

The Theology of the Westminster Standards
WCF 6.4 – Original Corruption and Actual Sins

I. Review – WCF 6.3 – The Consequences of Adam and Eve’s Sin for their Descendants

They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation. (WCF 6.3)

- A. What are the two-fold consequences of Adam’s sin for all of his and Eve’s descendants?
- B. What is the biblical rationale (see Rom 5:12!) for the imputation, or reckoning, of Adam’s guilt upon the human race?
1. **Rom 5:12** – *“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned ...”*

“... the only solution is that there must be some kind of solidarity existing between the ‘one’ and ‘the all’ with the result that the sin of the one may at the same time and with equal relevance be regarded as the sin of all.”

– John Murray on Rom 5:12 (“all sinned”) in light of Rom 5:15–19

WLC Q. 22. *Did all mankind fall in that first transgression?* A. The covenant being made with Adam as a public person, not for himself only, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in that first transgression.

C. The “Adam-Christ” Parallel

1. **Rom 5:18** – *“Therefore, (just) as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.”* [Paul is not a universalist; rather, Paul is at pains to make it parallel!]
2. **1 Cor 5:21–23** – *“For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.”*

“In God’s sight there are two men—Adam and Christ—and these two men have all other men hanging at their girdle strings.” – Puritan Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680)

- D. **** BONUS QUESTION ****: What is the significance of the consequences of Adam’s sin being restricted to those “descending from them by ordinary generation”?

“It may not be strictly accurate to say that we become depraved by natural generation. It is true that in the act of generation we become depraved. This is true because it is by generation that we come to be as distinct persons. In this sense it would not be improper to say that we become depraved by natural generation. But natural generation is not the reason why we are conceived in sin . . . Natural generation we may speak of, if we will, as the means of conveying depravity, but, strictly, natural generation is the means whereby we come to be and depravity is the correlate of our having come to be.” – John Murray

II. WCF 6.4 – Original Corruption and Our Actual Sins

From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions. (WCF 6.3)

- A. What are the differences between (a) Pelagianism, (b) Semi-pelagianism, and (c) the Confession/Augustinianism? Which do you think is most common today?
1. **Pelagianism** – a heretical lay movement associated with the Welsh monk Pelagius (c. 354–418), who rejected original sin (i.e., imputed guilt and total depravity) from Adam and emphasized human choice in salvation (“ought” implies “can”).
 - a. Batman – *“It’s not who I am, but what I do that defines me.”*
 2. **Semi-Pelagianism** – a “middle ground” between Pelagianism and Augustinianism, holding that Adam’s sin only weakened the will of man, who still retains the moral ability to cooperate with God’s grace in order to be saved.
 - b. Miracle Max – *“It just so happens that your friend here is only mostly dead. There’s a big difference between mostly dead and all dead. Mostly dead is slightly alive. With all dead, well, with all dead there’s usually only one thing you can do.”*
 2. **Augustinianism** – The biblical view, championed by Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD), that Adam’s sin brought death-deserving guilt and comprehensive corruption upon the human race, such that nothing truly good can proceed from the human heart, any more than a bad tree can produce good fruit (cf. Mark 7:20–23; Matt 7:17–18); not that every human life at all times is guilty of violating all of God’s commandments, but the deepest orientation of the fallen heart is one of unbending “hostility” (Rom 8:7) toward God in all areas of life.
 - a. **Rom 8:7–8** – *“For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”*
 - b. **Gen 6:5** – *“The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”*
 - c. **Eph 2:1**– *“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience ...”*
- B. What are the implications of one’s view of fallen human nature for (a) politics; (b) education; (c) the sexual revolution (LGBTQ+); and (d) the gospel?