

THE EFFECTS OF ADAM'S SIN ON THE HUMAN RACE

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"Next to the word God, the word sin is the most closely packed with meaning for the human race and for the universe,"¹ wrote Edward Heppenstall. I concur with this assessment. It seems fitting, then, for the Adventist Theological Society to consider the biblical understanding of sin. What did the Fall of Adam do to the human race? How did that one act of sin affect his posterity? Does it affect one's state at birth? Are we born sinners, or do we only become sinners when we sin?

In this article we will explore the historical and biblical dimensions of these questions. We first turn to history, where various schools of thought have grappled with the issue of human nature at birth. Does it receive anything from Adam's sin or not? These are called theories of imputation.

Theories of Imputation

The Pelagian Theory. In 409 the British monk Pelagius presented his theory at Rome in which he argued man's natural innocence. It was condemned at the Council of Carthage in 418. Socinians and Unitarians later came to advocate the same theory. This view teaches that every human soul is immediately created by God innocent, free from depraved tendencies, and with the ability to obey God as was Adam before his sin. So Adam's sin hurt no one besides himself. The only effect of Adam's sin on his posterity was a bad example.

Paradoxically, Pelagius also recognized the power of sin. Man is born unto perdition, the image of God is eclipsed by the Fall, and

humans are in a certain sense corrupt, so that sin is natural. Nevertheless, in spite of human corruption, humans remain basically good.² Thus man is not born with an inclination towards wrong, that comes only after his own acts of sin. Therefore, it is theoretically possible to live above sin, as Adam could have, and thereby get to heaven through living without sinning. This view doesn't see Christ's incarnation and His saving mission as essential for every human.

The Arminian Theory. Arminius (1560-1605), University of Leyden professor in Holland, proposed his theory which is dubbed "semi-Pelagian." The Greek church holds this view. Methodism later adopted it. There are different kinds of Arminians, just as there are different kinds of Protestants. Arminius believed Adam's sin affected the race, so man is born depraved in body and mind, although the will is able to obey Him. Man is born without "righteousness." Therefore, God bestows a special gift of the Holy Spirit at birth to enable the newborn to obey. This is "prevenient grace" (grace sent before conversion) which removes and neutralizes condemnation from Adam's sin.

No baby is born with tendencies to do wrong. These only come from his own sinning. Yet, the gift of the Holy Spirit to overcome depravity from Adam assumes that the Spirit saves man from the results of Adam's sin rather than Christ. Also, each baby is seen as an isolated entity rather than a part of the human race. Salvation for the world (John 3:16), and the implications of this, are not thought through. If man has the ability not to sin, then the universality of sin and the universal need of a Savior are not a reality.

The New School Theory. This theory was propounded by Hopkins, Emmons, Dwight Taylor and Finney. Some Presbyterians and Congregationalists have supported the view. It teaches that newborns enter the world with a predisposition to sin, but do not sin until they arrive at moral consciousness. Thus sin is not a state, but solely an act. Hence, prior to gaining moral consciousness babies do not need Jesus as their Savior.

The Federal Theory. Also called the "theory of the Covenants," Federal theory is linked to Cocceius (1603-1669) and Turretin (1623-1669). (1) Federal and (2) Natural (or Realistic) headship in Adam need to be distinguished. Federal headship traces

physical nature through inheritance back to Adam, but with the soul as separately created for each newborn, the so-called "creationist view for the soul's origin." Natural (Realistic) headship traces man wholistically (including the soul) back to Adam, the Traducianist view for the soul's origin. In different ways Anselm, Aquinas, Calvin and Hodge have advocated these views. The "Federal theory" teaches that God entered into a covenant with Adam as the federal head of the race, stating that if he obeyed God, eternal life would be given to his posterity, but death to all if he disobeyed.

This means that condemnation passed upon all the race through God's covenant and not through Adam's sin. The race is not sinful because of Adam's fall, but because God regards them as such, due to His agreement with Adam; and God immediately (not mediately) creates each soul with a corrupt nature.

The Mediate Imputation Theory. Placeus, a French professor (1606-1655), promulgated this theory. It teaches that all are born physically and morally depraved, due to Adam's sin. God creates each individual soul, but it becomes corrupt as soon as it is joined to the body. Man, therefore, is born a sinner, which is the source of his own sins. Yet, only his physical and moral depravity go back to Adam (immediate), for his soul's depravity goes back to his own creation-birth (mediate). Also, man's depravity is the consequence, not the penalty, of Adam's sin.

The Augustinian Theory. Augustine (354-430) taught this view, which has roots back to Tertullian (c.150-220), and was held by the Reformers, except Zwingli. It is basic Catholic teaching and is espoused by A. H. Strong. It teaches that all the race were seminally present in Adam, and share not merely in the effects of his sin but in its guilt as well. It follows that man is born sinful and guilty and needs salvation the moment of birth. All sins issue as fruits from the one sin of Adam. This theory is also known as Realism. Realists W. G. T. Shedd, S. Greijdanus and K. Schilder speak of all humans being "co-sinners" with Adam, so that they are responsible for the original sin. Adam's guilt is not an "alien guilt," but their own. Texts such as humans dying for their own sin (Ezek 18:20), and Levi being in the loins of his father (Heb 7:5, 10) and

all sinning in Adam (their interpretation of Rom 5:12) fueled their thinking.³

Whereas Federalists believe humans are condemned because Adam broke the covenant,⁴ Realists reject imputed condemnation. Realist understanding of all humans as co-sinners with Adam views each person as individually responsible for sin. In this way, Realists question the validity of the imputation of "alien guilt" or "alien responsibility for sin," found in Catholic and Protestant theology. Not even Calvin's appeal to a divine decree can absolve God from being understood as capricious.

Summary of the Theories. A. H. Strong has provided a helpful summary of these various schools, indicating that the Pelagian, Arminian and New School do not believe man inherits condemnation from Adam's sin, whereas the Federal, Placean and Augustinian theories believe that man does inherit condemnation from Adam's sin. Note that each theory, except the Augustinian, finds the soul as created immediately by God, and to that extent without any ultimate connection with Adam (Creationism/ Traducianism debate.)⁵ Note the varying views concerning how a person sins; from following Adam's example (Pelagian), by conscious choice in spite of the Spirit's help (Arminian), by voluntary breaking of God's law (New School); and by being accounted sinners in Adam's sin (Federal), by possessing depraved nature (Placean), by having a part in Adam's sin, as seminally present (Augustinian), and by being co-sinners with Adam (Realists).

Although Catholic teaching on original sin is indebted to Augustine, since the 1950's, and particularly following Vatican II Council (1963-1965), there has been an explosion of Catholic literature on this topic, affected largely by the evolutionary world view that dismisses a historical Adam and his Fall. This is because Vatican II encouraged the freedom of science to explore its view of human origins.⁶ George Vandervelde, in a doctoral dissertation at the Free University in Amsterdam, focuses on two major trends: the situationists and the personalists. We will not discuss them in this article, but will note their common concern: "to safeguard the personal responsibility that appears to be jeopardized by the traditional doctrine."⁷ This is because, as Berkouwer pointed out, "the

central problem in the doctrine of original sin is the problem of *peccatum alienum* or alien guilt."⁸

We will see later that the biblical understanding of individual responsibility is crucial to determining the questions before us.

"Original Sin" in Adventist History

Some study into original sin in connection with the Seventh-day Adventist church has been accomplished by students at Andrews University Theological Seminary.⁹ The doctoral research of Edward H. Zackrisson is the most extensive work known to this writer on original sin in the Seventh-day Adventist church up to 1984.¹⁰

Early Adventists considered the first death as due to Adam's sin, the second death because of personal sin. The first death is merely the consequence, not the penalty for Adam's sin. These early Seventh-day Adventists believed Adam and Eve were created with a "middle nature" that could become mortal or immortal, or could become moral or immoral. A "middle nature" is defined as being innocent but without character, like a blank sheet of paper waiting to receive pencil markings. Original sin consisted in a loss of the "middle nature," hence, a gaining of mortality. This concept was worked out largely in defense of conditional immortality, and was a unique Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the state of the dead. Thus, original sin was first studied from an anthropological perspective.

The anthropological focus, in Adventist study of original sin, continued until 1888. In that year, when a new emphasis on righteousness by faith emerged from the Minneapolis General Conference, the focus on original sin shifted from the anthropological to the soteriological,¹¹ from the consequences of Adam's sin as only physical death,¹² to include moral depravity.¹³ This depravity was not properly called sin. By the turn of the century Adventists had come to consider original sin in terms of separation from God. Throughout the Church's history, the idea of each newborn possessing the guilt of Adam's sin has not been normative in its literature, although a depraved nature as consequence, not penalty, came to be the developed understanding.

Sin Defined as an Act

Scripture defines sin as "the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4 KJV), or "lawlessness" (NIV, RSV). "Sin is always *against God*."¹⁴ "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17, KJV).

There are many Hebrew and Greek words translated by the one English word "sin" which emphasize sin as an act. Here are a few examples; *shagah* and *shagag* (Heb.) mean "error," *ta'ah* (Heb.) means "to err" or "wander about," *parakoe* (Gr.) means "disobedience," *chata* (Heb.) and *hamartano* (Gr.) mean "missing the mark," *'abar* (Heb.) means "to cross over" or "to pass by," with *parabaino* as the Greek equivalent. *'Awal* (Heb.) "to act wrongfully," *pasha'* (Heb.) and *marad* (Heb.) mean "to rebel," with *apeitheia*, *aphistemi* and *apostasia* as Greek equivalents. *Ma'al* (Heb.) and *bagad* (Heb.) mean "treachery," *parapipto* (Gr.) means "to fall away," and *shiqquts* (Heb.) means "abomination."¹⁵ However, many of these words also imply or suggest a state of sin.¹⁶

Sin Defined as Internal Condition and Separation

The Bible also speaks of sin as "more than an act." We will consider three aspects, (1) immediate roots, (2) tendency to sin, and (3) sin as separation from God.

Immediate Roots. Romans 14:23 says, "Everything that does not come from faith is sin" (NIV). The context concerns acting without faith. Here, the definition for sin reaches back behind the act to the motive that causes the act. This is the deeper, inner side of sin. These are "the thoughts and attitudes [literally "intentions,"] of the heart" (Heb 4:12, NIV). Jesus said corrupt fruit comes from a corrupt tree (Matt 12:33-35), likewise evil proceeds out of the human heart [mind] (Mark 7:21-23).

This is why the law has more than some external relationship to the believer, for God said "I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts" (Heb 8:10, NIV; cf Hebrews 10:16). This is why Jesus spoke of the inner meaning of law-keeping, or law-breaking (sin), as having to do with thoughts and motives even though no external act ever took place. Thus, a "lustful look" is the same as committing adultery, even though it only transpires in the mind (Matt 5:28). This is why the tenth commandment goes deeper

than external acts, for covetousness is the internal act/state that precedes them.

Tendency to Sin. But, Scripture penetrates beyond the thoughts, motives and feelings to a tendency to sin that is inherent in human nature. David speaks of this when he said, "sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Ps 51:5, NIV). Note, not just sinful from birth, but from conception! David is speaking of the sin-situation into which he was born. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* on Psalm 51:5 says,

David recognized that children inherit natures with propensities to evil (see Job 14:4; Psa 58:3; PP 61, 306; MH 372, 373; GC 533). He did not seek to excuse his sin, but sought to stress the still greater need of God's mercy because of his inborn tendency to do evil (see PP 64).¹⁷

Scripture clearly attests to this sin situation into which humans are born. Of Israel we read, "You were called a rebel from birth" (Isa 48:8, NIV). The psalmist attested, "Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies" (Ps 58:3, NIV). In contrast to these statements, John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth" (Luke 1:15, NIV). Leon Morris notes that John the Baptist is the only human spoken of in this way in the New Testament.¹⁸ Except for Christ, maybe John was an exception, being a chosen forerunner to prepare the way for Christ. At least we can say from history that even if the Holy Spirit is with humans from birth, all, except Christ, have given into this tendency to sin in spite of the presence of the Holy Spirit. This is why all humans need to be born again.

In the Ten Commandments God says, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands who love me and keep my commandments" (Exod 20:5, 6, NIV; cf. chap. 34:7; Num 14:18). This passage seems to teach imputed punishment. It needs to be studied in the light of Ezekiel 18:20, where "The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son" (Ezek 18:20, RSV). What is at stake here is the individual responsibility for sin. Natural consequences can be passed on, but punishment is never imputed.

As the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* states,

A distinction should be made, however, between the natural results of a sinful course of action, and punishment inflicted because of it (PP 306). God does not penalize one individual for the wrong deeds of another (Eze. 18:2-24). Each man stands before God, responsible only for his own acts. At the same time God does not interfere with the laws of heredity in such a way as to protect one generation from the misdeeds of its fathers, as that would be inconsistent with His character. It is only through these laws of heredity, which were of course ordained by the Creator in the beginning (see Gen. 1:21, 24, 25), that divine justice visits the "iniquity" of one generation upon the next.¹⁹

Irrespective of ones parents, all babies are born with a tendency to sin. Thus, humans enter the planet in need of a Savior before they ever commit an act of sin.²⁰ But why is this? To this we now turn as we consider what lies behind mankind's tendency to sin.

Separation from God. Behind the "immediate roots" and "tendency to sin" lies another more fundamental aspect of sin. We need to understand more precisely what Adam's sin was, what it did to him, and what he passes on to the race. God told Adam and Eve not to eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden (Gen 2:15-17; 3:1-5). They disobeyed. The resulting Fall was a fall from a trusting relationship with God. The Fall was a rebel step. So the *essence of sin is separation from God*. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God (Gen 3:8), because sin broke their relationship with Him. Actually, before the overt act of eating the fruit, Eve broke her relationship with God. It was doubt (broken relationship) that led to disobedience (Gen 3:1-7). Ellen White expresses it this way,

It was through the desire for self-exaltation that sin entered into the world, and our first parents lost the dominion over this fair earth.²¹ Satan exulted in his success. He had tempted the woman to distrust God's love, to doubt His wisdom, and to transgress His law, and through her he had caused the overthrow of Adam.²²

As Heppenstall points out, "Original sin is not per se wrong doing, but wrong being. So there is a *causal* connection between the first sin of the first man and the self-centeredness of his posterity. . . . Trying to locate sin or the transmission of sin genetically simply misses the real problem. The issue is a spiritual one and not

something in a gene. Sin is not transmitted genetically from parents to children. Sin must not be reduced to something physical."²³

Apply this to the fallen angels. There is no genetic involvement among those beings. Yet "sin originated in self-seeking. Lucifer, the covering cherub, desired to be first in heaven. He sought to gain control of heavenly beings, to draw them away from their Creator, and to win their homage to himself."²⁴ So Satan separated himself from God, and then went out to separate the angels from Him. This was his "original sin."

Therefore, because of Adam, man is also in a broken relationship with God. But, thank God, He provided the way back through Jesus (John 14:6). Jesus is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9, KJV)²⁵ This is why each human must be born again (John 3:5-8). Separation is the deepest root of original sin. The very essence of what Adam passes on to the race, "an inherited disposition to sin"²⁶ issues out of a broken relationship with God.

One major problem with many theories of imputation is their failure to penetrate to the essence of sin as a broken relationship with God. *What is imputed to the race is a broken relationship with its tendency to sin.* Humans are born in need of being born again. Furthermore, nowhere in Scripture does it say that sin, punishment, condemnation or guilt is imputed. If these were imputed, then God would be unjust, and this alone would cause Him to fail to answer the great controversy issue against His justice. *Only consequences are imputed*, and so the justice of God is seen in His imputed righteousness through the second Adam that more than makes up for the broken relationship imputed by the first Adam. There is only one place in Scripture where sin is imputed, and that is to Christ as mankind's substitute at Calvary. Human sin was laid upon Him (Isa 53:6), so that He who knew no sin became sin for us (2 Cor 5:21). There are repeated references to righteousness being imputed to humans but never sin or guilt. This insight needs to guide our interpretation of Romans 5.

The essence of inherited sin from Adam is spiritual (broken relationship) and not genetic (physical). Although all humans are physically smaller and live shorter lives than Adam, his original sin impacts us spiritually. The question of God's justice is involved in

the way we look at the effect of Adam's sin. Heppenstall is right when he concludes, "Any position that makes genetically inherited sin or its moral consequences the specific ground for the condemnation of the race, involves God in the responsibility. Once solidarity with Adam is interpreted to mean transmission of sin by a procreated posterity, responsibility gets back to the Creator."²⁷

The Two Adams

In studying Romans 5, Karl Barth reversed the Adam-Christ analogy with a Christ-Adam analogy, and did disservice to history.²⁸ Nevertheless, I agree with G.C. Berkouwer that in Romans 5 "Adam, according to Paul, must stand in the *light of Jesus Christ*. Christ is the *theme* and the *starting-point* in this chapter."²⁹ Romans 5 thinks through the doctrine of justification within a soteriological framework. The super-abounding salvation through Christ is contrasted with the reign of death. The emphasis is on what Christ has done as the typological escalation to what Adam did. The indebtedness of the entire human race to Adam and Christ is spelled out in Romans 5. As the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* notes,

In this passage the main points of comparison that Paul is emphasizing are that as sin and death, as a principle and power, proceeded from Adam to the whole human race, so righteousness and life, as a counteracting and conquering principle and power, proceed from Christ to all mankind.³⁰

The crucial parallelism between what the two Adams brought to the race is not identical. Adam's broken relationship with God caused all his posterity to be born in need of a Savior; whereas only Christ can restore the broken relationship for those who accept what He did in bridging the gulf. Furthermore, what Christ has gained is even more than what the first Adam lost.³¹ The one sin of Adam has opened the gates to a sin-situation, whereas the one act of Christ more than atones for Adam's sin, for it atones for all subsequent sin too.

"Adam was a type of Christ in that both were representatives of the entire human family. He was the representative and author of fallen humanity. Christ was the representative and author of restored humanity"³² (see Rom 5:14). Thus Christ is called "the last

Adam" (1 Cor 15:45), and "the second man" (1 Cor 15:47). Romans 5 does not compare the nature of the two Adams, but their contribution to the race.

Seventh-day Adventists do not believe the guilt³³ of Adam's sin passed on to his posterity as does the Augustinian theory of imputation. For they do not believe the race was seminally present in Adam, and therefore shared in the responsibility for his sin. However there is some confusion among Adventists about what was passed on from Adam to the race. For example, *The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* in 1966 stated

SDA's believe that man inherited a sinful nature without a propensity to sin, and their writings either reject the idea that men inherit the guilt of Adam's transgression, or fail to stress it.³⁴

This surprising statement, denying imputed propensities, is a position not supported by a number of Seventh-day Adventist authors (R. F. Cottrell, 1881, G. W. Morse, 1888, E. Heppenstall, 1977, Richard Rice, 1885) who believe human nature was affected by Adam.³⁵ Some believe that sin should be confined to acts and not include nature (e.g. D. E. Priebe).³⁶

The question now before us is: How does Paul's comparison of the two Adams give insight into the human condition at birth? In Romans 5 Paul broadens the definition of sin. "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the One the many shall be constituted righteous" (Romans 5:19, ABUV*). Clearly Adam's sin affected the race, constituted them sinners. But what does this mean? Some answer this by going to verse 12, "It was through one man that sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus death pervaded the whole human race, *inasmuch as all men have sinned*" (NEB, emphasis added). They suggest that Adam merely began the process, and each man enters sin through his own sinning. However that view is flawed because babies can die before sinning. Others see Adam as the one who not only began the process but also influenced it.

Consider the contribution of the two Adams to the race. Romans 5:17-19 compares the two gifts to mankind from the two Adams. These gifts are genuine, they come apart from human works. Thus, it is the obedience of Christ that constitutes a person

righteous, and not his own obedience. Likewise the disobedience of Adam constitutes a person a sinner (broken relationship with God), and not his own acts of sin. Here Paul penetrates beyond personal acts of sin³⁷ as the reason for mankind's sin-problem to the first sin of Adam that severed the race from its unbroken relationship with God.

Then, Why did Paul also say "death came to all men, because all sinned"? (vs. 12, NIV). Medieval Catholics used the latin Vulgate translation where this text says "*in quo omnes peccaverunt,*" that is, "*in whom all sinned,*" meaning all sinned *in Adam*. This translation has been abandoned by most scholars, who favor "because all sinned" instead of "in whom all sinned."³⁸ More significant than this difference of translation is the immediate context. The next two verses, following Romans 5:12, speak of death reigning even before the giving of the law at Sinai, from the time of Adam to Moses (vss. 13-14). This death reigned from the first sin of Adam through human history. Clearly, the reign of death is linked to its initiation in Adam rather than to subsequent sin, either of Adam or his posterity. Within this context the words "all sinned" are an ingressive aorist tense, meaning Adam's first sin began the process which has continued throughout history. His first sin began the reign of death. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* suggests that

Paul seeks to show that there is something else at work besides the guilt of individuals for personal sins. That something is the result and effect of Adam's fall. All of the descendants of Adam share in the effect of Adam's fall, because death and the tendency to sin are inherited evils.³⁹

The fact that Paul singles out one period of human history, from Adam to Moses, indicates that he was not concerned with hereditary sin, a central problem in most imputation theories. His focus is on the super-abounding grace of Christ in spite of the reign of sin. Adam initiated the sin situation from which depravity and death result. Although death is not a punishment for Adam's sin, it is a consequence of his sin. Adam's sin gave mankind a tendency to sin, a leaning towards sinning which is in the very nature of humans at birth. Human nature has sinful propensities as a result of Adam's broken relationship with God. So the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* can say,

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, they not only lost their right to the tree of life, which resulted inevitably in their death and in the passing on of death to their descendants, but by sin also became depraved in nature, thus lessening their strength to resist evil (see PP 61). Thus Adam and Eve passed on to their posterity a tendency to sin and a liability to its punishment, death. By their transgression sin was introduced as an infectious power in human nature antagonistic to God, and this infection has continued ever since. It is because of this infection of nature, traceable to Adam's sin, that men must be born again (see on chs. 3:23; 5:1).⁴⁰

Adam did not impute to mankind condemnation, guilt, punishment or sin. He did pass on a tendency to sin, because He led mankind into a broken relationship with God. All sins issue out of this state of sin into which mankind is born. In the above quote it is important to note that the need to be born again is not because of personal sins (which of course is also true), but because of "this infection of nature, traceable to Adam's sin." In his parallel passage to Romans 5, Paul compares death from Adam with resurrection out of death from Christ (1 Cor 15:21). Both death and eternal life come from one "man." The impression is that what Adam actually gifted the race is canceled by what Christ provisionally gifted the race. Because of Adam's sin humans are born to die (first death). Because of their own sins, humans need to be born again to avoid the second death.

Another important insight into the meaning of Romans 5 is found in comparing its parallel statements. Romans 5:12, 17 speak of death being passed on and Romans 5:18-19 speak of Adam's sin constituting his descendants sinners. It would seem that this constituting of a person a sinner is the death that is passed on. Both refer to the broken relationship with God which necessitates a Savior. That Adam's sin affects the race is mentioned five times in Romans 5:15-19. It is important to realize that the comparisons in this passage are between Adam and Christ (three times) and not between Adam and his posterity. Paul's focus is on Christ's super-abounding salvation in view of Adam's Fall and its effects.

We need to follow the corresponding phrases in Romans 5, as pointed out by Richard Davidson.⁴¹ There are three types: (1) the *hos (hosper)*. . . *houtos*, or "as. . . so" phrases in verses 12, 18, 19,

21; (2) the *ouch hos*. . . *houtos* or "as. . . so" phrases in verses 15,16; and (3) the *ei*. . . *pollo mallon* "if. . . much more" phrases in 15b, 17. The first group have a correspondence of similarities. Thus, as sin entered the world, so death passed to all humankind. As one offence brought all condemnation, so one act brought all justification/life (potentially), and as from one disobedience many were constituted sinners, so by one obedience were many constituted righteous. The "many" in these last two phrases are to be understood as equivalent to "all," for verse 15 says that many died because of Adam's sin, whereas verse 12 says that death passed to all from Adam's sin.

The second group are a correspondence of opposites, for Christ's gift was not like Adam's sin, and also condemnation came from Adam's one sin whereas justification comes to humans after many sins (Adam's and theirs). The word "condemnation" (Gr. *katakrima*) is not to be understood as imputed punishment, but as imputed broken relationship with its consequences. The third group builds upon the second group by stressing that Christ's gift is much more than Adam's sin. The "much more" focus is mentioned five times in Romans 5 (vss. 9, 10, 15, 17, 20). From these corresponding phrases it is clear that (1) Adam and Christ are similar in gifting the race, apart from human works, and (2) dissimilar in that all receive the gift from Adam, whereas the gift from Christ is received only by those who accept it. Furthermore, (3) Christ gifts the state of justification by faith in the new birth that more than makes up for Adam's gift of the state of sin and death to the race at birth.

The soteriological context of Romans 5 is seen in verses 1-11. Paul glories in the super-abounding salvation through the life and death of Christ. The focus is on justification by faith, not on sanctification which follows in chapters 6 and beyond. Paul has argued convincingly in the first four chapters that justification is not by works of the law but by faith in the gift given by Christ. Romans 5:12 begins with "Therefore," as a summation of what precedes. "Therefore" as by the first Adam sin and death entered and passed through to all mankind, and as a type of Christ (*tupon*, vs. 14) Adam gifted all mankind, so Christ's more abundant gift was given for the whole human race (see John 3:16). Romans 5 mentions gifts (*charisma, dorema*) in verses 15 and 16. To be true gifts they

cannot be earned. This is a crucial argument in Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. It is not by works. Neither Christ's justification nor Adam's sin-state can be earned by human works. The two Adams give to the race apart from human works (good or bad). So death comes to the whole race not when each one sins personally, but when each is born. Furthermore, in the whole context of Scripture, the gifts of both Adams are received at birth: sin, as broken relationship (tendency to sin) at one's first birth, and justification when one is born again.

Terms such as "constituted sinners" and "condemnation," although biblical, are misinterpreted by Federal theologians, because Scripture knows of no imputation of sin, condemnation, punishment or guilt. These terms are simply ways of expressing the broken relationship of mankind with God which has its source in the "original sin" of Adam. This is the essence of the "state of sin" or "tendency to sin" into which all humans are born.

Humans Born Into a Race Separated from God

If humans are born separated from God, then the center of their lives is not God but self. Have you ever seen a baby who was always unselfish? As wonderful as babies are, I believe Edward Heppenstall was right when he said, "Every child is born with an impossible self-centeredness. This Biblical truth is the primary fact of all human life at its beginning."⁴² Consider Ellen White's insights on this. She said,

Adam was required to render obedience to God, not only in his own behalf, *but in behalf of his posterity*. God promised him that if he would stand the test of temptation, preserving his allegiance to the Creator during the great trial to which he would be subjected, his obedience would insure his acceptance and favor with God. He would be forever established in holiness and happiness and these blessings *would be extended to all his posterity*. But Adam failed to bear the test, and because he revolted against God's law, *all his descendants have been sinners*.⁴³

Note that all descendants are sinners as a result of Adam's sin. The word "sinners" is defined by other words she uses, as found in the following quotations. Thus, "because of [Adam's] sin his posterity was *born with inherent propensities*."⁴⁴ For "when man

transgressed the divine law, his nature became evil. . . ."⁴⁵ "Thus at its very source human nature was corrupted."⁴⁶ Here inherent propensities, evil or corrupt nature are all ways to describe a broken relationship with God, which has its center in self.

Just as Adam and Eve were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27), Adam "had a son in his own likeness" (Gen 5:3, NIV). What is the significance of this change? "Seth was a worthy character, and was to take the place of Abel in right-doing. Yet he was a son of Adam, like sinful Cain, and inherited from the nature of Adam no more natural goodness than did Cain. He was *born in sin*."⁴⁷

Conclusions

Geoffrey W. Bromiley said it right when he noted, "original sin raises difficult problems."⁴⁸ Yet the *Sacramentum Mundi*, the *summa* of Catholic theology since Vatican II Council (1963-65), states "the doctrine plays a very small part in the contemporary presentation of Christianity."⁴⁹ Bromiley writes with the whole spectrum of theological thinking in mind, and the *Sacramentum* speaks from the perspective of the Catholic church. Should this difficult problem be important to Seventh-day Adventists? I believe it should be, as it impacts on our understanding of the nature of Divine salvation. The "cure" is better understood in the light of the "disease."

We have seen that sin is more than acts. It precedes acts in the motives, the tendency to sin and the broken relationship with God rooted in self-centeredness. As Erickson suggests, "sin is not merely wrong acts and thoughts, but sinfulness as well, an inherent inner disposition inclining us to wrong acts and thoughts. Thus it is not simply that we are sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners."⁵⁰ What are the implications of the fact that all are sinners at birth, born separated from God, centered in self with a tendency to sin? When we grasp the utter desperate condition of the race, we better appreciate how great is the gift of salvation.

As Coates put it, "The whole nature of the Christian religion stands upon these two great pillars, namely, the greatness of our fall and the greatness of our redemption."⁵¹ As Erickson stated, "the

more radical our conception of sin, the more supernatural the salvation we will deem needed."⁵²

The book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* sums it up in this manner:

While the natural birth saddles each person with the results of Adam's transgression, everyone who experiences the spiritual birth receives the benefits of Christ's perfect life and sacrifice. 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive' (1 Cor 15:22).⁵³

General Conference President Robert S. Folkenberg recently wrote, "Through his sin Adam infected us with sinful natures. . . ."⁵⁴ Whether we call the effects of Adam's sin "sinful nature," "depravity," "sinfulness," "lostness" "leaning," "tendency to sin" or "inherent propensity" is not important, as long as these terms do not imply imputation of sin, punishment or guilt. All these terms are simply attempts to describe the broken relationship with God that each newborn experiences. Without Christ even a precious newborn baby cannot get to heaven. Jesus said "no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Thank God for His super abundant provision to more than make up for what we have received from Adam!

Endnotes

**American Bible Union Version* (Improved Edition), (United Bible Society)

1 Edward Heppenstall, *The Man who is God, A Study of the Person and Nature of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man*, (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1977), p. 107.

2 George Vandervelde, *Original Sin: Two Major trends in contemporary Roman Catholic Reinterpretation* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, Inc., 1981), pp. 10-14.

3 G. C. Berkouwer, *Sin*, trans. Philip C. Holtrop (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 436-448.

4 G. C. Berkouwer observes, "The federalist admit that not all men are personally responsible for the sin which Adam has committed," (*Sin*, p. 465).

5 The Creationist view of the soul's origin is that God creates each individual soul directly at the moment of conception or at birth, whereas the Traducianist view of the soul's origin is the soul is transmitted from the parents. The first is immediate, and the second mediate. (See M. J. Erickson, *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986], p. 157; and G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962], pp. 279-309). Catholics and Calvinists prefer the Creationist view and Lutherans believe the Traducian view. In 1950 the Pope's encyclical *Humani Generis* concurred that ideas relative to the creation of the human body could conform to unfolding insights from science, but the truth that souls are immediately created by God must be held fast. Of course, both views hold that the soul is immortal.

6 *The Documents of Vatican II*, Gen. ed. Walter M. Abbott, S. J., trans. Joseph Gallagher, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), pp. 233-234.

7 Vandervelde, p. 57. See pages 1-2.

8 Berkouwer, *Sin*, p. 436.

9 For example, Edwin H. Zackrisson, *Seventh-day Adventists and Original Sin: A Study of the Early Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of the Effect of Adam's Sin on his Posterity*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Andrews University, 1984. I am indebted to Zackrisson's thesis for this source listing. Albert R. Parker, *A Theological Study of the Effects of the Sin of Adam upon his Posterity as Related to Sin and Guilt*, M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 1954; Lee H. Fletcher, *The Seventh-day Adventist Concept of Original Sin*, M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 1960; Edwin H. Zackrisson, *M. L. Andreasen's Position on the Moral Nature of Christ*, term paper, Andrews University, 1963; Andrew Mustard, *A Comparison between Calvin's Doctrine of Original Sin and the Seventh-day Adventist Position Implied from Various Sources*, term paper, Andrews University, 1965; Bruno W. Steinwig, *What about Original Sin?* term paper, Andrews University, 1969; Haraldo J. Seidi, *On Original Sin*, term paper, Andrews University, 1972; Marius E. J. Brinkman, *Original Sin*, term paper, Andrews University, 1974; Tim Crosby, *A New Approach to an Adventist Doctrine of Original Sin*, term paper, Andrews University, 1977.

10 Zackrisson's doctoral dissertation gave insight into the interpretation of "original sin" in early Seventh-day Adventist history.

11 Also, the SDA view on the new birth changed from placing it at the resurrection to conversion. See Zackrisson, pp. 252-257, 371. The focus on post-new birth, Christian living occupied some of the new soteriological emphasis, for original sin was now understood to have affected the *imago Dei* (image of God, Genesis 1:26, 27) - "Through sin the divine likeness was marred, and well-nigh obliterated." Ellen G. White, *Education* (Angwin, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1952), p. 17.

12 J. M. Stephenson, "Inasmuch as all die for original sin, none can die for personal sin." *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 22, 1854; Uriah Smith, "Inasmuch as all die for original sin, or on account of the sin of Adam, . . ." *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 9, 1857 are two examples. Little wonder that Smith could affirm, "Christ's death had no reference whatever to Adam's original sin, in the way of paying the penalty therefore, or saving men from its effects." *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 3, 1888. See Zackrisson, op cit, pp. 417-418.

13 E. R. Jones "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.' Rom. 5:19. None will deny that this refers to the inherited depravity, the sinful nature and tendency in which, through his disobedience, every single soul of Adam's race is born." *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 7, 1890.

14 Berkouwer, *Sin*, p. 242.

15 See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), pp. 564-575 for a good discussion of these terms, from which I have drawn.

16 See C. Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Sin* (London: Epworth Press), 1953 and G.M. Staffen, *Sin as Set Forth in Holy Scripture* (New York, NY: E. P. Dutton Company, 1986).

17 *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed F. D. Nichol (Takoma Park, Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1954), 3:755.

18 See Leon Morris, *Luke, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), p. 77.

19 *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953), 1:603

20 See Strong, p. 579. This text implies that (a) sin exists in the case of infants prior to moral consciousness, and therefore (b) sin exists in the nature, as distinguished from personal activity.

21 Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1956), p. 17.

22 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Takoma Park, Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1958), p. 57.

- 23 Heppenstall, p. 122.
- 24 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1940), p. 21.
- 25 The Greek verb for "coming" (*erchomenon*) can grammatically, in this passage, apply to Christ's coming in the first advent (as the RSV and NIV translate) or to each human's coming into the world (as in the KJV). Both are grammatically and theologically correct.
- 26 Heppenstall, p. 107.
- 27 Heppenstall, p. 116.
- 28 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 149-187.
- 29 Berkouwer, *SIN*, pp. 509-510.
- 30 *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 6:529
- 31 "By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.
- 32 *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 6:532.
- 33 Ellen White has written about receiving guilt, although it is not clear what is meant. For example, "As related to the first Adam, men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death." Ellen G. White letter 68, 1899, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 6:1074. Also Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assn., 1954), p. 475; "The sin of our first parents brought guilt and sorrow upon the world, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1913), p. 61. See the exchange of views on whether Ellen White means guilt or not, Robert Olson affirms this in *Ministry*, October 1970, and Bruno Steinwig denies it in *Ministry*, 1971.
- 34 *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, ed Don F. Neufeld, (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn, 1966), p. 748. It is also true to say that some believe in inheriting propensities without calling them sin.
- 35 For example, Edward Heppenstall, *The Man Who is God, A Study of the Person and Nature of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man*, pp. 107-128. Richard Rice, *The Reign of God* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1985), pp. 126-128. Note the following from around 1888. R. F. Cottrell, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, (subsequently as RH) January 18, 1881, "The whole race was lost when our first parents sinned." *Adult Sabbath School Quarterly*, 1889, "Lessons on the Letter to the Hebrews," p. 17, "Adam's sin involved his whole posterity in ruin." G. W. Morse, RH, (June 19, 1888), p. 394, "The entire race sinned in Adam."
- 36 For one example, Dennis E. Priebe says, "Sin is not basically the way man is, but the way man chooses." Or, "sin is concerned with a man's will rather than with his nature." *Face to Face with the Real Gospel* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1985), p. 17. Even though Priebe maintains that "sin is not nature but choice," op cit, p. 17, he also believes "we do inherit badness, weakness, and corruption from Adam. We have the same desires that Adam had in his sinful state. We desire to do wrong; we desire to rebel against God. It is hard for us to do right. It is more natural to do wrong. I think if we're honest with ourselves, we will admit that we are our own tempters all too often. We really do not need Satan to follow us around and tempt us with all sorts of ideas, because we are well able to tempt ourselves. Our own natures lead us astray. . . So we do inherit negative tendencies from Adam, which lead us to do wrong." op. cit., pp. 27, 28. So, for Priebe, only the choice to give into nature is sin, not the nature itself.
- 37 Although man's own sin obviously adds to the sin-problem, and is not to be condoned.
- 38 Berkouwer, *Sin*, p. 492.
- 39 *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1957, 6:531.
- 40 *Ibid*.
- 41 See Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study in Hermeneutical Typos Structures*, (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), pp. 299-304.

- 42 Heppenstall, p. 121.
- 43 Ellen G. White, Ms 126, 1901, italics added.
- 44 Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1956, 5:1128 (EGW letter 8, 1895) italics added and brackets supplied.
- 45 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1950), p. 505.
- 46 Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 16, 1904, (vol. 4, p. 281).
- 47 Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, February 20, 1879, (vol. 1, p. 87), bold letters supplied.
- 48 Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Historical Theology. An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1987), p. 183.
- 49 *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, eds. Karl Rahner, Cornelius Ernst and Kevin Smyth (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, nd), 3:329.
- 50 Erickson, p. 578.
- 51 Gottfried Quell, George Bertram, Gustav Stahlin and Walter Grundmann, *Bible Key Words from Gerhard Kittel's Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, trans Grundmann and Coates, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1959), preface by J. R. Coates, p. v.
- 52 Erickson, p. 562.
- 53 General Conference Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Washington D.C., 1988), p. 113.
- 54 Robert S. Folkenberg, "Called to Repentance in Christ," *Adventist Review*, October 28, 1993, p. 3.