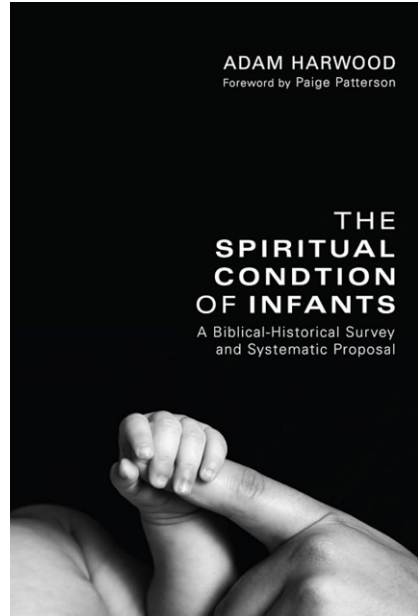


(4) WHAT DO INFANTS RECEIVE FROM ADAM? (ROMANS 5:12-21)¹

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. For if by the transgression of the one,



death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Rom 5:12–21

Tuesday nights are special nights in the Harwood home. My older children are now ten and twelve. Every Tuesday night, I take one of them out for an hour or so just to spend some time together. Usually we'll get ice cream cones, but the idea is for each of them to have one-on-one time with dad a couple of times during the month. (Soon, I'll need to figure out how to work my preschoolers into a similar schedule.)

Yesterday, I took my oldest child on her special day. In a break from our routine, we visited various stores looking for a desk for her room. During the car ride home, she commented about the trouble she was having with some of her teeth. Her mom has great teeth, but I don't. She got her bad teeth from me. She also got her extra-thick, dark hair from me. But she got the freckles on her nose from her mom. In this chapter, we'll consider something that was passed on to us. But

¹ Chapter 4 of Adam Harwoods book, *The Spiritual Condition of Infants: A Biblical-Historical Survey and Systematic Proposal* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), chpt title: "What Do Infants Receive from Adam? (Romans 5:12-21)"

it wasn't passed on to us from our parents. It came all the way from the first Adam. Sin. But did we also receive his guilt?

Romans 5:12–21 is probably the most important biblical text to consider in this study because it directly links Adam's sin with human sinfulness. But it's important to draw meaning out of the text rather than read meaning into it. New Testament scholar Joseph Fitzmyer issues this warning when he cautions readers of Rom 5 to be careful to determine what Paul was saying rather than what the church later said that Paul was saying. The Catholic scholar explains that the doctrine of original sin (the view that all people inherit both the sin and the guilt of Adam) is a Christian idea rather than an explicit Pauline teaching. This doctrine was developed from later Augustinian writings and solidified through the Sixteenth Council of Carthage, the Second Council of Orange, and the Tridentine Council. Also original sin developed as a doctrine in the western tradition but not in the eastern tradition.²

In Rom 5:12–21, Paul parallels the work of one man, Adam, with the work of the God-man, Jesus. Sin and death entered the world and came to all people through one man, Adam (v. 12). Between the time of Adam and Moses, who was given the law, sin and death reigned in the world (vv. 13–14). In this way, there were lawbreakers even before the giving of the law. Adam, though, was a pattern of the one (Jesus Christ) who was to come (v. 14). The parallel between the actions of Adam and Christ is presented in verses 15–19. Adam's trespass, one act of sin, brought judgment, condemnation, and death for all people. We are all sinners because of Adam's disobedience. Conversely God's grace is demonstrated in Christ's one act of righteousness, which brought grace, justification, and righteousness for many people. We are made righteous because of Christ's obedience. Verses 20 and 21 mention that when the law was given, sin increased and reigned in death. But God met that with an increase of grace so that "grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (NIV).

There is widespread agreement in Christian circles that every person is sinful because of people's relationship to Adam. But there are two views of how Adam's sinful actions are imputed (passed on) to us. These are known as the immediate and the mediate views of imputation. Both views teach that all people are sinful and guilty before God due to our relationship to Adam. And both views read Rom 5 as a parallel of Adam and Christ, in which Christ reverses through his obedience the condemnation that resulted from Adam's disobedience. The difference comes when considering precisely whether a person becomes or is always guilty of sin and thus under the condemnation of sin and death.

² Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with introduction and Commentary*. In vol. 33 of *The Anchor Bible*. Edited by William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman. Garden City, (NY: Doubleday, 1993.), 408–09.

This first view is known as immediate imputation. In this book, I'll refer to it as either the view of inherited guilt or the Augustinian-Calvinist tradition. According to this view, the final phrase in Rom 5:12, "because all sinned," means that all people are guilty because all people sinned in Adam. The view of inherited guilt teaches that all people were either present in or represented by Adam when he sinned in the garden. Therefore, Adam is to blame for the sin and guilt of humanity.

The second view is known as mediate imputation. I'll refer to it as either the inherited sinful nature view or moral responsibility. This view affirms that everyone is sinful because of Adam, but it denies that we are guilty due to the sin of Adam. Instead, we are guilty and fall under condemnation only when God judges our own sinful thoughts, attitudes, and actions. That is the position for which I am advocating. Below, I will summarize and critique the arguments for the first view, immediate imputation, and then present a case for the inherited sinful nature view.

THE INHERITED GUILT VIEW

In 1959, John Murray published *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*, which is a biblical-historical examination of Rom 5:12–21. Murray begins his study of the passage by identifying the clause *eph' hō pantes hēmarton* ("in that all sinned" or "because all sinned") in verse 12. Murray sees in this phrase an explanation for why death came to all people. The reason is because all sinned in Adam.

Murray writes that a person who thinks that people die only because of their own sin have adopted a Pelagian view.³ In Pelagianism, Adam is a prototype, one who sinned and died and was followed by others who will do the same. But the inherited sinful nature view should not be called a Pelagian view because it affirms the full sinfulness of humanity from the time of conception, which Pelagianism denies.

Interestingly, Murray begins his study by acknowledging that "the construction of verse 12 does not disprove this interpretation." Murray's comment that the construction of Rom 5:12 "does not disprove" the Pelagian view is a devastating admission. The main argument of Murray's work is that all people are counted guilty because of their association in the mind of God with the sin of Adam. If Rom 5:12 doesn't disprove the mediate view, then Murray's entire argument is suspect.

Murray reads Augustinian-Calvinism into Rom 5:12. This is because he teaches that the phrase *eph' hō pantes hēmarton* ("because all sinned") means that all of humanity sinned in Adam. Augustine understood the phrase *eph' hō pantes hēmarton* to mean "in whom all sinned" rather

³ In *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*, Murray presents the following views: Pelagian, Roman Catholic, Calvin's Interpretation, and the Classical Protestant Interpretation. In this study, I am not attempting to summarize and critique every nuance of Murray's argument but to interact with his main argument for the immediate view and against the mediate view of imputation

than "because all sinned" or "with the result that all sinned." It is not clear whether this resulted from his use of the Old Latin and Vulgate versions of Rom 5:12 or from the influence of western theologians. University of Durham Emeritus Professor of Divinity James D. G. Dunn writes that the "dominant consensus" is that this phrase is "best taken as 'for this reason, because.'"⁴ This translation choice is affirmed by the following English versions of the Bible, which translate the phrase, "because all sinned": ESV, HCSB, NASB, NIV, NKJV, and the NET⁵ What that means is that people who hold to the Augustinian-Calvinist view must add these italicized words to the text so that Rom 5:12 ends as follows: "because all sinned" in Adam.

Murray argues against what he calls the Pelagian view. As previously demonstrated, Murray misuses the term Pelagian because he actually argues against the mediate view of imputation. First, he writes, some infants die without "actually and voluntarily" sinning. Second, verses 13 and 14 state that death reigned over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam's transgression; in other words, death reigns universally. Third, verses 15–19 repeatedly state that many died because of the trespass of the one person— rather than stating that many died because of their own individual and personal trespasses. Fourth, the Pelagian view violates Paul's analogy between two men, Adam and Christ. Since the justification of men is brought about by the act of one man, Christ, then the condemnation of men being brought about by each man's individual sin would destroy the comparison of one man to one man.⁶

The Death of Some Infants Before They Commit Sinful Acts

Murray's first objection is that some infants die without "actually and voluntarily" sinning. This is true. However, it does not follow that an infant's death is a result of his or her personal sin. In the International Critical Commentary on Romans, C. E. B. Cranfield allows for a distinction between Adam's sin being passed to infants and the guilt they later incur after they commit sinful actions when he writes the following: "It has also sometimes been argued that pantes [hēmarton] must include those who have died in infancy, and that the contention that infants participate by seminal identity in the primal sin of Adam is more intelligible than the contention that they commit actual sins. But those who die in infancy are a special and exceptional case, and Paul must surely be assumed to be thinking in terms of adults."⁷ In Cranfield's estimation, Paul was dealing with adults in Rom 5:12 not infants.

One of the arguments later in the book of Romans (chapter 8) is that all of creation is presently in a state of corruption but there is a future hope of glory when it will be set free and renewed

⁴ C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans. Volume I*, in *The International Critical Commentary*, edited by J. A. Emerton and C. E. B. Cranfield (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 274–81.

⁵ In fairness to Murray, it should be noted that none of those English translations were in existence when Murray first published his study

⁶ John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 9–12.

⁷ Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 279.

(vv. 18–25). The death of infants is one of those instances in which all of God's creation is being subjected to bondage and futility prior to the future revelation of glory.

I will suggest in my examination of Gen 6 that infants both inside and outside of the womb suffered death as a consequence of God's judgment against the human race carried out in the flood during the time of Noah. Genesis 6:5 states that this judgment came as a result of the wicked actions and thoughts of humans. Murray's view would require us to think that all of the infants who were swept up by the flood of God's judgment were killed because of the sinful nature that infants possess from the time of their conception. The inherited sinful nature view, however, understands that the deaths of those infants were a result of God's general judgment against the sinful thoughts, attitudes, and actions of men rather than his particular judgment against their sinful nature.

The Death of People Who Did Not Participate in Adam's Sin

Murray's second objection is that the "because all sinned" phrase of Rom 5:12 cannot refer to individual transgression. The reason is that verses 13–14 state that death reigns apart from the existence of the law even among those who did not commit Adam's sinful act. In other words, people who did not participate in Adam's sin still die. Therefore, people do not experience death because of their individual sin against God but because they share in the sinful act and judgment declared against Adam, which was death.

Murray is correct in affirming that people experience death as a result of the sinful disobedience of Adam. But it doesn't follow that because people experience death they are guilty of and responsible for the sin of Adam. Advocates of both views of imputation agree that sin is passed from Adam to all humanity. The difference is that the inherited guilt view ties all death to guilt of and participation in Adam's actions. The inherited sinful nature view, which is the argument of this book, is that death is a result of Adam's sin. And the effects of sin, including death, impact all people. But this does not make us guilty of Adam's sin. We are guilty and under condemnation only for our own sins, which we commit after we know the difference between right and wrong and choose to do wrong.

Murray's third and fourth arguments suggest that we sinned in Adam because of the link between death and Adam's sin mentioned in verses 15–19 and the Adam-Christ parallel in the passage. So, Adam's one sin results in the death of all people because all people are guilty of Adam's one sin before they are guilty of their own sin. The inherited sinful nature view, however, teaches that death is an effect of Adam's sin and is experienced by all of creation. We experience the consequences of Adam's sin, but that does not make us guilty of Adam's sin.

The remainder of Murray's work is a historical presentation of the two major views of union with Adam (realistic and representative) and the two major views of imputation (mediate and

immediate). After providing detailed arguments from the writings of various theologians, Murray casts his lot with the representative view of our union with Adam. He then defines that view in such a way as to affirm both Augustine's seminalism and Calvin's federalism.⁸

THE INHERITED SINFUL NATURE VIEW

Murray's presentation of the two major views of imputation provides an important distinction. The major difference between the two views is that the inherited sinful nature view excludes the imputation of guilt while the other view includes it.⁹ Murray cites as advocates of this sinful nature view some Calvinist theologians who were associated with New Divinity, also known as New England Theology. Samuel Hopkins (1721–1803), for example, was a Congregational minister and a brother-in-law of Jonathan Edwards. Hopkins taught this view of imputation because he thought that infants possess evil inclinations and will eventually sin, but that they become guilty of Adam's sin only when they actually join his rebellion.¹⁰

Timothy Dwight (1752–1817) was another advocate of the inherited sinful nature view. He was a Congregationalist minister and one of the early presidents of Yale College. Dwight wrote, "When I assert, that in consequence of the Apostacy [sic.] of Adam all men have sinned; I do not intend, that the posterity of Adam is guilty of his transgression. Moral actions are not, so far as I can see, transferable from one being to another. The personal act of any agent is, in its very nature, the act of that agent solely; and incapable of being participated by any other agent. Of course, the guilt of such a personal act is equally incapable of being transferred, or participated."¹¹

Hopkins and Dwight were in agreement that infants are sinful but not guilty. Murray, however, disagrees. He explains that the analogy between Adam and Christ in Rom 5 favors the view of inherited guilt, in which there is an "immediate conjunction of the sin of Adam" with the death of all (vv. 12, 15, 17), the condemnation of all (vv. 16, 18), and the sin of all (vv. 12, 19).¹²

Murray concludes his study by stating the following conclusions: First, all humans were conceived of in God's mind and associated with Adam when he sinned. Second, people do not become but always are sinners. Third, Adam's sin is imputed to people from the moment that they come into existence. Fourth, all people are considered to have sinned in Adam. Fifth, Adam sinned by transgressing God's law. Sixth, imputation includes depravity.¹³ These conclusions, though, are

⁸ Ibid., 22-41.

⁹ Ibid., 42-70

¹⁰ Samuel Hopkins, *The Works of Samuel Hopkins, vol. 1* (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1865; reprint, New York: NY: Garland, 1987), 216–18; cited in Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*, 48–50.

¹¹ Timothy Dwight, *Theology Explained and Defended*, 478, cited in Murray, *Imputation*, 51. Original punctuation in place; first sentence is italicized in the original.

¹² Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*, 65–70.

¹³ Ibid., 91–93.

statements of the Augustinian-Calvinist viewpoint, which are read into rather than exegetical conclusions that are drawn out of the text of Romans.

Murray's book is a helpful study of the historical perspectives on this issue and provides an argument that we inherit both sin and guilt from Adam (inherited guilt). But his arguments don't rule out the possibility that we inherit from Adam sin but acquire our own guilt and condemnation the first time we knowingly sin (inherited sinful nature).

DUAL CAUSALITY

Before leaving this discussion of Rom 5, I should raise the point that many scholars who have written commentaries on this book advocate for a both/and rather than an either/or position on the question of how a person becomes guilty.

In the Anchor Bible commentary, Fitzmyer observes in Rom 5 an "antithetical parallelism" between Adam and the resulting death and Christ and the resulting life. Fitzmyer identifies the "dual causality" of both one's relationship to Adam and one's own sinful actions for understanding the phrase "all have sinned" (v. 12). Fitzmyer also explains that including infants among the all who sinned of Rom 5:12 was not an idea that Paul had in mind.¹⁴

Dunn affirms an idea similar to Fitzmyer's dual causality when he writes that "Paul was operating with a double conception of death," in which death is "an outcome of Adam's first transgression" and also "a consequence or even penalty for one's own individual transgressions."¹⁵ To the voices of Fitzmyer and Dunn should be added the voice of New Testament scholar Leon Morris. In an article on sin and guilt in Pauline literature, Morris writes, "All commit their own sins, to be sure, but in some way all are also caught up in the sin of Adam, for by the one man's trespass the many died' (Rom. 5:15)."¹⁶

Wheaton College Blanchard Professor of New Testament Douglas Moo provides another example of this view of dual causality. He writes in his commentary on Romans, "Paul can therefore say both 'all die because all sin' and 'all die because Adam sinned' with no hint of conflict because the sin of Adam is the sin of all. All people, therefore, stand condemned in Adam, 'guilty by reason of the sin all committed in him.'"¹⁷

In his commentary on Romans, Baylor University Distinguished Professor of Religion Charles Talbert explains, "Adam's sin caused all to sin (v. 19), all to be condemned (v. 18), and all to die (vv. 15, 17). At the same time, [Paul] said 'all sinned' (v. 12). Paul, then, did not answer the

¹⁴ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 406–13.

¹⁵ James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 96. Emphasis his.

¹⁶ Leon Morris, "Sin, Guilt," page 878 of Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (editors), *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1993).

¹⁷ Douglas Moo, *Romans 1–8* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991). 338.

question about chow' that later interpreters have attempted."¹⁸ If Talbert is correct, then it is impossible to know from this passage alone exactly how our sin, condemnation, and death are all linked to Adam's sinful actions.

GOD JUDGES ACTIONS

It is also helpful to notice the context of Rom 5. In Rom 3:10, we see a classic statement of man's unrighteousness (sinfulness). What follows in Rom 3:11–18 is not a summary of man's sinful nature but his sinful actions. Humankind is indicted for its failure to understand or seek God (v. 11); for turning aside and failing to do good (v. 12); for speaking sinful words (vv. 13–14); and for killing, destroying, failing to live peaceably, and failing to fear God (vv. 15–18). These are all indictments by God against sinful actions rather than a sinful nature. The significance? The Augustinian-Calvinist tradition argues for human guilt based upon a sinful nature, but Paul argues for human guilt based upon sinful actions.¹⁹

The dilemma that the view of inherited guilt creates is that a person is considered guilty before God before committing any sinful actions. God's judgment in Scripture, though, is clearly manifested against sinful actions not against a sinful nature.²⁰ Fitzmyer, Dunn, Morris, Moo, and Talbert do not assign only one cause of judgment and death. Instead, they consider the causes for the sin, guilt, and death upon humanity to be found in both our link to Adam as well as our individual sinful actions.

CONCLUSION

The inherited guilt view teaches that people are sinful and guilty because of the sin of Adam. The inherited sinful nature view teaches that people receive from Adam a sinful nature but later become guilty due to their own sinful thoughts, attitudes, and actions. This third view, dual causality, affirms aspects of both views to be true. We are sinful and guilty because of Adam's sin as well as our own. But could it be that infants are a special case? For, infants do not knowingly commit sinful, thoughts, attitudes, or actions for which to be judged. If that is the case, then they are excluded from God's judgment and thus are sinful in their nature but not guilty of committing any sin.

¹⁸ Charles H. Talbert. *Romans* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 155.

¹⁹ See also Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Bible Doctrine* (Leicester LE17GP, Great Britain: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994; and, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 499–500.

²⁰ For an extended argument from the beginning of Romans that at the final judgment God judges according to works, see Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 132–83.