

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL

“Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came to the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech, Naomi’s husband died; and she was left and her two sons...and Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them...”(Ruth 1:1-5).

We have seen thus far, in the name of Elimelech, the doctrine of God and the doctrine of man; and in the name of his wife, Naomi, the doctrine of the Fall. Now we will see, in the name of his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, the doctrine of the consequences of the Fall. Naomi’s name means “pleasant”. When man saw that the fruit of the forbidden tree was pleasant, he disobeyed God (sinned), took of the fruit and died, just as God said he would. Now we see his children also dying! Mahlon means sickness, which results in physical death. Chilion means pining, psychological disorder that spells emotional and intellectual death. The reason for this is reported in Romans 5: 12: *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that (in whom) all have sinned”*

The Apostle Paul, in his arguments for justification to life by imputation of the obedience of Christ to His elect people, draws upon the consequences of Adam’s disobedience passing on to his posterity as a parallel of the obedience of Christ being imputed to those who are in vital union with Him. *“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous”*(Romans 5:19). A Reformed view of this passage puts Adam as the federal head and representative of all the non-elect on the same level with the Christ as the federal Head and representative of all the elect. This doctrine did not appear until the sixteenth century Reformation, but it has dominated Reformed theology since then, either in the form of *mediate* or *immediate* imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity. It is not my purpose or within the limited space for this article to debate these theories. I will, however, make a few observations which make such doctrines of the imputation of Adam’s sin less than unshakable.

First, its appeal to the imputation of Christ’s righteousness is not absolute and, therefore, an inadequate parallel, because such imputation to the elect is never without voluntary, conscious faith as a condition of union with Him. The alleged immediate imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity contains no such criteria. And although these will all certainly sin, the alleged imputation of Adam’s sin precedes such sins, and *must include infants*. According to this theory, all who die in infancy must go to hell. Nor does infant “baptism” solve the problem.

Secondly, there is no Biblical precedent for imputing the sins of the fathers to the children. Contrarily, the New Covenant expressly denies such a thing (Jeremiah 31:29-30).

Thirdly, the acts of a father are counted the acts of his descendants by virtue of organic union, not federal headship, so that Abraham’s tithe to Melchisedec is counted, since Levi was in organic union with Abraham just as we all were in organic union with Adam. Levi’s tithe to Melchisedec was, therefore, literal, not imputed! On this same basis, Adam’s posterity is guilty of his sin, because they literally sinned when he sinned. Adam’s sin was our sin because we were organically in him, not because he was our representative. The outcome of the two views are the same; but the difference is, one view is Biblical, and the other is not. That is no small consideration.

The human casualty of the Fall is portrayed in sickness and death, but the consequences of the Fall, and the curse incurred, envelopes the whole earth which became cursed “for man’s sake”. Paul tells us in Romans 8:22 that *“the whole creation groans and travails in pain together”*. It, together with us all, waits for that blessed promise of the manifestation of the sons of God when the whole creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Romans 8:21)

- C. M.