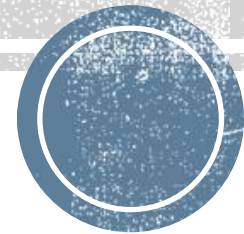


# **The Garden and Our Guilt**

**Why All People Are Born Sinners**

Mike Riccardi

Sundays in July 2024



# Born Sinners

- Psalm 51:5 – “Behold, I was **brought forth** in iniquity, and in sin my mother **conceived** me.”
- Psalm 58:3 – “The wicked are estranged **from the womb**; those who speak lies go astray **from birth**.”
- Ephesians 2:3 – “Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and **were by nature children of wrath**, even as the rest.”



# Why Study Sin?

- The glory of the **stars** is only enjoyed against the dark contrast of the **night sky**.
- The glory of **salvation** is only beheld against the dark contrast of **man's sin**.
- If we underestimate the **gravity** of our **need** before a holy God, we will underestimate the **sovereign power** of God's **remedy** and the **glory** of His **salvation**.



# Man's Original State

- Very good
  - Genesis 1:31 – “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was **very good**.”
- Upright
  - Ecclesiastes 7:29 – “God made men **upright**.”
- “Original Righteousness” (Berkhof, 204)
  - Untested Righteousness
  - Innocence
  - No bent to sin



# Man's Original State

- Fallible Righteousness
  - Able to sin
  - Able not to sin
  - Not: perfect blessedness
  - Heaven: Unable to sin

Original righteousness  
was **not** an  
immutable righteousness.



# Man's Probation

- God was pleased to test the original, fallible, untested righteousness of man.
- From untested, fallible righteousness to confirmed, infallible righteousness.
- Genesis 2:15–17 – “Then Yahweh God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’”



# Man's Probation

- Genesis 2:15–17 – “...‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’”
- **The threat of death for disobedience implies the promise of life for obedience.**

## Original

Able to sin  
Able not to sin  
Able to fall

## Exalted

Not able to sin  
Not able to fall



# Man's Probation

- Genesis 2:15–17 – “...‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’”
- Leviticus 18:5 – “So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may **live** if he **does** them.”
- Romans 10:5 – “For Moses writes that the man who **practices** the righteousness which is based on law shall **live** by that righteousness.”





# Man's Probation

- Genesis 2:15–17 – “...‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’”
- Genesis 3:22 – “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.”



# Man's Probation

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  - All Qal perfects; no iterative sense



# Man's Probation

- Genesis 3:22 – “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and **take** also from the tree of life, and **eat**, and **live** forever.”

If **disobedience** brought **death** by the **removal** from the tree of life, **obedience** would have brought **life** by granting **access** to the tree of life.



# Man's Probation

If **disobedience** brought **death** by the **removal** from the tree of life, **obedience** would have brought **life** by granting **access** to the tree of life.

1. An **explicit threat** of spiritual **death** upon disobedience
2. An **implicit promise** of spiritual **life** upon obedience



# Original Sin

- “...the state of sin that plagues all of Adam’s natural descendants and is the origin of all other sins”  
(Beeke & Smalley, *RST*, 2:365).



# Original Sin

- Rather: “...the **state** of sin that plagues all of Adam’s natural descendants and is the origin of all other sins” (RST, 2:365).
- The **condition** with which every descendant of Adam is born; the sinfulness that is the root and fountain of all of our sinful **acts**.



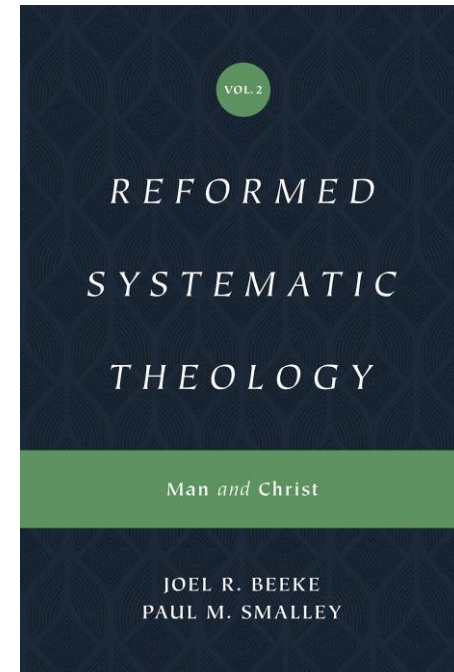
# Original Sin

- Imputation of **Guilt** & Transmission of **Corruption**
- What is **our relationship** to the sin of Adam?
  - Are we **guilty** of Adam's transgression? If so, why? And how?
  - Do we **inherit** an actually-corrupt or polluted nature? If so, why? And how?



# Original Sin a Cardinal Doctrine

“If we set aside the doctrine of the historical sin of Adam and its imputation to his natural descendants, then we have forsaken the biblical diagnosis of mankind’s misery and hence also the biblical remedy, which is the gospel of Christ.”



Beeke & Smalley  
*Reformed Systematic Theology,*  
2:382





# Romans 5:12–19

- **Guilt** and **Condemnation** of all united to Adam
- **Righteousness** and **Justification** of all united to Christ
- “Adam’s sin cast all his natural descendants into a moral and spiritual pit. His sin was propagated to his offspring, making them sinners, in a twofold manner: **imputation of guilt and transmission of [corruption]**. This is original sin: our sin before we commit actual sin” (*RST*, 2:388).



# Romans 5:12–19

- Imputation of Guilt
  - Forensic / Legal
  - Change of **status** rather than **nature**
  - Opposite of infusion, impartation
  - **Guilty** before a standard of **law**
  - Sentenced to **condemnation**
  - *Logizomai*: credit, count, reckon (Rom 4:3/Gen 15:6)



# Romans 5:12–19

- **Imputation of Guilt**
  - *Logizomai*: credit, count, reckon (Rom 4:3 / Gen 15:6)
  - Abraham **believed** and it was **credited** to **him** as **righteousness**.
  - Adam **sinned** and it was **debited** to **us** as **guiltiness**.



# Romans 5:12–19

- Imputation of Guilt

- *Logizomai*: credit, count, reckon (Rom 4:3/Gen 15:6)
- Abraham **believed** and it was **credited** to **him** as **righteousness**.
- Adam **sinned** and it was **debited** to **us** as **guiltiness**.
- “...to attribute anything to a person or persons, upon adequate grounds, as the judicial or meritorious reason of reward or punishment” (Hodge, *ST*, 1:194).



# Romans 5:12–19

- Imputation of Guilt

- Romans 5:18 – “Through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men.”

- Romans 5:19 – “Through the one man’s disobedience the many were **made** sinners.”

- *Kathistēmi* – Constituted, appointed

- Acts 6:3 – “...whom we may **put in charge** of this task.”

- Titus 1:5 – “...and **appoint** elders in every city...”

- Heb 5:1; 7:28; 8:3 – **Appointment** of the high priest



# Romans 5:12–19

- **Transmission of Corruption**
  - Transformative, inherent pollution
  - Change of **nature** rather than **status**
  - Corruption transmitted through **ordinary generation**
  - “A sinful state followed the sinful deed” (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:106–07).
  - Genesis 5:3 – The **nature** Adam passes down to his son is a nature **like** his own.



# Romans 5:12–19

- **Transmission of Corruption**
  - Genesis 5:3 – The **nature** Adam passes down to his son is a nature **like** his own.
  - The Heritage of Death: “**And he died**”
    - Adam (5:5)                      Mahalalel (5:17)
    - Seth (5:8)                        Jared (5:20)
    - Enosh (5:11)                    Methusaleh (5:27)
    - Kenan (5:14)                    Lamech (5:31)



# Romans 5:12–19

- Transmission of Corruption
  - Genesis 5:3 – The **nature** Adam passes down to his son is a nature **like** his own.
  - The Heritage of Death: “**And he died**”
  - Genesis 6:5 – “...the **wickedness** of man was **great** on the earth, and that **every** intent of the thoughts of his heart was **only evil continually**.”





# Original Sin

“The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the **guilt** of Adam’s first sin, the **want** of original righteousness, and the **corruption** of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all **actual** transgressions which proceed from it.”



Westminster Shorter Catechism  
Question 18



# Guilt or Corruption?

- Both!
  - 1 Corinthians 15:22 – “**In Adam all die**”
  - Romans 5:19 – “Through the one man’s disobedience the many were **constituted** sinners.”



# Guilt or Corruption?

- Both!
  - 1 Corinthians 15:22 – “In Adam all die”
  - Romans 5:19 – “Through the one man’s disobedience the many were constituted **sinners**.”
    - By virtue of our **legal union** to Adam, his actions counted as if they were our actions, and we are debited with his **guilt**.
    - The **corruption** of that sin is transmitted to us through **ordinary generation**.



# Rom 5:12 & eph'hō

- Romans 5:12 – “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death [entered] through sin, and so death spread to all men, because [ἐφ’ ᾧ] all sinned...”
  - Literally: “upon which”
  - KJV – “for that”
  - Locative: “in whom”
    - Vulgate: *in quo omnes peccaverunt*
    - **Realism** – All humanity was physically in Adam



# Realism

“This theory is to the effect that human nature constitutes, not only generically but **numerically** as well, **a single unit**. Adam possessed the whole human nature, and in him it corrupted itself by its own voluntary apostatizing act in Adam.

Individual men are not separate substances, but manifestations of the same general substance; they are numerically one.



Systematic Theology

Louis Berkhof

Louis Berkhof  
*Systematic Theology*, 241



# Realism

“This universal human nature became corrupt and guilty in Adam, and consequently **every individualization** of it in the descendants of Adam is also corrupt and guilty from the very beginning of its existence. This means that all men **actually sinned** in Adam before the individualization of human nature began.”



Systematic Theology

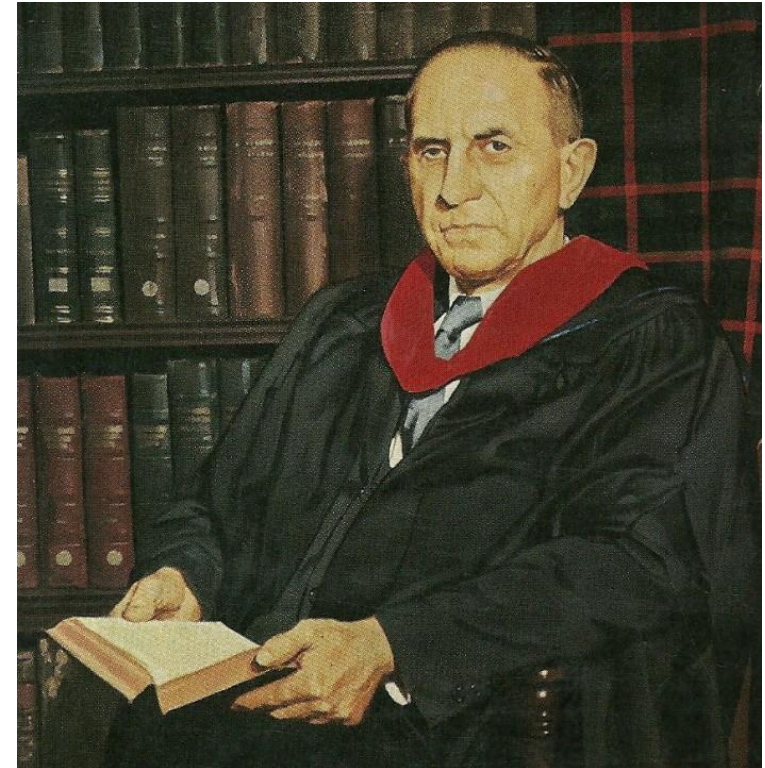
Louis Berkhof

Louis Berkhof  
*Systematic Theology*, 241



# Realism

“In brief, the position [of realism] is that human nature in its unindividualized unity existed in its entirety in Adam, that, when Adam sinned, not only did he sin but also the **common nature** which existed in its unity in him, ...

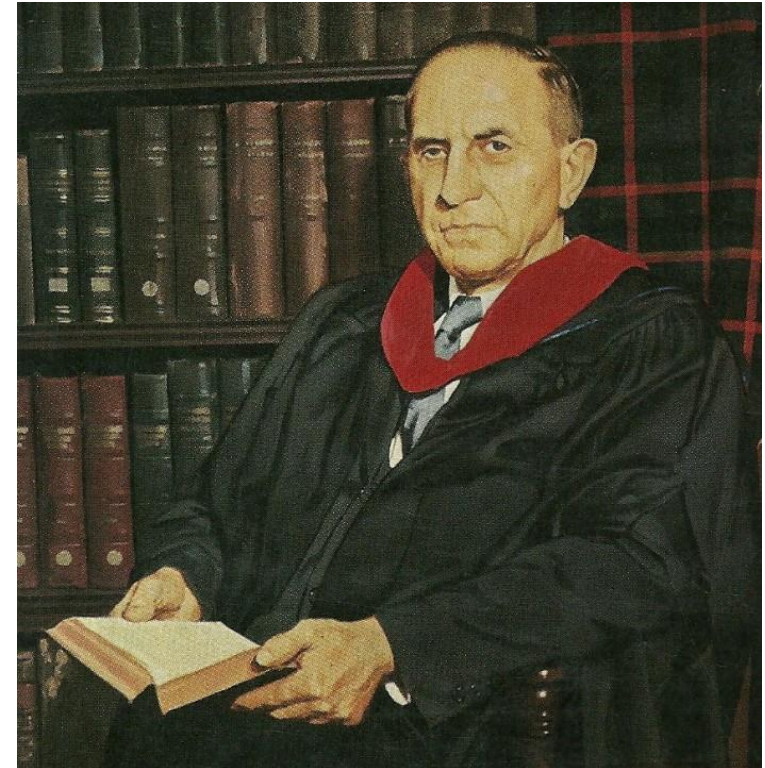


John Murray  
*The Imputation of Adam's Sin, 24*



# Realism

“...and that, since each person who comes into the world is an individualization of this one human nature, each person as an ‘individualized portion’ of that common nature is both culpable and punishable for the sin committed by that unity.”



John Murray  
*The Imputation of Adam's Sin, 24*





# Realism

- Hebrews 7:9–10 – “And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still **in the loins of his father** when Melchizedek met him.”
  - Because Levi was seminally in the loins of Abraham, Abraham’s action could be said to be his action.
  - Because Adam’s nature *was* human nature, and because we were in his loins, his sin corrupted human nature. That corrupt human nature was passed to us.
- **Seminal headship**



# Reasons to Reject Realism

## 1. No Contextual Basis

- Quite the opposite!
- Approaches doctrine of pre-existence

## 2. Grammatically Unlikely

- Would demand antecedent to be 21 words removed
- *En*, rather than *epi*, expected (cf. 1 Cor 15:22)



# Reasons to Reject Realism

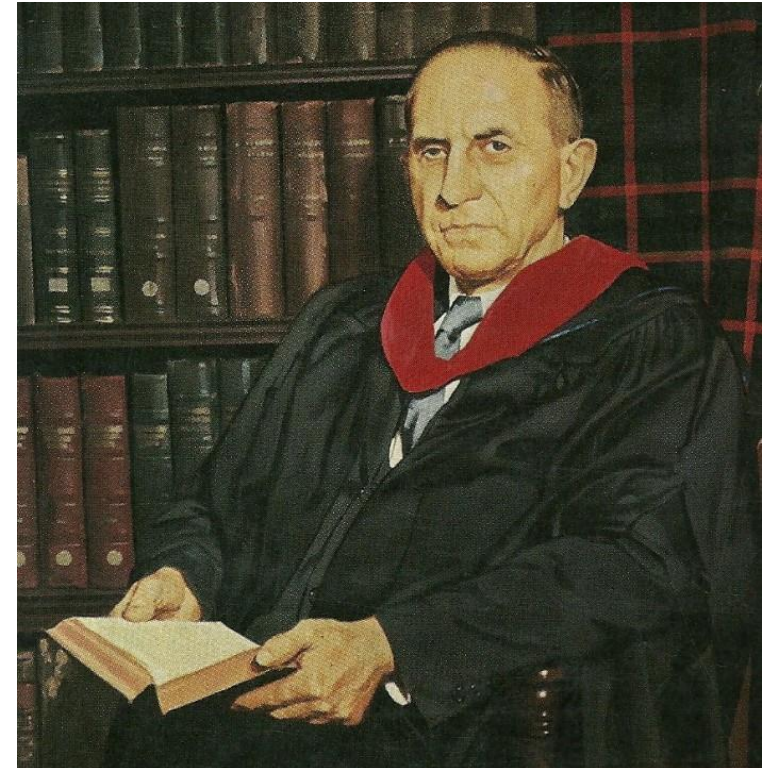
## 3. Can't Account for Adam-Christ Parallelism

- Is Christ's righteousness passed to His people **seminally**?
- Our union with Christ is not natural or seminal, but **legal**.
- Christ's **lived-out record** of human **obedience** is counted to be ours.
- So also: Adam's **lived-out record** of human **disobedience** is counted to be ours.



# Reasons to Reject Realism

“It is admitted by the realist that there is no ‘realistic’ union between Christ and the justified. That is to say, there is no human nature, specifically and numerically one, existing in its unity in Christ, which is individualized in those who are beneficiaries of Christ’s righteousness. ...

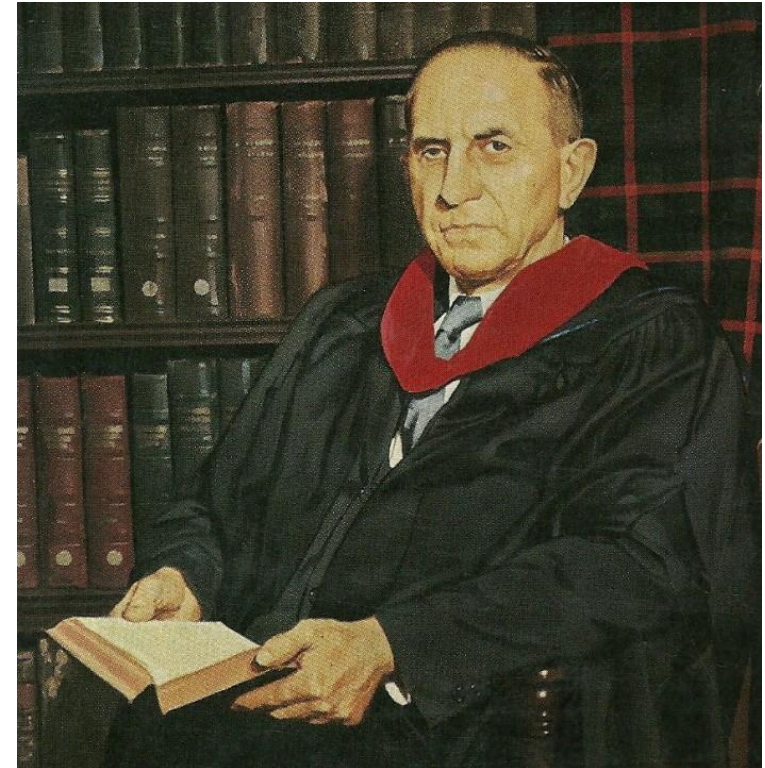


John Murray  
*The Imputation of Adam’s Sin, 33*



# Reasons to Reject Realism

“...On realist premises, therefore, a **radical disparity** must be posited between the character of the union that exists between **Adam** and his posterity, on the one hand, and the union that exists between **Christ** and those who are his, on the other.”



John Murray  
*The Imputation of Adam's Sin, 33*



# Reasons to Reject Realism

## 3. Can't Account for Adam-Christ Parallelism

- The **mechanism** by which Adam and Christ bring guilt or righteousness is **exactly the same**.
- But we are **not infused** with righteousness through an **essential union** with Christ.
- Counted **righteous** in Christ; counted **guilty** in Adam
- Infusion of **corruption** in **ordinary generation** corresponds to infusion of **practical righteousness** in **progressive sanctification**.



# Reasons to Reject Realism

4. Can't Account for Guilt of Only One Transgression
  - We were just as much “in Adam’s loins” when he committed the **rest** of his sins in his life.
  - Romans 5:16, 18 – “...**judgment arose from one transgression. ... through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men.**”
  - We were no more in Adam’s loins than in Noah’s loins, or our fathers’ loins. Why aren’t we guilty of their sins also?



# Rom 5:12 & *eph'hō*

- Romans 5:12 – “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death [entered] through sin, and so death spread to all men, because [ἐφ’ ᾧ] all sinned...”
  - Locative: “in whom”
  - Consecutive: “with the result that”
    - Mediate Imputation
    - Death leads to sin
    - Paul says the opposite in Rom 5:12





# Rom 5:12 & *eph'hō*

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  - Locative: “in whom”
  - Consecutive: “with the result that”
  - Causal: “because”
    - LSB, NASB, ESV, CSB, NET, NKJV, NIV
    - Fits with 2 Cor 5:4
    - Coheres best with immediate imputation



# Mediate vs. Immediate

- Romans 5:12 – “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death [entered] through sin, and so death spread to all men, **because all sinned...**”
- Pelagianism: Each one dies as a result of personal sin; Adam merely a bad example.
- Mediate Imputation
  - Adam’s Sin → Corrupt Nature → Acts of Sin → Guilt/Death
  - Guilt imputed by the mediation of a corrupt nature
  - You’re guilty because you’re corrupt



# Mediate vs. Immediate

“Adam’s descendants derive their innate corruption from him by a process of **natural generation**, and only on the basis of that **inherent** depravity which they share with him are they also considered guilty of his apostasy. ...



Systematic Theology

Louis Berkhof

Louis Berkhof  
*Systematic Theology*, 243



# Mediate vs. Immediate

“...They are not born corrupt because they are guilty in Adam, but they are considered **guilty because they are corrupt**. Their condition is not based on their legal status, but their legal status on their condition.”



Systematic Theology

Louis Berkhof

Louis Berkhof  
*Systematic Theology*, 243



# Against Mediate Imputation

1. Makes Adam's Sin an Insufficient Basis for Condemnation
  - Romans 5:14 – “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had **not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam.**”
  - Human beings died who did not commit personal acts of sin.



# Against Mediate Imputation

## 2. Misreads the Grammar of Romans 5:12



Romans 5:12 – “Therefore, just as through one man sin **entered** into the world, and death [**entered**] through sin, and so death **spread** to all men, because all **sinned**...”



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# Against Mediate Imputation

## 2. Misreads the Grammar of Romans 5:12

Romans 5:12 – “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death [entered] through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned...”

- At what point in the past did **all people sin**?  
→ **When Adam their representative head sinned**



# Mediate vs. Immediate

- Romans 5:12 – “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death [entered] through sin, and so death spread to all men, **because all sinned...**”
  - Pelagianism
  - Mediate Imputation
  - Immediate Imputation
    - Adam’s Sin → Guilt → Corruption → Acts of Sin → Death
    - 1 Cor 15:22; Rom 5:19
    - Guilt imputed immediately by virtue of union
    - You’re corrupt because you’re guilty





# How is This Just?

How can it be fair for God to count us guilty of Adam's sin?

- Ezekiel 18:20 – “The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity...” (cf. Deut 24:16; 2 Kgs 14:6).
- 1. Adam is not merely the **natural** head, but **federal** head, of humanity.
  - “God does not impute sin to a person merely because one of his ancestors sinned. Adam stood in special relation to mankind” (*RST*, 2:393).



# How is This Just?

How can it be fair for God to count us guilty of Adam's sin?

1. Adam is not merely the **natural** head, but **federal** head, of humanity.
2. We understand the fairness of representation in **other contexts**.
  - A head of state decides to involve his country in war
  - Basketball: Personal fouls vs. Team fouls



# How is This Just?

How can it be fair for God to count us guilty of Adam's sin?

1. Adam is not merely the **natural** head, but **federal** head, of humanity.
2. We understand the fairness of representation in **other contexts**.
3. There is **no injustice** with God (Rom 9:14)
4. It is reasonable for the **natural** head to be **representative** head.



# How is This Just?

How can it be fair for God to count us guilty of Adam's sin?

5. Adam was an **excellent** representative.
6. No objections to the justice of imputed righteousness.



# Original Sin: Summary

- All humanity **sinned in Adam** by virtue of the **legal union** they had with him.
- All humanity is **imputed** with Adam's **guilt**, and therefore, in Adam all die.
- Sin also brings **practical corruption**, which is transmitted through **natural generation**.
- We inherit **both** the guilt **and** the corruption of Adam's sin, our actual corruption **following** from our imputed guilt.



# The Only Remedy

- Imputation of **our disobedience** to Christ
  - 2 Cor 5:21a – “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf...”
  - 1 Pet 2:24a – “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross...”
- Imputation of **Christ’s obedience** to us
  - 2 Cor 5:21b – “...so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
  - 1 Pet 2:24b – “...so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.”



# The Only Remedy

- Imputation of Adam's disobedience to us (**Rom 5:12**)
  - **Adam's sin** provides an **actual, lived-out record of human disobedience**, which was counted to be ours through our union with him, and became the **legal basis** on which **God justly constituted all men guilty**.
- Imputation of our disobedience to Christ (**2 Cor 5:21**)
  - **Our sin** provides an **actual, lived-out record of human disobedience**, which was counted to be Christ's through His union with us, and became the **legal basis** on which **God justly punished Him on the cross**.



# The Only Remedy

- Imputation of Adam's disobedience to us (**Rom 5:12**)
  - **Adam's sin** provides an **actual, lived-out record of human disobedience**, which was counted to be ours through our union with him, and became the **legal basis** on which **God justly constituted all men guilty**.
- Imputation of Christ's obedience to us (**Rom 5:19**)
  - **Christ's life of obedience** provides the **actual, lived-out record of righteousness**, which is counted to be ours through our union with Him, and becomes the **legal basis** on which **God justly constitutes believers righteous**.

