilt justly imputed to us*? The immediate imputation of Adam's sin is the "judicial cause of [man's] commencing [his] existence in a depraved condition,"³⁸ writes Hodge. But what explanation can the followers of De La Place offer? Writes Dabney, "Either man was tried and fell in Adam or he has been condemned without a trial. He is either under the curse (as it rests on him from the beginning of his existence) for Adam's guilt or for no guilt at all."³⁹ Pink sets forth the alternatives:

Which appears to be more consonant to human conceptions of justice—that we should suffer through Adam because we were legally connected with him and he transacted in our name; or that we should suffer solely because we derive our nature from him by generation, though we had no part in or connection with his sin? In the former we can perceive the ground on which his guilt is charged to our account; but in the latter we can discover no ground or cause that any share of the fatal effects of Adam's sin should be visited upon us. The latter alternative means that we are depraved and wretched without any sufficient reason, and in such an event our present condition is but a misfortune and in no wise criminal. Nor is God to be blamed. He made man upright, but man deliberately apostatized.⁴⁰

³⁷ Arthur W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Human Depravity* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Publishers Inc., 2001), pp. 49-50.

³⁸ Hodge, *Outlines*, p. 359.

³⁹ Dabney, *Lectures*, p. 331.

⁴⁰ Pink, *Depravity*, p. 84.

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De La Place and his modern followers respond that it is not fair that Adam should be our legal head without our “consent.” “In the opinion of the Federalist,” complains Jenkins, “Adam is accounted mankind’s representative by sovereign appointment. As such, his sin is directly and legally laid at the door of all his posterity.”⁴¹ Throughout Jenkins’ work this note is sounded: But we did not consent to Adam as our representative! A few quotations demonstrate this. Federalism “assumes—without a scrap of biblical evidence—that mankind sanctioned Adam’s appointment as its covenantal representative: or, as De La Place would have it, ‘Who of us ever appointed Adam to be his Deputy or Commander?’”⁴² “If the guilt of one man should implicate an entire community, that would be because the whole community is supposed to have consented to the guilt: otherwise it is not able to happen justly.”⁴³ The “notion that mankind agreed to appoint Adam as its covenantal representative in the first place” is according to Jenkins “extra-Scriptural.”⁴⁴ De La Place reiterates that “Adam was never offered or was in a position to accept this representative role.”⁴⁵

In response to De La Place and Jenkins, we insist that God *sovereignly appointed* Adam as both the organic and the legal head of the human race. God did not ask Adam if he would like to have such a position: He created Adam that way in His own good pleasure. Hoeksema writes, “If one seeks the reason for this legal solidarity of the race, ultimately that reason is to be found in the sovereign good pleasure of God.”⁴⁶ Gresham Machen writes, “Adam was the representative of all mankind by the appointment of God. We cannot fathom the divine counsels sufficiently to say exactly why God made such an appointment but we can see that there was something very fitting about it.”⁴⁷ Murray dismisses the argument from consent as “purely gratuitous” and argues that it is “not valid to insist that vicarious sin can be imputed only when there is *voluntary* engagement to undertake such imputation.”⁴⁸ Turretin writes,

⁴¹ Jenkins, *Saumur Redux*, p. 26.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁴⁶ Hoeksema, *Voice*, p. 446.

⁴⁷ J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian View of Man* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner, repr. 1984), p. 213.

⁴⁸ Murray, *Imputation*, p. 36.

It is not necessary in order to be a just imputation that he who bears the punishment of another's sin should either actually consent to it or sometime have consented to it.⁴⁹

This representation was fair. We could not have asked for better representation in Eden than Adam, fresh from the hand of God, created in God's image with true knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness. There was no reason why Adam should not have stood and we in him. Adam was "capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God" (*Belgic Confession* 14). The heart of Adam was "upright" and "all his affections [were] pure and the whole man was holy" (*Canons of Dordt* III/IV: 1). Pink silences the cavils of recalcitrant men:

Fresh from the hands of his Creator, with no sinful heredity behind and no depraved nature within him, but instead endowed with holiness and indwelt by the Spirit of God, Adam was well equipped for the honorable position assigned him. His fitness to serve as our head, and the ideal circumstances under which the decisive test was made, must forever close every honest mouth from objecting against the divine arrangement and the fearful consequences which Adam's failure has brought down upon us.⁵⁰

VI. An Exegetical Study of Romans 5

The locus classicus of original sin is undoubtedly Romans 5. Berkouwer expresses its importance in these words: "With no trace of exaggeration at all, we can say that the entire history of the original sin dogma is decisively defined by the question of what is meant by these words in Romans 5:12b."⁵¹ A careful exegesis of this passage shows that De La Place's view is untenable.

A. "All Sinned," Not "All Are Sinful"

First, we must notice the use of the aorist in verse 12: "For that all (have) sinned." In Greek, the aorist is used to describe "snapshot" actions in history.

⁴⁹ Turretin, *Institutes*, vol. 1, p. 616.

⁵⁰ Pink, *Depravity*, pp. 44-45.

⁵¹ Berkouwer, *Sin*, p. 491.

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Martyn Lloyd-Jones explains it this way: “The Apostle used here the aorist tense, which conveys the idea of an act completed once and forever in history, an historical event or fact, not a description of a general state.”⁵² The Apostle is teaching here that we are all condemned to die (death passed upon all men) because we all sinned. The ground of our condemnation is not first of all our actual sins, because even infants die, having committed no personal sins. Rather, the ground of our condemnation is *our sin in Adam, or Adam’s sin as our representative*. The teaching of mediate imputation is that we are all condemned to die *because we are all sinful*. However, Paul does not write, “for that all are sinful,” but “for that all have sinned.” Herman Hoeksema makes a similar point: “When the apostle says, ‘Death passed upon all men for that all have sinned,’ he does not mean that all repeat the sin of Adam.”⁵³ Lloyd-Jones explains, “We inherit, of course, a sinful nature from Adam; there is no question about that. But that is not what condemns us. What condemns us and makes us subject to death is the fact that we have all sinned in Adam and that we are all held guilty of sin.”⁵⁴

B. The “One” Offence of “One” Man

Second, we notice the insistence of the Apostle upon “one offence” by “one man” as the ground of our condemnation. Paul underlines this fact throughout the passage: “by *one* man sin entered (v. 12), “through the offence of *one* many be dead” (v. 15), “*one* that sinned” (v. 16), “by *one* man’s offence death reigned by *one*” (v. 17), “by the offence of *one*” (v. 18) and “by *one* man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (v. 19). The one man is Adam. The emphasis is on *what Adam did* as the representative head of the human race. If the ground of our condemnation is not the *one* imputed sin of Adam but our own depraved nature, the apostle would never have used the word “one.” Our depraved nature is not “one” sin but many sins. Our fallen nature is a cesspool of iniquity. As Calvin puts it in the *Institutes*,

The mind of man has been so completely estranged from God’s righteousness that it conceives, desires and undertakes only

⁵² Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 5*, p. 199.

⁵³ Herman Hoeksema, *Righteous by Faith Alone: A Devotional Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: RFP, 2002), p. 221.

⁵⁴ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 5*, p. 210.

that which is impious, perverted, foul, impure and infamous. The heart is so steeped in the poison of sin that it can breathe out nothing but a loathsome stench.⁵⁵

Anthony Hoekema contends,

There is no indication in the key passage on which the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's guilt is based (Rom. 5:12-21) that the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin is mediated through our corruption. In verses 16 and 18 Paul clearly states that condemnation came upon us because of the one trespass of Adam; so to say that that condemnation was grounded upon the sinful depravity in which we were born is to introduce an element into the text that is not there.⁵⁶

C. Many "Made" Sinners

Verse 19 declares that by one man's disobedience many were "made" sinners. The language is legal. The verb "to make" in the text does not mean "to cause to become," but "to constitute." Lloyd-Jones explains the meaning this way: "The word translated 'made' is much stronger than our English word suggests. It means 'to set down in the rank of' or 'to place in the category of' or 'to appoint to a particular class.'"⁵⁷ He adds, "I must say again that Paul does not say that we were constituted 'sinful.'"⁵⁸ We quote again from Lloyd-Jones: "Paul does not say that the one sin of Adam has the effect of leading us to follow Adam's example and sin ourselves, and thereby bring ourselves under condemnation."⁵⁹ "Neither does he say that as a result of that one sin of Adam we have all inherited from Adam a sinful nature and because of this God condemns us."⁶⁰ "What the apostle is saying is that because of that one sin of Adam the whole of mankind are *treated as sinners*."⁶¹ Pink concurs,

⁵⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.5.19, p. 340.

⁵⁶ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, repr. 1994), p. 157.

⁵⁷ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 5*, p. 271.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 270; italics mine.

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The Greek word for “made” (*kathistemi*) never signifies to effect any change in a person or thing but means “to ordain, appoint,” to “constitute” legally or officially ... Note well that it is not here said that Adam’s disobedience makes us unholy. Paul goes farther back and explains why such should follow, namely, because we are first constituted sinners by imputation.⁶²

John Gill states,

Nor is the sense of the phrase, “made sinners by one man’s disobedience” that Adam’s posterity derive a corrupt nature from him, through his sin; this is indeed a truth, but not the truth of this passage ... There is a difference between being “made” sinners and “becoming” sinful, the one respects the guilt, the other the pollution of nature: the one is previous to the other and the foundation of it; men receive a corrupt nature from their immediate parents, but they are not made sinners by any act or acts of their disobedience.⁶³

Robert Haldane writes,

It is essential to observe that when it is here said that by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners there is no reference to the commission of sin, or to our proneness to it from our innate corruption. *The reference is exclusively to its guilt* ... Paul does not mean that through the disobedience of one many were rendered depraved and addicted to the commission of sin, but that they became guilty of sin ... the term sinners has no reference to the pollution, indwelling or actual commission of sin, or the transmission of a corrupt nature.⁶⁴

This is an important distinction. De La Place minimizes Adam’s legal headship but Paul’s language throughout Romans, exactly because he treats

⁶² Pink, *Depravity*, pp. 56-57.

⁶³ John Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity or a System of Evangelical Truths Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures* (Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., repr. 1995), p. 327.

⁶⁴ Haldane, *Romans*, pp. 220-221; italics mine.

the imputation of Adam's sin on the one hand and the imputation of Christ's righteousness on the other hand, is legal. De La Place, writes Jenkins, "is unyielding in his determination to look beyond our legal status" and differs from those whose concern is "always to accentuate our legal relationship to Adam, not our natural relationship."⁶⁵ In that case, De La Place militates against the Apostle, who emphasizes our legal relationship to Adam and to Christ. Adam is *both* our natural or organic head *and* our legal or representative head. In Romans 5, however, the legal headship of Adam, not the organic relationship, is on the foreground.

D. Adam: The "Figure" of Him to Come

The word translated "figure" in Romans 5:14 is "type." Pink exclaims at the incongruity of this word to describe the relationship between Adam and Christ, for in many ways Adam and Christ are exact opposites:

That is truly an astonishing statement. Occurring in such a setting it is really startling and should at once arrest our attention. With what accuracy and propriety could it be said that the father of our fallen race foreshadowed the Lord Jesus? Adam, when tempted, yielded and was overcome; Christ, when tempted, resisted and overcame. The former was cursed by God, the latter was owned by Him as the One in whom He was well pleased. The one is the source of sin and corruption to all his posterity, but the other is a fount of holiness to all His people. By Adam came condemnation, by Christ comes salvation. Thus they are as far apart as the poles. Wherein, then, was Adam a "figure" of the coming Redeemer?⁶⁶

Adam was a type of Christ. This means that in a certain unique sense Adam was like Jesus Christ. To understand Romans 5, we must identify exactly in what that likeness consists. Adam and Christ are both heads of their respective peoples: Adam of the entire human race and Christ of His elect church. But,

⁶⁵ Jenkins, *Saumur Redux*, p. 33.

⁶⁶ Pink, *Depravity*, pp. 38-39. Actually Adam was not cursed, but the ground was cursed for his sake.

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although it is true that Adam is the organic head of the human race, the same is not true of Christ. There is only one way in which Adam's headship typifies Christ's. Both are legal, federal or representative heads. Again we see that De La Place's downplaying of Adam's federal headship leads him away from the true meaning of Romans 5. Pink explains the type thus:

The whole context makes it clear that it was in the official position which he occupied that Adam was a type of the Lord Jesus—as the federal head and legal representative of others. If Romans 5:12-19 be read attentively it will be seen that through it the fact which is there given the greatest prominence is that of one acting on behalf of the many, the one affecting the destiny of the many. What the one did is made the legal ground of what befalls the many.⁶⁷

Hoeksema writes, "Adam was a figure of Christ. Both were the legal representative heads of a corporate body. In that sense, Adam was a figure of Christ."⁶⁸ Haldane concurs,

The resemblance on account of which Adam is regarded as the type of Christ consists in this, that Adam communicated to those whom he represented what belonged to him and that Christ also communicated to those whom He represents what belonged to Him.⁶⁹

Remember the theme and purpose of the book of Romans. Paul is setting forth the great doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ received by faith alone. This explains why Paul broaches the topic of the fall of Adam in the middle of chapter five, several chapters after he has explained at length the total depravity of man. How does Romans 5 help elucidate the truth of gracious justification that Paul is expounding in the Epistle? Pink explains,

Here he shows Adam was a "figure" of Christ (5:14), that the one sustained an analogous relation to his race as the other did to His seed, that each transacted as the one for the many,

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

⁶⁸ Hoeksema, *Righteous*, p. 230.

⁶⁹ Haldane, *Romans*, p. 212.

and that therefore the gospel principle of imputation (Christ's righteousness reckoned to the account of the believer) is *no novelty*, but identical with the one on which God acted from the beginning.⁷⁰

E. "As ... Even So"

It is vitally important for a correct understanding of Romans 5 to see not only the typology but the exact parallel drawn between Adam and Christ. Repeatedly, the inspired apostle employs phrases like "as by one man" (v. 12), "as by the offence of one" (v. 18), "even so by the righteousness of one" (v. 18), "as by one man's disobedience" (v. 19), "so by the obedience of one" (v. 19), "as sin hath reigned unto death" (v. 21) and "even so might grace reign" (v. 21). If we misinterpret the means through which we become guilty of Adam's sin, we will also be liable to misinterpret the means through which we become righteous in Christ. The imputation of Adam's sin and the imputation of Christ's righteousness are closely connected in this part of Scripture.

Many theologians rightly stress the importance of a right interpretation of this parallel. Lloyd-Jones sums up the teaching of the entire chapter thus:

Here is the parallel. On the one hand Adam's sin is imputed to us; on the other, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. But you must maintain the parallel.⁷¹

As we were constituted sinners because of Adam's one sin and apart from any action on our part, so we are constituted righteous persons entirely and only because of Christ's obedience.⁷²

Pink writes,

That "all have sinned" cannot signify their own personal transgressions is clear because the manifest design of Romans 5:12 is to show that Adam's sin is the cause of death; because physical death (a part of sin's wages) is far more extensive than personal transgression—as appears from so many dying in

⁷⁰ Pink, *Depravity*, pp. 47-48; italics Pink's.

⁷¹ Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 5*, p. 210.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 276.

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infancy—and because such an interpretation would destroy the analogy between Adam and the One of whom he was a “figure” and would lead unto this comparison: as men die because they sin personally, so all earn eternal life because they are personally righteous! Equally evident is it that “all have sinned” cannot mean that death comes upon all men because they are depraved, for this too would clash with the scope of the whole passage. If our subjective sinfulness be the ground of our condemnation, then our subjective holiness (and not Christ’s merits) is the ground of our justification. It would also contradict the emphatic assertion of verse 18: “By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” Thus we are obliged to understand the “all have sinned” of verse 12 as meaning all sinned in Adam.⁷³

Charles Hodge informs us that this is the consensus among theologians:

... by all theologians, Reformed and Lutheran, it is admitted, that in the imputation of Adam’s sin to us, of our sins to Christ, and of Christ’s righteousness to believers, the nature of the imputation is the same, so that the one case illustrates the others.⁷⁴

This parallel is destroyed, the doctrine and argument of the Apostle are overturned, if it be denied that the sin of Adam, as antecedent to any sin or sinfulness of our own is the ground of our condemnation.⁷⁵

Turretin concurs, “In Christ we are constituted righteous by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness; therefore we are made sinners in Adam by the imputation of his sin; otherwise the comparison is destroyed.”⁷⁶

Haldane writes,

⁷³ Pink, *Depravity*, p. 50.

⁷⁴ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, p. 194.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 212-213.

⁷⁶ Turretin, *Institutes*, vol. 1, p. 618.

Here, then, these two doctrines of the imputation of sin and of righteousness, which [are] taught throughout the whole of the Scripture, [are] exhibited in a manner so clear, that, without opposing the obvious meaning of the words, they cannot be contested. It is impossible to conceive how men could be made sinners by the disobedience of Adam or righteous by the obedience of Jesus Christ in any degree whatever if the truth of the doctrine of the imputation of the sin of the former and the righteousness of the latter be not admitted.⁷⁷

VII. Conclusion

We have noted the important parallel between Adam and Christ in Romans 5. Now we will see, as we argued in the introduction, that De La Place's position jeopardizes the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

De La Place and Amyraut were heavily influenced by John Cameron who denied that justification includes "the imputation of Christ's active obedience."⁷⁸ Cameron opposed the "by then standard interpretation of justification" because "the imputation of Christ's righteousness may seem to leave no condition left for the people to fulfill their side of the covenant."⁷⁹ Further, Cameron taught that the "universal" covenant of grace, in the service of which Amyraut developed his heresy of a hypothetically universal atonement and De La Place his heresy of the mediate imputation of Adam's sin, offers sufficient grace for all men's salvation "through natural revelation" on the condition of faith.⁸⁰ The theologians at Saumur taught "a twofold will of God and a universal provision of grace for all mankind: Christ's dying love is available to and applicable to all."⁸¹ According to Joshua De La Place, writes Jenkins, the gospel frees us from two accusations:

First it is objected that we are sinners: that is, guilty of violating the condition which was imposed in the legal covenant.

⁷⁷ Haldane, *Romans*, p. 220.

⁷⁸ Jenkins, *Saumur Redux*, p. 51.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

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Next it is objected that we are unbelievers, that is, we did not perform the condition of the covenant of grace, viz. faith. From the former accusation we are justified by faith only, whereby we embrace Christ's grace and righteousness. From the latter we are justified also by works as faith is shewed by them.⁸²

So, we are justified by faith and works!

The "righteousness" which the believer embraces, according to this scheme, does not include the active obedience of Christ. The works to which De La Place refers are:

An unconscious overflow of faith that saves: works that deplore self-advancing purpose and bespeak an endless struggle against sin. But why struggle at all if His [i.e., Christ's] active obedience is ours?⁸³

It is not surprising to find De La Place and his modern followers denying that the active obedience of Christ is imputed to the believer in justification. By confusing the parallel between Adam and Christ in Romans 5, they have opened themselves up to that position.

Turretin observed in his day,

There is no one of the heretics who have denied the imputation of sin who have not for the same reason opposed the imputation of Christ's righteousness (as is seen in the Pelagians, Socinians and Arminians). Hence the reasons by which the imputation of Adam's sin is opposed can no less be turned back against the imputation of Christ's righteousness; those upon which the imputation of Christ's righteousness is built also serve to establish the imputation of Adam's sin.⁸⁴

This denial of the active obedience of Christ is a pet theory of the Federal Vision. No wonder, then, that we find Jenkins quoting Norman Shepherd

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Turretin, *Institutes*, vol. 1, p. 623.

with approval.⁸⁵ The justification of the Federal Vision, the “single imputation view,” is only half-justification and therefore no justification at all. As a sinner under the law of God there are two requirements I must fulfill: I must pay the penalty for transgressing the law and I must render perfect obedience to the law of God. Christ graciously took upon Himself both of these obligations: He paid the penalty for my sins and He fulfilled the demands of the law of God for obedience in my place. If Christ’s active obedience is not imputed to me as part of my justification, the demands of the law have not been satisfied and I cannot be saved. Therefore, Jenkins’ contention that “it is Christ’s suffering and death on the cross that is imputed to us, not His perpetual obedience to God’s law” is a grievous error.⁸⁶ In an effort to commend the single imputation view, Jenkins scorns double imputation. He accuses the orthodox of concluding that “Christ’s death was not sufficient for our justification” and charges the orthodox with a “reluctance to recognize the perfection of Christ’s sacrifice,”⁸⁷ while the “Academy at Saumur was [so] scrupulous in its refusal to compromise the passive obedience of Christ.”⁸⁸

In an article entitled “Justification: the Calvin-Saumur Perspective,” Alan Clifford, the leader of the Amyraldian Association in Great Britain, is bold to assert that this was also Calvin’s position. “Concerning imputation, Amyraut—again like Calvin—taught only the imputation of Christ’s passive obedience.”⁸⁹ Christ’s obedience to the law of God—His thirty-three years of perfect submission to God—is “for imitation rather than imputation.”⁹⁰ Clifford even claims that the *Heidelberg Catechism* originally taught the single imputation position but was changed between the first and second printings “without the authors’ consent.”⁹¹ Quoting Ursinus’ *Commentary* (“Evangelical justification is ... the imputation and application of that righteousness which Christ wrought for us by His death on the cross and by His resurrection from

⁸⁵ Jenkins, *Saumur Redux*, p. 52.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁸⁹ Alan C. Clifford, “Justification: the Calvin-Saumur Perspective” (www.nrchurch.co.nr), p. 8; quoted by Jenkins with approval (pp. 53, 55).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 22.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

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the dead"⁹²), Clifford concludes that Ursinus taught *only* the single imputation view of justification.⁹³ However, a page earlier Ursinus is clear that Christ's active obedience must be included: "Evangelical righteousness is *the fulfilling of the law*, performed not by us, but by another in our stead, and imputed unto us of God by faith."⁹⁴ Concerning that righteousness, Ursinus writes,

The entire humiliation of Christ, from the moment of His conception to His glorification, including His assumption of humanity, his subjection to the law, his poverty, reproach, weakness, sufferings, death ... is all included in the satisfaction which He made for us and in the righteousness which God graciously imputes to us and all believers. This satisfaction is equivalent to the fulfilling of the law, or to the endurance of eternal punishment for sin, to one or to the other of which the law binds all.⁹⁵

Clifford also attempts to prove that Olevianus, the co-author of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, taught the single imputation view. He does this without success because Olevianus writes, "[Christ] performed such obedience for us *His whole life long*, and from the moment of His conception until the last drop of His blood was spilled, He bore the wrath of God for us who believe and trust in Him."⁹⁶

To this we can add the testimony of the *Belgic Confession*:

But Jesus Christ, imputing to us all His merits and so many holy works which He has done for us, and in our stead, is our Righteousness ... (Art. 22).

And therefore we always hold fast this foundation ... relying and resting upon the obedience of Christ crucified alone, which becomes ours, when we believe in Him ... (Art. 23).

⁹² Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, p. 326; italics mine.

⁹³ Clifford, "Justification: the Calvin-Saumur Perspective," pp. 17-18.

⁹⁴ Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, p. 325; italics mine.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

⁹⁶ Caspar Olevianus, *A Firm Foundation: An Aid to Interpreting the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. & ed. by Lyle D. Bierma (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), p. 124; italics mine.

Clifford's claim that Calvin denied the imputation of Christ's active obedience is ably refuted by Turretin, who quotes Calvin as follows:

... elsewhere he [i.e., Paul] extends the cause of pardon, which delivers us from the curse of the law, to the whole life of Christ ... from the time that "he [i.e., Christ] took upon himself the form of a servant," he began to pay the price of liberation in order to redeem us. Nevertheless, that the Scripture may define more precisely the mode of salvation, it ascribes this as peculiar and proper to the death of Christ Nor yet ... is the remaining part of his obedience, which he performed during his life, excluded, as Paul comprehends the whole from the beginning even to the end of his life ...⁹⁷

Justification, as Calvin and the authors of the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Belgic Confession* taught, is the imputation of both Christ's active and passive obedience. Christ thus satisfies the double demand of the law against the elect sinner.

Mediate imputation must be rejected because it is a dangerous undermining of the truth of our original guilt in Adam, it is not the historic Reformed position but a novelty invented to save De La Place from ecclesiastical censure, and because it is exegetically untenable. Let Reformed believers beware of the strange winds of doctrine still blowing from the Academy of Saumur!

⁹⁷ Turretin, *Institutes*, vol. 2, p. 454.