Romans 5 and the Necessity of Christ

Federal Headship and Why Everyone in Heaven Needs Him

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Written for my grandson Samuel, and Drs. Maddox and Thomas in partial completion of the requirements of the PhD program at North American School of Theology

Dear Samuel,

In the further attempt to leave you with a theological and intellectual legacy, I have written you a brief overview and interpretation of Romans 5 and the subject of Federal Headship. This is, as the other documents, in hope that you are prepared to think and to make sense of life and the glorious Gospel of Christ.

Love,
your grandfather

Abstract

Romans 5 teaches that Adam and Christ stand as two heads over two humanities. Adam, as the federal head of the race, brings guilt and corruption to all who descend from him. Christ, as the federal head of those united to him by faith, brings justification and life. That same pattern —one legally representing the many—appears elsewhere in Scripture: in the two Adams of 1 Corinthians 15, in Hosea's covenant with Adam, in Levi counted in Abraham's loins, in the imputation texts of 2 Corinthians and Galatians, and in Old Testament corporate dealing under heads. The stake is plain. Everyone who reaches heaven reaches it only by Christ's sacrifice—by the removal of guilt and by the gift of his righteousness. Without that federal parallel, other accounts leave open paths into heaven that bypass the cross. Romans 5 will not allow that.

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Brief Note

This treatise grows from the extended Romans 5 extract also filed as Appendix B in *Molinist Federalism Attempted and Rejected*. I expand it here as a stand-alone paper, because the necessity of Christ for everyone in heaven is a stake that extract already pressed and did not finish.

Part I — Federal Headship in Romans 5

This paper is my fuller Romans 5:12–19 and federal-headship presentation. What follows elevates the continuous voice on Adam as seminal and covenantal head, and on Christ as covenantal head of those found in him by faith. Middle knowledge and the prior Molinist attempt I have treated elsewhere; they are not the load here.

I have driven other stakes elsewhere, and I leave this one standing until the ground is clear, because the argument of Romans 5:12–19 will not bear a hurried reading, and because the justice of the whole gospel is bound up with it. The biggest stake not yet mentioned is Adam and Christ as heads. Adam is the seminal and covenantal head of the race that descends from him by ordinary generation. Christ is the covenantal head of those who are found in him by faith. From the first head come guilt and corruption. From the second head come justification and life. If that parallel is broken, Paul's argument is broken. If that parallel stands, then a very real dilemma exists for any account of salvation that will allow Adam to transmit a wounded nature and will not allow him to transmit guilt, and a very real dilemma exists for any account of freedom that will make God the author of Adam's sin in order to keep the decree intact, or that will empty the decree in order to keep Adam free.

This first part has two movements, and they belong together. First I stay inside Romans 5:12–19 until the comparison Paul actually wrote is allowed to finish itself. Then I state the condition in which that comparison leaves the children of Adam, seminally and covenantally corrupted and guilty, and I close that statement with the light that still leaves them without excuse. The causal map that keeps Adam the author of his own defection, and God not the author of the sin, I have treated elsewhere; it is not the load of this paper. I drive this as the biggest stake of federal headship itself.

I. The Comparison Paul Wrote

The English of the passage, as the English Standard Version prints it, is this:

"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— 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. 15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through

one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. 16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. 17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. 18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."

The Greek of verse 12 is "Διὰ τοῦτο ὥσπερ δι' ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διῆλθεν ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον—" "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world and through sin death, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—"

Verse 12 begins with "Therefore," and it begins a comparison it does not finish. John Murray said what the syntax itself forces upon any patient reader: "It is scarcely necessary to argue the fact that verse 12 is an unfinished comparison. Few interpreters dispute this fact." The reason the comparison breaks off is not that Paul lost the thread. "The development of Paul's thought required a parenthesis after the concluding clause of verse 12. This parenthesis begins at verse 13 and continues through verse 17." He does not return to the construction he had begun until verse 18. "Here we have a finished comparison with both protasis and apodosis." The finished comparisons of verses 18 and 19 then "place beyond all doubt what the governing thought of this passage is." The governing thought is not a general observation that men die because men sin. The governing thought is the one man and the one trespass set over against the one man and the one act of righteousness.

The last clause of verse 12 is the hinge on which the older disputes have turned. The Greek is "ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον," "because all sinned." Murray renders the clause "in that all sinned," and he will not let the Vulgate settle the grammar. "It is unnecessary at this stage in the history of exposition to argue that the Vulgate rendering, in quo omnes peccaverunt, though, as we shall see, it is theologically true, is nevertheless grammatically untenable. The force of [the Greek] is causal and it means "in that", "by the fact that", or simply "because"." The grammar

does not say “in Adam” by a relative pronoun. The grammar says that death spread to all men because all sinned. The whole question is what Paul means by that “all sinned.”

As far as form is concerned, Murray admits, the words could refer to the actual sins of men. Romans 3:23 uses the same verb of the sins men themselves commit. “The meaning, however, is not to be determined by grammatical possibility but by contextual considerations.” The context will not bear the Pelagian reading.

Murray gives three reasons, and they are still the right reasons. First, the Pelagian view “is not actually or historically true. Not all die because they actually and voluntarily sin. Infants die. But they have not actually transgressed after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” Second, “in verses 13, 14 Paul states the opposite of the Pelagian view. For here we are told that death reigned over those who did not sin after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” Third, and this is the blow that ends the argument, “the most conclusive refutation of the Pelagian interpretation is derived from the repeated and emphatic affirmations of Paul in the immediate context.” “On at least five occasions in verses 15-19 this principle is asserted.” “It is indisputable, therefore, that Paul regards the universality of condemnation and death as grounded upon and proceeding from the one trespass of the one man Adam.”

Cornelis P. Venema reads the same context the same way. “If Paul’s language in verse 12 is interpreted in the light of the broader context of the concise argument of Romans 5:12-21,” then the caution that would keep “all sinned” inside the later actual sins of the race “appears unnecessary.” “These considerations demonstrate that Paul is not referring to the actual sins of all men, but to the original sin of Adam. They also show that Paul views Adam on analogy to Christ as the covenant head or representative of his posterity.” The implication, he says, “seems clear: all are subject to condemnation and death on account of the sin of Adam, the head and representative of fallen humanity, not on account of their actual sins.”

That is why verses 13 and 14 are in the text. They are not a digression about the history of law. They are the proof that death’s reign does not wait for a Mosaic statute and does not wait for a trespass that looks like Adam’s trespass. “For sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.” (Rom 5:13–14 ESV) If death reigned where sin was not counted as

Mosaic transgression, and if death reigned over those who did not sin after Adam's pattern, then the reign of death is not being explained by the later, similar, voluntary sins of the children. It is being explained by the one man who is already named.

Adam "was a type of the one who was to come." Richard B. Gaffin Jr. will not let that typology float free of history or of representation. "In both passages," Romans 5:12–19 and 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45–49, "Adam and Christ are clearly in view as individual persons. But as individuals they no less clearly have a significance that is more than individual. They are contrasted as each represents others, as each is a head in a way that is decisive for those "in him." This union-based contrast exhibits the representative or federal principle that is at the root of the Bible's covenant theology taught, for instance, in the Westminster standards." The summary is as old as the contrast itself: "as Adam by his disobedience has brought sin with all its consequences into the originally good creation for himself and all those "in him," so Christ by his obedience has brought salvation from sin and all its consequences for those "in him."" "Only Adam, in his representative role in union or solidarity with "all," is the "type of the one who was to come" (Rom. 5:14). As Christ is the omega-point of redemptive history, so Adam is its alpha-point."

Thomas R. Schreiner makes the same historical claim from the other end of the contrast. "And here Paul contrasts Adam and Christ, which implies that Paul viewed Adam as a real, historical individual. In fact, the relation between Adam-Christ is so tight in these verses that one cannot deny a historical Adam without denying a historical Christ. If Adam is mythical then Christ is mythical." "When Paul says "one man," he means one man, not a symbol and not a myth." Gaffin is no softer when the historicity of Adam is treated as exegetically optional. "Suffice it here to note that this view flatly contradicts the sustained emphasis in Romans 5 on Adam's sin as the one sin of the one man, distinct from the sinning of "many" or "all." To conclude that the historicity of Adam is irrelevant for Paul is in fact to make responsible exegesis irrelevant."

The parenthesis of verses 15–17 then does what Murray said it would do. It will not let the reader take the one man as a mere first instance, and it will not let the reader take the comparison as a flat equation.

Verse 15 names the first unlikeness and keeps the first likeness. “But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.” The likeness is “through one man.” The unlikeness is “much more.” Many died through one man’s trespass. That is the federal sentence on Adam’s side, and it is already enough to wreck the claim that each man dies only because he himself later trespassed. The gift by the grace of the other one man does not merely match that ruin. It abounds. The parallel is a parallel of heads. The surplus is the surplus of grace.

Verse 16 names a second unlikeness and keeps a second likeness. “And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.” One trespass, one judgment, condemnation. That is not a description of a climate. That is a verdict after a single public act. The gift is unlike that result because it does not follow one trespass as a mere counterpart of one verdict. It follows many trespasses and brings justification. The first head’s one act was enough to condemn. The second head’s gift is enough to justify after the many acts that grew from the first. If condemnation after one trespass is denied, justification after many trespasses has lost the structure Paul wrote.

Verse 17 names the reign on both sides and names the receivers on Christ’s side. “For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.” Death reigned through that one man. The reign is not a fog that settled on the race after enough private sins had accumulated. The reign is through the head. The answering reign is also through a head, and it belongs to “those who receive.” The participle is the fence around the second “all.” Five times, as both Murray and Schreiner count them, the one man’s one act is made the ground of the many’s condition.

Schreiner lists the five as the preacher must list them, because Paul listed them. “Note how Paul tells us five times about the impact of Adam’s sin upon the entire human race.” “First, in verse 15 we see that “many died through one man’s trespass.”” “Second, notice verse 16, where the text speaks how “the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation.”” From that sentence Schreiner draws the conclusion the verse will not let go: “all people are born into

the world guilty and condemned before God by virtue of Adam's sin." "Fourth, verse 18 speaks of the one trespass that "led to condemnation for all men."" "So, even babies don't enter the world innocent. They come into the world guilty and condemned before God." "Fifth, the text says that "by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners."" Put together, "Adam is our covenant head, our federal head. God has chosen Adam not only to be the first human being, biologically speaking, but he has also chosen him to represent the entire human race and due to Adam's one act of disobedience, given the unity of the human race, all of us come into the world spiritually dead and condemned before God."

I take that federal sentence as the right sentence. I do not take every gloss Schreiner offers along the way as the right gloss. On the last clause of verse 12 he writes, "I actually think the words translated "because" are incorrect here. I think a better translation is "as a result." So, Paul is saying that all people because they are children of Adam come into the world spiritually dead, and as a result of this spiritual deadness they sin against God. First comes spiritual deadness and then comes sin." That sequence is true as a description of what fallen men then do. It is not what verse 12 is naming when it says "all sinned." Murray is right to refuse a reading that would make the actual sins of the children the ground of the death that spread. Venema is right to say that Paul is "not referring to the actual sins of all men, but to the original sin of Adam." If "all sinned" is only the later fruit of spiritual deadness, then the clause that was supposed to explain why death spread has been turned into a second fact that death itself is being used to explain. Paul would then be saying that death spread because the dead then sinned, which is a truth of later experience and is not the truth of verse 12. The fivefold drumbeat of verses 15–19 is not "they sinned and so they died." It is "one trespassed, and so the many died, were condemned, and were made sinners."

Murray therefore draws the only inference the comparison will bear. "For these reasons we are compelled to infer that when Paul says "all sinned" (vs. 12) and when he speaks of the one trespass of the one man (vss. 15-19) he must be referring to the same fact or event." "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 contemplated can be regarded at the same time and with equal relevance as the sin of the "one" or as the sin of "all.""

What kind of solidarity? Here the treatise must not cheat by choosing one bond and pretending the other is an embarrassment. Murray admits the seminal bond without making it do the work of imputation. “Adam sustains a genetic relation to the whole race and that all are seminally united with and derived from him. This does not hold in the relation of Christ to his people.” That last sentence matters, and I will return to it when Christ is in view. “But,” Murray continues, “it is not the fact of seminal, genetic relationship that constitutes the specific ground of our involvement in the one sin of the one man Adam either for the realist or for the exponent of representation. For the realist it is realistic union; for the representationist it is representative union.” The representative view, as he states it, “does not deny but rather affirms the natural headship of Adam, the seminal union of Adam and posterity, that all derive from Adam by natural generation a corrupt nature, and that therefore original sin is passed on by propagation.” What it will not do is confuse the two offices of the one head. “the representative idea finds in representation rather than in natural headship the specific ground of the imputation of Adam’s sin.” “On the representative construction natural headship and representative headship are correlative, and each aspect has its own proper and specific function.”

That is the construction I am driving in. Adam is seminal head, and the corrupt nature is propagated. Adam is representative head, and the one trespass is imputed. The first explains why the children are born corrupt. The second explains why they are born guilty of that one sin. If you keep only the first, you can still talk of a wounded race, and you will not have explained verses 16, 18, and 19. If you keep only the second, you can still talk of a condemned race, and you will not have explained why the nature itself is now a fountain of actual sins. Paul keeps both, because he is speaking of a head who is both father and representative. (This is profoundly important, and the implications seem to be missing in the thinking and arguments of all who are anti or contra Reformed in their understanding of the will; but, the explanation of the Reformed may be easy to make others anti or contra given that there seems to be overstatement and a lack of treating the effects on the will in the sufficient detail.)

Venema, writing inside the same federal grammar, names the old embarrassment and does not flinch from it. “In the instance of the imputation of the guilt of Adam’s sin to his posterity, the older view understood this to mean that, though Adam personally disobeyed the commandment of God, God reckoned or attributed the guilt of this offence to his posterity or those whom he represented.” “This is what is known in theological shorthand as the problem of

“alien guilt.”” The phrase is shorthand for a real question, and I will not pretend the question is unserious. The question is whether God condemns children for a sin they did not personally commit. The answer of this passage is that the sin in view is not alien in the sense that it is unrelated to them. It is the sin of their head. The judgment that followed that one trespass “brought condemnation.” By the one man’s disobedience “the many were made sinners.” The many were not merely later imitators who then became guilty by their own copies of the first act. They were constituted sinners by that act, because that act was the act of the man who stood for them.

Murray will not insert a buffer between the trespass and the death. “the only feasible interpretation of Romans 5:12-19 is to the effect that the one trespass of Adam is the sin of all, that when Paul says “one sinned” and “all sinned” he refers to the same sin viewed in its twofold aspect as the sin of Adam, the one man, and the sin of all his posterity.” “Adam sinned and he died — there is immediate conjunction. All sinned (in Adam, as argued already) and they died — there is the same immediate conjunction. It would be just as arbitrary and indefensible to interject the thought of mediating depravity in the latter case as it would be in the case of Adam himself.” Immediate imputation, as he then defines it, is not a legal fiction added on top of a prior corruption. “If we say that the trespass of Adam is imputed to posterity, all we can strictly and properly be regarded as meaning is that the sin of Adam is reckoned by God as the sin also of posterity. The same sin is laid to their account; it is reckoned as theirs.” Provisionists would do well to pay close attention to this and understand this Federal Headship schema is a specific statement on how sin enters and how it affects the race. Other verses which say that the children are not held responsible for the sins of their fathers are not an appropriate interpretive lens for this passage for several reasons, not least of which those passages are not talking about this one sin of Adam under probation in the garden, and they are not speaking of this specific headship issue. Both things can be true, i.e. this passages clear teaching and those passages clear statements without cancelling one another. Utilizing those verses as contradistinctive to the issue and statements of this passage is infantile at best.

Gaffin treats that reckoning as a constitutive factor of original sin, not as a later optional theory. Reviewing accounts that will speak of guilt and will not speak of this imputation, he writes: “Both fail to affirm that Paul teaches, principally in Rom 5:12ff., the imputation of Adam’s first transgression, to affirm that guilt for that sin is a constitutive factor in original sin,

the condition as sinner in which every human being is born." He quotes the contrary thesis in order to refuse it: "Nevertheless, guilt only enters into the reckoning with the individual's own transgression." And again: "Human beings are not held responsible for the state in which they are born. That is the starting point of their personal responsibility, a starting point for which they are not liable." Gaffin's judgment on that axiom is not polite, and it should not be polite. "The Pelagian/semi-Pelagian axiom that ability is the measure of accountability could hardly be expressed more clearly. Where, in this or similar fashion, personal responsibility is evacuated from the notion of original sin, then the undeniable "givenness" of sin as part of the human condition from birth, sin in its corporate, transsubjective, and transpersonal dimensions, will be seen, inevitably, as an alien, enslaving power and the accent will fall on sinners as helpless victims. Correlatively, accountability and guilt will be limited to personal, voluntary acts and so give rise to the temptation to find remedies that are essentially moralistic." The same review notes the correlative silence on the other side of the parallel. "First, there is little sympathy for, in fact downright antipathy toward, any notion of imputation." "Imputation" is missing from Dunn's extensive subject index. "He rejects, as we have seen, that Paul teaches the imputation of Adam's sin. Not surprisingly, then, his lengthy treatment of justification is silent about the imputation of Christ's righteousness." Every position that does not understand this imputation of guilt and transference of corruption minimizes both by making Adam's posterity victims rather than actually guilty rebels. That could very well be the situation, but not if you stick with the text and the overall warp and woof of Scripture. If you believe the Bible, and let it speak, it is saying and explaining something initially hard here, which is you and I are guilty of the sin of Adam in the garden, as guilty as he was. Before we cry out unfair and quote a verse that says God doesn't hold the children responsible for the father's sin like most of these guys in the Arminian and "provisionist" camp (I always put that in quotations because I consider their positions laughable, I'm sorry. They are Pelagianists who've obviously never read Pelagius, I can prove that with their statements if anyone wants to challenge me on it, and they would have been run out of the pulpit at and since both Carthage and Orange, period. But their biggest problem, the actual source of their error, is that they do not understand this passage, not even an infantile cursory reading of it- I take that estimate as a fair statement given that those who understand this passage differently, i.e. differently than any throughout church history who were not branded heretics, take the position that those who understand this passage as it is stated are preaching another

gospel). Paul understood the possibility of how unfair what he was saying would sound, i.e. "how can a just God hold people responsible for something they did not do?", which is why the construction is as it sits in this passage and why the passage is so clear that God has done just this, the act of imputation that initially sounds and seems so unfair. The passage, again, is saying that you and I, and all humanity, are corrupt and guilty of Adam's sin, in a desert sense, i.e. in the sense that we deserve punishment for Adam's sin and left to ourselves will experience that punishment in death and eternal separation from God. Notice the distinction people on both sides of this sovereignty/freedom debate make; one side, I'll classify them as Arminian, takes this to mean that Adam's posterity are victims and the saving Christ provides is a saving of them as victims or at least partially victims in this schema; the other side is letting the passage actually say what it does say, i.e. Adam's humanity are not victims but active willing participants, or would have been had they been there in the garden that day. This distinction is why I will attempt a helpful illustration below. If you don't get this right, that this is what this passage is saying in its brutal totality, you're left with what I will call a "victim seeking gospel and salvation" that leads the individual mind to universalism and in some cases to atheism, because there is no good explanation as to how all of those people who die without ever hearing the gospel go to hell. If an answer to that question and problem eludes you, or if it bothers you with the thought of how could God allow such, then you haven't read this passage, you haven't allowed it to speak. God has judged all humanity as guilty and deserving of hell because we would have done the same thing Adam did if we had been Adam, period. That disagreement is why Dunn rejected it; he didn't understand it, but rejection of it is damning because you also have to deal with the imputation of Christ on the other side, and Dunn was noticeably silent there.

That silence is the reason Venema can say that, in the federal theology of the Westminster Confession, Romans 5:12–21 is "a key biblical testimony to the doctrine of justification through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to those who are united to him by faith." The passage sets two humanities in view: "fallen humanity, which lies under the sentence of condemnation and death on account of the disobedience of the first Adam as its covenant head or representative; and redeemed humanity, which has been constituted righteous and heir of eternal life on account of the obedience of Christ, the second Adam and the covenant head or representative of all who share in him through faith." He had already said it at the head

of the essay: “IN THE HISTORY of Reformed theology, Romans 5:12-21 is a passage that served as one of the principal sedes doctrinae for a certain understanding of Christ’s work as Mediator of the covenant of grace.”

Verses 18 and 19 then close the comparison verse 12 had opened. “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” (Rom 5:18–19 ESV) The Greek of verse 19 is “ὥσπερ γὰρ διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἁμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί, οὕτως καὶ διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί,” “for as through the disobedience of the one man the many were constituted sinners, so also through the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous.” The “all” and the “many” on Adam’s side are the race that is in him by descent. The “all” and the “many” on Christ’s side are not that same company counted a second time without remainder. Schreiner is right to restrict the second “all” by the text’s own qualifier. “Romans 5 itself makes it clear that the all and many when used with reference to Christ, do not refer to all people without exception, but only to all those who are in Christ, to those who exercise faith. Look at verse 17.” “It is only those who receive the gift of righteousness who will reign in life. Not everyone is in Christ, but only those who receive the gift of righteousness.” “Our covenant head is either Adam or Christ.”

Gaffin states the limit from the Adamic side with the same severity. “Adam is the representative of all who, by descending from him, are in natural union or solidarity with him, and he represents only them.” “There is no hope of salvation for sinners who do not bear the image of Adam by ordinary generation. Christ cannot and does not redeem what he has not assumed, and what he has assumed is the nature of those who bear the image of Adam, and as they do so by natural descent.” The two unions are therefore not the same kind of union, which is what Murray had already said when he noted that seminal derivation “does not hold in the relation of Christ to his people.” Representation remains the specific ground of the imputation in both directions. Descent explains how the first head’s corruption reaches the race. The Spirit’s uniting of those who receive the gift to Christ explains how the second head’s obedience reaches them. The justice of the first representation is the justice of a public person appointed over a race already his by generation. The justice of the second is the justice of a public person appointed

over a people made his by promise. Break either representation and you have broken the parallel Paul wrote.

That is the exegesis I am willing to stand on. Sin entered through one man. Death entered through sin. Death spread to all men because all sinned, and that "all sinned" is the one trespass of the one man viewed as the sin of the all who were in him. The many died through that trespass. The judgment following it brought condemnation. Death reigned through that one man. The one trespass led to condemnation for all men. By the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners. And over against that fivefold ruin stands the one man Jesus Christ, whose grace abounds, whose gift follows many trespasses and brings justification, who gives the gift of righteousness to those who receive it, whose one act of righteousness leads to justification and life, whose obedience will make the many righteous. The first man is a type of the second because both are heads. The gift is not like the trespass because the second head does not merely cancel a debt. He reigns, and those who receive the gift reign with him. Christ is the chosen means. The people are concomitant.

II. The Condition That Follows

The condition that follows from that exegesis is not a single word. Fallen man is seminally corrupted and covenantally guilty, and he is seminally guilty and covenantally corrupted, because the two bonds were never two Adams. They were one man joined to us in two ways.

The Westminster Confession states both conveyances in one sentence. "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." The root is a generative figure. Imputation is a forensic figure. Ordinary generation is the path of the corrupt nature and of the death in sin. The confession will not let the reader take one figure and leave the other in the margin. The first covenant, as the same confession states it, "was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience." The covenantal bond is not an ornament hung on a merely biological fact. Life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon a condition that was perfect and personal. The one public act was the act of the head of that covenant.

Francis Turretin makes the double bond explicit, and he makes the ranking of the two bonds explicit, which is what Murray later called the specific ground. “Adamus enim duplici isto vinculo nobiscum junctus est; 1. Naturali, quatenus Pater est, et nos ejus filii; 2. Politico ac forensi, quatenus fuit Princeps et Caput repræsentativum totius generis humani.” For Adam is joined to us by this double bond: first, a natural bond, inasmuch as he is Father and we his sons; second, a political and forensic bond, inasmuch as he was Prince and representative Head of the whole human race. “Fundamentum ergo Imputationis non est tantum communio naturalis, quae nobis cum Adamo intercedit, alias omnia ipsius peccata deberent nobis imputari, sed praecipue moralis et foederalis, per quam factum est, ut Deus cum illo, ut cum nostro Capite, foedus pepigerit.” The foundation of Imputation therefore is not only the natural communion that exists between us and Adam, otherwise all his own sins would have to be imputed to us, but principally the moral and federal communion, by which it came to pass that God struck a covenant with him as with our Head. “Unde Adamus se habuit in illo peccato, non ut persona privata, sed ut publica et repræsentativa quae omnes suos posteros in actione illa repræsentavit, cujus proinde demeritum ad omnes pertinet.” Hence Adam conducted himself in that sin not as a private person but as a public and representative person who represented all his posterity in that action, whose demerit therefore belongs to all. The question he had set over the locus is the question this paper is answering. “An actualis inobedientia Adami omnibus ejus posteris naturali generatione ab eo oriundis imputetur imputatione immediata et antecedente? Aff.” Whether the actual disobedience of Adam is imputed to all his posterity arising from him by natural generation with an immediate and antecedent imputation? It is affirmed.

Two observations follow from that Latin and should not be lost in it. First, if natural communion alone were the foundation of the imputation, then every later sin of Adam would lie on the race as the first sin lies on the race. The federal bond is what distinguishes the one trespass from the rest of Adam’s life. God covenanted with him as head. The one commanded act was the public act. Second, the natural bond is not thereby emptied. The posterity in view are those “naturali generatione ab eo oriundis,” arising from him by natural generation. Representation does not float over a race it did not father. It is the moral and federal appointment of the father who already is the root.

Calvin, who does not use Turretin’s forensic vocabulary at every turn, still refuses to let original sin be either a bare penalty detached from pollution or a pollution detached from guilt.

"Original sin, then, may be defined a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all the parts of the soul, which first makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and then produces in us works which in Scripture are termed works of the flesh." Two things "are to be distinctly observed." The first is that, "being thus perverted and corrupted in all the parts of our nature, we are, merely on account of such corruption, deservedly condemned by God." The second is the answer to the charge that this is liability for another man's fault in the sense that innocents are being punished as innocents. "This is not liability for another's fault. For when it is said, that the sin of Adam has made us obnoxious to the justice of God, the meaning is not, that we, who are in ourselves innocent and blameless, are bearing his guilt, but that since by his transgression we are all placed under the curse, he is said to have brought us under obligation. Through him, however, not only has punishment been derived, but pollution instilled, for which punishment is justly due." Infants are the test case, as they were for Murray and for Schreiner. "Hence, even infants bringing their condemnation with them from their mother's womb, suffer not for another's, but for their own defect. For although they have not yet produced the fruits of their own unrighteousness, they have the seed implanted in them. Nay, their whole nature is, as it were, a seed-bed of sin." And then the sentence that shuts the door on a guiltless corruption: "there could be no condemnation without guilt."

The Canons of Dort say the same thing in the plainer speech of a synod, and they remain, on this point, exegetically serious. "Since all people have sinned in Adam and have come under the sentence of the curse and eternal death, God would have done no one an injustice if it had been his will to leave the entire human race in sin and under the curse, and to condemn them on account of their sin." According to Romans 5, we are guilty of Adam's sin, so guilty that we deserve hell, such that God would be just to hold us accountable only for that. Dort has already said it. After the fall, "Human beings brought forth children of the same nature as themselves after the fall. That is to say, being corrupt they brought forth corrupt children. The corruption spread, by God's just judgment, from Adam and Eve to all their descendants—except for Christ alone—not by way of imitation (as in former times the Pelagians would have it) but by way of the propagation of their perverted nature." Dort does not, in that article, pause to say "imputed" or "federal." It does not need to pause in order to do the work that article is doing. The article refuses imitation as the path of the ruin, which is the Pelagian path, and it names propagation as

the path of the perverted nature, and it has already said that all sinned in Adam. The two bonds are there even where the later school-terms are not.

Jonathan Edwards will not let the church treat depravity and imputed guilt as two unrelated loads strapped to the same child. “By Original Sin, as the Phrase has been most commonly used by Divines, is meant the innate sinful Depravity of the Heart. But yet when the Doctrine of original Sin is spoken of, it is vulgarly understood in that Latitude, as to include not only the Depravity of Nature, but the Imputation of Adam’s first Sin; or in other Words, the Liableness or Exposedness of Adam’s Posterity, in the divine Judgment, to partake of the Punishment of that Sin.” The running title under which he conducts the argument is “Federal Head.” The constitution with Adam is the thing he will not dissolve. “God, in each Step of his Proceeding with Adam, in Relation to the Covenant or Constitution established with him, look’d on his Posterity as being One with him.” “And tho’ he dealt more immediately with Adam, yet it was as the Head of the whole Body, & the Root of the whole Tree.” From that oneness Edwards draws a conclusion that is easy to miss if one has already decided that the child must be carrying two separate indictments. “Therefore I am humbly of Opinion, that if any have supposed the Children of Adam to come into the World with a double Guilt, one the Guilt of Adam’s Sin, another the Guilt arising from their having a corrupt Heart, they have not so well conceived of the Matter. The Guilt a Man has upon his Soul at his first Existence, is one and simple; viz. the Guilt of the original Apostacy. …”

I take Edwards’s “one and simple” as a help, not as a solvent. The two bonds are two. The guilt, at first existence, is one, because the apostasy of the head is the apostasy of the body, and the corrupt heart is not a second crime added to the first. It is the nature of the one who already stands guilty of the original apostasy. Seminal corruption and covenantal guilt are not two stories. They are the two ways the one story reaches the child.

Against that whole consensus a later denial has been printed in words that are at least clear. I mean Article Two of the document that names itself “A Statement of the Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God’s Plan of Salvation.” That Statement affirms that, “because of the fall of Adam, every person inherits a nature and environment inclined toward sin and that every person who is capable of moral action will sin. Each person’s sin alone brings the wrath of a holy God. …” It then denies “that Adam’s sin resulted in the incapacitation of any

person's free will or rendered any person guilty before he has personally sinned." That denial is not a small adjustment of emphasis. It is the break of Paul's parallel. If the child is not guilty until he himself has sinned, then verse 16 is wrong when it says that the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, and verse 18 is wrong when it says that one trespass led to condemnation for all men, and verse 19 is wrong when it says that by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, and Schreiner is wrong when he says that babies do not enter the world innocent, and Gaffin is wrong when he says that guilt for Adam's first transgression is a constitutive factor in the condition as sinner in which every human being is born. What is left is Dort's rejected imitation in a softer dress: a nature inclined toward sin, an environment that pulls, and then guilt only when the capable person acts. The fivefold "one" of verses 15–19 has been replaced by the later many. The type of the One who was to come has been reduced to a bad example who spoiled the climate. The problem with what is now often called provisionism, and with traditionalism in Southern Baptist and broader Protestant circles, is just this: the headship is not understood, and it is not applied. Mark my words here, if this prevails, within the next twenty years these men will be universalists or worse. Death on all or passing on to all, as the result of Adam's sin, is not fair or just without the Reformed understanding of Romans 5; it is not fair under the provisionist or traditionalist position. Their position is Pelagian, actually so close to it that it's scary, yet they have degrees and a platform. That is scary, too. The level of theological and scriptural ignorance in the discussions involving these men is scary, too. As I listen to them and/or read them, I can't decide whether to be angry or weep in empathetic embarrassment for them. That's harsh, but this is serious, and it's not as harsh as I need to make it. There are two sides to this representation and not understanding one side affects the other. I actually heard Leighton Flowers in a podcast say that he had less problem with "open theism" than with Calvinism. Surely that is the flourish of overstatement for emphasis, but it's dangerous, and if it is his genuine position, the two systems have an unanticipated parallel. Though I haven't looked at "open theism" for over 30 years, one of its problems has always been its inability to anticipate whether there would ever be anyone who would actually be born and then live without sin, such that that person could go to heaven without Christ (I can already here the cries of foul, but prove this is a theoretical impossibility under their position and I will take it back). A similar situation possibly exists for the "provisionists" if they believe that children are not guilty of Adam's sin. In that case, all children

who die go to heaven based on their innocence (again, I hear the cries of foul, and in the next breath the emotional argument of "children don't go to hell", but I do not personally know a Calvinist who believes they do go to hell. What we believe, what I believe, is that all infants go to heaven based on the substitutionary atonement of Christ—that is not to say that hyper-Calvinists don't take the contrary position, but they too are wrong). Taking these two streams of thought together leads to the reality that there will be many people in heaven for whom Christ is not Savior.

(The implications of these theoretical possibilities would not be if these opponents would simply let the passage speak. But think about those theoretical possibilities for a moment. Open theism has no counter on their principles, it is possible that someone could go to heaven without Christ. Provisionists fare slightly better, but only slightly. I point this out because unless they deny the gospel completely, surely they believe that the work of Christ dealt with the two problems we have as sinners, namely the presence of guilt and the absence of a secure status of righteousness by which we enter heaven. Under the "provisionist" schema, Christ would only be providing half of this for infants or those who die before the age of accountability. In essence, they would still be in need of the status of righteousness provided by his active obedience, so in heaven they could at least be thankful for half of the work of Christ. I say their position is slightly better because this is better by half than the theoretical possibility under "open theism". Surely someone will deny this and show me where I am misunderstanding both positions, but let me say this, language such as Calvinism being "another gospel" is Paul's language in Galatians and there it comes with a condemnation. Surely, those who see the necessity for all in heaven to necessarily have both aspects of Christ's work are not the anathema in this dialogue. And for Calvinists, specifically those who follow the confessions closely and not hyper-calvinists, a group who believe in some form of compatibilism ranging from simply stating both truths of sovereignty and freedom and leaving the solution to the secret counsel of God, to those who specify more nuanced versions of compatibilism like "rational spontaneity and the *sensus divinitatis*, but all denying that God is the author or coercer of human sin, this is way too harsh in criticism. Those who believe that Christ's active and passive obedience provide a status of righteousness and the removal of guilt for all who will spend eternity in heaven surely are not the ones anybody needs to be claiming anathema on. I will let that set right here.)

The same denial also severs the other half of the parallel, whether it means to or not. If there is no imputation of the first head's disobedience, the imputation of the second head's obedience is an anomaly rather than an analogue. Venema's two humanities will not stand. Gaffin's warning about moralistic remedies will come true, because the only guilt left to remedy will be the guilt of the discrete voluntary act, and the only righteousness left to offer will be assistance toward better acts. I am not willing to pay that price. Paul did not write a comparison between a climate and a Savior. He wrote a comparison between two heads. Not understanding this also negates a full understanding of the depth of Christ's accomplishments. Just because I am full with the glory of it at this point in thinking about the depth and breadth of this representation, let me point out that because of Christ's representation and his righteousness imputed to us, the law that once cried out against me "condemned! Worthy of punishment! Guilty of the awful sin of defying the chief and best of beings!", now cries out for me "righteous! Worthy of blessing! Worthy of eternal bliss!" because Christ's active obedience in keeping the law perfectly purchased a status of righteousness that is passed on to those who are represented by Him!

The justice of this presentation, one which is undeniable given Paul's "and so death spread to all men because all sinned," is best illustrated by an illustration of mine, not Paul's metaphor. If all humanity had been created simultaneously, and if an election had been held for one person to represent us, Adam would have been our choice, given that he was and is the best among us. That is my illustration. It is not a hidden statement of Romans 5. It is a way of saying why the appointment of this head is not an insult to the race he represented. He was not a stranger pressed upon us. He was the best of us, and he was already ours by the nature God gave.

The moral aptness of that representation is enough for the present argument. Adam is an apt representative, not a random assignee. God does not damn on a bare whim. He imputes the actual act of an accurate representative—the public person who was already the root of the race and the best among us. That aptness is further account of why the one public act of the one public person is not a cruelty.

The genius of the system as Paul presents it is found in the fact that only by humanity being subsumed in Adam could humanity be represented by one Savior, namely Christ, and be forgiven. One head of condemnation is the condition for one head of justification. "Therefore, as

one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." If each stood only for himself, there is no single Savior. The "all" of verse 18 is limited, as Schreiner said, by "those who receive" in verse 17. The Federal headship of Christ is the gracious solution wherein we are forgiven because Christ has both paid the debt we owe justice for our sin, and has provided the positive righteousness that was circumvented in the garden, the perfect obedience the first head did not keep. The Heidelberg Catechism, answering how a man is righteous before God, will not split the gift: "Only by true faith in Jesus Christ; that is, although my conscience accuse me that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have never kept any of them, and that I am still prone always to all evil, yet God, without any merit of mine, of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never committed nor had any sin, and had myself accomplished all the obedience which Christ has fulfilled for me, if only I accept such benefit with a believing heart." Satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness. As if I had never committed sin, and as if I had myself accomplished the obedience. The debt is paid. The positive righteousness is imputed. Christ, by that finished work, provides for those who come to faith in him. He is the chosen means. Those who receive the gift are concomitant.

The accompanying aspect of salvation named adoption is the Christ-centered counterpart of our seminal connection with Adam. In Adam we were physical posterity. In Christ we are adopted posterity, standing in a stronger position as sons and heirs. The counterpart of seminal descent is not a second biological line. It is union with the second head, and the name the gospel gives the new relation that union receives is adoption into the household of the other Head. Murray had already said that seminal derivation "does not hold in the relation of Christ to his people." But he was wrong not to pick up the counterpart outlined as an integral part of our salvation and how it fits with this representative explanation Paul makes here in Romans 5. The reality is that we gain more in Christ than we ever lost in Adam. Adoption is how that inequality is not a defect. We were born of the first head. We are placed in the household of the second by adoption.

The resulting condition, then, is this. Every child of Adam, Christ only excepted, comes into the world by ordinary generation from the root, and so comes with the corrupt nature

propagated from that root. That is the seminal bond, and it is enough to make the heart a seed-bed of actual sins. The same child is represented in the one public act of that root, and so comes under the condemnation that followed the one trespass. That is the covenantal bond, and it is enough to make the child guilty before he has personally copied the first act. The guilt is not the guilt of an innocent pressed under a stranger's crime. It is the guilt of a member of the body whose head apostatized, and it is, as Edwards said, one and simple at first existence. From that one guilt the later fruits grow. They do not create it.

Fallen man is still, in that condition, epistemically responsible. The ruin of the will and the darkening of the heart have not left him without a world that speaks, and they have not left him with an excuse. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse." (Rom 1:18–20 ESV) The Confession says the same thing without adding a theory beyond the text. "Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation." "The light of nature showeth that there is a God." Dort, describing what remains after the fall, will grant the remnant and will not grant it saving power. "There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in all people after the fall, by virtue of which they retain some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrate a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling humans to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him—so far, in fact, that they do not use it rightly even in matters of nature and society. Instead, in various ways they completely distort this light, whatever its precise character, and suppress it in unrighteousness. In doing so all people render themselves without excuse before God."

I do not need a new theory of epistemic responsibility to make those sentences cohere with federal headship. The man who suppresses the truth is the man already in Adam. He is not excused by the fact that he was born in that head, because the light he suppresses is light God has shown, and the world in which he suppresses it is the world that has been made. Original guilt

explains why the suppression is already in motion before the first remembered trespass. Remaining light explains why the suppression is without excuse when it occurs. The two do not cancel. They describe the same fallen man from two sides of his condition. What is left out of that description is how that fallenness, what will be called “enslavement to sin” in other passages, affected the freedom of the will.

What Romans 5 requires, Scripture does not leave lonely. Before I turn to the short foils that test the necessity of Christ, I set the same federal architecture outside this chapter—one legally representing the many—so the Romans 5 claim is seen as the load-bearing statement of a wider biblical frame, not as a Pauline novelty.

Part II — One Legally Representing the Many: Federal Headship Outside Romans 5

Romans 5 is the load-bearing chapter. The word federal is a theological category; it is not a biblical vocabulary word. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short define Latin foedus as "a league, treaty, compact," and, transferred beyond the political sphere, "a compact, covenant, agreement."[1] That is the etymology of the English adjective, not a verse. The principle itself—one individual legally representing the many—is older than the Latin label and older than Paul's letter to Rome. Corporate representation, legal imputation, and covenantal headship show up elsewhere in Scripture. If Adam's headship is real, Christ's headship is the only path that puts anyone in heaven by His sacrifice alone. The same architecture that condemns under the first head is the architecture that makes life under the second. There is no third head.

I. 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45–49 — The Two Adams

The closest companion to Romans 5 is 1 Corinthians 15. Paul builds the same contrast under the language of death and resurrection:

"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." (1 Cor. 15:21–22 ESV)[2] An interesting and possible parallel paraphrase would be "as by man came the presence and guilt of sin and its resultant death, so in Christ came the defeat of sin, and the removal of guilt, and victory over death in resurrection of those in Christ" (paraphrase mine).

"In Adam" and "in Christ" are not mere reports of physical descent. They are legal positioning. Charles Hodge will not let the union float as poetry. "We die by means of Adam, because we were in Adam; and we live by means of Christ, because we are in Christ. Union with Adam is the cause of death; union with Christ is the cause of life. … In both cases it is a representative and vital union. We are in Adam because he was our head and representative, and because we partake of his nature. And we are in Christ because he is our head and representative.[3]" The resurrection of Christ secures the resurrection of His people, Hodge adds,

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1 Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, A Latin Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), s.v. "foedus, eris": "a league, treaty, compact"; transferred, "a compact, covenant, agreement."

2 Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV). The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®) is copyright © Crossway.

3 Charles Hodge, An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1874), 324–25: "We die by means of Adam, because we were in Adam; and we live by means of Christ, because we are in Christ. … In both cases it is a representative and vital union. We are in Adam because he was our head and representative, and because we partake of his nature. And we are in Christ because he is our head and

"for as there was a causal relation between the death of Adam and the death of his descendants, so there is a causal relation between the resurrection of Christ and that of his people.[4]"

Hodge's Systematic Theology states the same constitution without hedging. "God constituted our first parent the federal head and representative of his race, and placed him on probation not only for himself, but also for all his posterity."[5] The union that grounds the imputation "is both natural and federal."[6] Adam "was their natural head," and "over and beyond this natural relation" there was "a special divine constitution by which he was appointed the head and representative of his whole race."[7] The first argument for imputation, then, is that "the Scriptures present Adam as not only the natural, but also the federal head of his posterity."[8]

Calvin says the same thing from the other side of the comparison. Adam "did not die for himself alone, but for us all," and Christ, the antitype, "did not rise for himself alone; for he came, that he might restore everything that had been ruined in Adam.[9]" "The cause of death is Adam, and we die in him: hence Christ, whose office it is to restore to us what we lost in Adam, is the cause of life to us." Calvin himself points the reader to Romans 5, with this difference only: there Paul reasons of spiritual life and death; here he treats the resurrection of the body as the fruit of that life.

John Murray hears the same solidaric fact in the Corinthian sentences. "Paul bears pointed witness to this fact when he says that 'in Adam all die' (I Cor. 15:22). And it is this same solidaric relationship that forms the background of his thought when he says, 'The first man

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representative."

4 Hodge, Exposition of First Corinthians, 324: "for as there was a causal relation between the death of Adam and the death of his descendants, so there is a causal relation between the resurrection of Christ and that of his people."

5 Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Hodge's ST), Volume 2, Page 25: "God constituted our first parent the federal head and representative of his race, and placed him on probation not only for himself, but also for all his posterity."

6 Hodge, Systematic Theology (Hodge's ST), Volume 2, Page 25: "The union between Adam and his posterity which is the ground of the imputation of his sin to them, is both natural and federal."

7 Hodge, Systematic Theology (Hodge's ST), Volume 2, Page 25: Adam "was their natural head"; "Over and beyond this natural relation which exists between a man and his posterity, there was a special divine constitution by which he was appointed the head and representative of his whole race."

8 Hodge, Systematic Theology (Hodge's ST), Volume 2, Page 25: "The first argument, therefore, in favour of the doctrine of imputation is that the Scriptures present Adam as not only the natural, but also the federal head of his posterity."

9 John Calvin, Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, trans. John Pringle, on 1 Cor. 15:21: "Adam did not die for himself alone, but for us all"; Christ "did not rise for himself alone; for he came, that he might restore everything that had been ruined in Adam."

Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a life-giving Spirit' (I Cor. 15:45)." That solidarity is why "the one trespass of Adam can properly be construed as the sin of all.[10]"

Paul then names the two men as the first and the last:

"Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. … The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. … Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven." (1 Cor. 15:45, 47, 49 ESV)

The Lexham Research Commentary on 1 Corinthians hears the same corporate architecture in that first-and-last naming. Paul "contrasts the first Adam and last Adam as corporate representatives of humanity,"[11] and in 1 Corinthians 15:45 "argues that Christ is the representative human (the last Adam) of those who will receive the resurrected, spiritual body."[12]

Hodge calls Christ "the second great head and representative man, of whom Adam is declared to have been the type, Rom. 5, 14.[13]" Richard B. Gaffin Jr. treats the two passages together without apology: "In both passages, Adam and Christ are clearly in view as individual persons. But as individuals they no less clearly have a significance that is more than individual. They are contrasted as each represents others, as each is a head in a way that is decisive for those 'in him.' This union-based contrast exhibits the representative or federal principle that is at the root of the Bible's covenant theology.[14]" Only Adam, "in his representative role in union or solidarity with 'all,' is the 'type of the one who was to come' (Rom. 5:14)."

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10 John Murray, The Imputation of Adam's Sin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 22–23: "Paul bears pointed witness to this fact when he says that 'in Adam all die' (I Cor. 15:22). … we shall be less reluctant … to entertain the proposition that the one trespass of Adam can properly be construed as the sin of all."

11 Lexham Research Commentary on 1 Corinthians (LRC 1Co), at 1 Corinthians 15:45, article "Christ, the Life-Giving Spirit": "He contrasts the first Adam and last Adam as corporate representatives of humanity."

12 Lexham Research Commentary on 1 Corinthians (LRC 1Co), at 1 Corinthians 15:45, article "Christ, the Life-Giving Spirit": "In 1 Corinthians 15:45, Paul argues that Christ is the representative human (the last Adam) of those who will receive the resurrected, spiritual body."

13 Hodge, Exposition of First Corinthians, 550: "the second great head and representative man, of whom Adam is declared to have been the type, Rom. 5, 14."

14 Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "All Mankind, Descending from Him …?," New Horizons 33, no. 3 (March 2012): 3–4: "In both passages, Adam and Christ are clearly in view as individual persons. But as individuals they no less clearly have a significance that is more than individual. They are contrasted as each represents others, as each is a head in a way that is decisive for those 'in him.' This union-based contrast exhibits the representative or federal principle that is at the root of the Bible's covenant theology."

That is why 1 Corinthians 15 serves the necessity of Christ. The same structure that condemns under Adam is the structure that makes life under Christ. There is no third head waiting in the wings for a private moral example to do what only a representative can do.

If the "provisionists" understanding of Romans 5 is allowed to stand, their position guts the representation and imputation of Christ, too.

II. Hosea 6:7 — Covenant with Adam

It is not as if any further statement beyond the above needs to be made. The exegesis of either of the passages above stand alone as binding. Together they provide a further unassailable interpretation of Romans 5 and Adam's Federal Headship therein. Still, a further development and elaboration or elucidation of the concept will not hurt.

Federal theology needs more than a Latin word. It needs a real covenant with the first head. The realities of Federal Headship sufficient for the accurate development of the doctrine exist without it, but Hosea supplies the Old Testament hinge in the form of a statement of the covenant as the English Standard Version prints this way:

"But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me." (Hos. 6:7 ESV)[15]

I will not pretend the history of the reading is simple. Calvin refuses the Adam reading. He renders the lemma "like men," and he calls the exposition "They have transgressed as Adam the covenant" "frigid and diluted"— "vapid."[16] He will not stop to refute it at length, but when compared with simultaneous and subsequent consideration and interpretation of the passage, he could not. He was obviously wrong.

C. F. Keil affirms what Calvin rejects. "Like Adam," Keil writes—not "after the manner of men"—"who transgressed the commandment of God, that he should not eat of the tree of knowledge. This command was actually a covenant, which God made with him, since the object of it was the preservation of Adam in vital fellowship with the Lord, as was the case with the

15 Hos. 6:7 ESV.

16 John Calvin, Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, vol. 1, trans. John Owen (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1846), on Hos. 6:7 (printed ~229–236): the "as Adam" exposition is "frigid and diluted"; "vapid."

covenant that God made with Israel."[17] That is the federal ground. The Genesis 2 command is not a private house rule. It is covenant. Adam breaks it as head.

Louis Berkhof reads the same hinge and will not surrender the Adam rendering. On Hosea 6:7—"But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant"—he answers the rival proposals in order. Some have suggested "at Adam," which would imply a well-known transgression at a place called Adam; "but the preposition forbids this rendering," and "the Bible makes no mention whatever of such a well-known historical transgression at Adam." The Authorized Version's "like men" fares no better: "there is no plural in the original," and "such a statement would be rather inane, since man could hardly transgress in any other way." "The rendering 'like Adam' is after all the best. It is favored by the parallel passage in Job 31:33; and is adopted by the American Revised Version."[18]

That reading serves the federal ground already named. Berkhof states the twofold relation federal theology requires: Adam stood as "the natural head of all mankind, and … the representative head of the entire human race in the covenant of works."[19] Federal theology stressed "an 'immediate' imputation of Adam's guilt to those who he represented as the head of the covenant."[20] "And because he was the federal representative of the race, his disobedience

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17 C. F. Keil, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Twelve Minor Prophets, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1878), 100: "like Adam," who transgressed the commandment of God, that he should not eat of the tree of knowledge. "This command was actually a covenant, which God made with him, since the object of it was the preservation of Adam in vital fellowship with the Lord, as was the case with the covenant that God made with Israel."

18 Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Berkhof's ST), Page 214, Part Two, "Man in His Original State," IV. "Man in the Covenant of Works," B. "The Scriptural Foundation for the Doctrine of the Covenant of Works," 5. "The Passage in Hos.": "In Hos. 6:7 we read: 'But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant.' Attempts have been made to discredit this reading. Some have suggested the reading 'at Adam,' which would imply that some well-known transgression occurred at a place called Adam. But the preposition forbids this rendering. Moreover, the Bible makes no mention whatever of such a well-known historical transgression at Adam. The Authorized Version renders 'like men,' which would then mean, in human fashion. To this it may be objected that there is no plural in the original, and that such a statement would be rather inane, since man could hardly transgress in any other way. The rendering 'like Adam' is after all the best. It is favored by the parallel passage in Job 31:33; and is adopted by the American Revised Version."

19 Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Berkhof's ST), Page 214: "This implies that Adam stood in a twofold relationship to his descendants, namely, that of the natural head of all mankind, and that of the representative head of the entire human race in the covenant of works."

20 Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Berkhof's ST), Page 214: "Without denying that our native corruption also constitutes guilt in the sight of God, federal theology stressed the fact that there is an 'immediate' imputation of Adam's guilt to those who he represented as the head of the covenant."

affected all his descendants."[21] If the first head broke a real covenant for the many, the last Head must fulfill and restore under a real covenant representation. Christ is not a private moral example only. He is the second covenant head.

III. Hebrews 7:9–10 — Levi in Abraham's Loins

Hebrews gives a structural precedent before Paul ever wrote Romans by referring to realities in Hebrew history:

"One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him." (Heb. 7:9–10 ESV)[22]

Levi was not yet born. God still counted him as acting in and through Abraham. John Owen spells the legal principle without soft edges. When Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, "he did it not in his own name only, but in the name of himself and his whole posterity." The apostle's observation follows: children, "the whole posterity of any one, are in his loins before they are born," and "what any one doth, that all his posterity are esteemed to do in and by him." Abraham, in that solemn address, "was the representative of all his posterity.[23]" Calvin's shorter note agrees: Levi "who was then in the loins of Abraham" was not exempt, for Abraham's tithe "made himself and his posterity inferior to the priesthood of Melchisedec.[24]"

Murray takes the same loins text and will not let seminal presence do all the work. "We are truly one in Adam, in terms of Hebrews 7:9, 10 we were all in the loins of Adam." But if the relationship "were simply that of seminal union, that of being in his loins, this would not provide any explanation why the sin imputed is the first sin alone.[25]" Representation must add what mere presence in the loins cannot. Scripture already knows how to impute the head's deed to those

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21 Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Berkhof's ST), Page 214: "And because he was the federal representative of the race, his disobedience affected all his descendants."

22 Heb. 7:9–10 ESV.

23 John Owen, An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, vol. 3 (London: Thomas Tegg, 1840), 481–82: Levi "paid tithes in Abraham"; "what any one doth, that all his posterity are esteemed to do in and by him"; Abraham "was the representative of all his posterity."

24 John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1853), 163–64: Levi "who was then in the loins of Abraham"; Abraham's tithe "made himself and his posterity inferior to the priesthood of Melchisedec."

25 Murray, Imputation of Adam's Sin, 35, 38–39: "We are truly one in Adam, in terms of Hebrews 7:9, 10 we were all in the loins of Adam"; "If the relationship to Adam were simply that of seminal union, that of being in his loins, this would not provide any explanation why the sin imputed is the first sin alone."

"in" him. Adam to his posterity, and Christ to His people, are the same kind of legal counting. They are not a Pauline invention sprung from nowhere in Romans 5.

IV. 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 3:13 — Imputation

Federal headship lives or dies by imputation—the legal transfer of guilt or righteousness from the representative to those represented. And this is part of the beauty and blessing of the gospel! When we consider it, I can't help but fall on my knees in worship and thanksgiving because we are counted as righteous in and through the representation of Christ. Wow! Note how Paul puts this in other verses.

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21 ESV)[26]

Calvin will not let "made sin" become a smear on Christ's person. Christ "was entirely exempt from sin" and yet "was made sin for us." The antithesis is sin against righteousness. "As, however, the curse of the individual was of old cast upon the victim, so Christ's condemnation was our absolution.[27]" Guilt is charged. Righteousness is given. The exchange is forensic.

Galatians presses the same transfer under the language of curse:

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'—" (Gal. 3:13 ESV)[28]

Calvin's inference is mercilessly plain. Christ "did not suffer that punishment on his own account. It follows, therefore, either that he was crucified in vain, or that our curse was laid upon him, in order that we might be delivered from it." He "placed himself in our room," and became "subject to the curse, not in himself indeed, but in us, yet in such a manner, that it became necessary for him to occupy our place." "How would he have freed us from the wrath of God, if he had not transferred it from us to himself?[29]"

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26 2 Cor. 5:21 ESV.

27 Calvin, Commentary on Corinthians, on 2 Cor. 5:21: Christ "was entirely exempt from sin" and "was made sin for us"; "As, however, the curse of the individual was of old cast upon the victim, so Christ's condemnation was our absolution."

28 Gal. 3:13 ESV.

29 John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1854), 91–92: "our curse was laid upon him"; he "placed himself in our room"; "how would he have freed us from the wrath of God, if he had not transferred it from us to himself?"

The Lexham Research Commentary on Galatians states the same transfer in the curse register: "Christ delivered believers from this curse by becoming a curse (katara) for us (Gal 3:13). As a result of Christ becoming a curse, the blessing of Abraham has come to Gentiles, and all can now live by faith (Gal 3:14)."[30]

Murray pairs the same two texts and keeps the discrimination clean. Christ is said to have been "made sin for us" and "made a curse," yet "we do not read that he sinned or was constituted a sinner." That discrimination marks "the difference that must be posited between imputation as it applies to Adam's sin and as it applies to Christ's sin-bearing.[31]" Adam's guilt is legally imputed prior to each person's later actual sins. Christ's righteousness is legally imputed to those found in Him—without making Him personally corrupt. Heaven requires the transfer that only Christ's headship supplies. The open-theism and provisionist pressure-tests that follow in the next part bite harder once imputation is on the table, because both foils try to get someone into glory without that transfer.

V. Joshua 7 and 2 Samuel 24 — Corporate Dealing under Heads

The Old Testament does not wait for Paul to teach that a head's legal status can bind the collective. Joshua 7 is the blunt case. Achan alone took what was devoted. God said Israel had sinned:

"But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel." (Josh. 7:1 ESV)[32]

"Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings." (Josh. 7:11 ESV)[33]

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30 Lexham Research Commentary on Galatians (LRC Ga), at Galatians, Ga 3:1–4:7, article "Christ as Curse": "However, Christ delivered believers from this curse by becoming a curse (katara) for us (Gal 3:13). As a result of Christ becoming a curse, the blessing of Abraham has come to Gentiles, and all can now live by faith (Gal 3:14)."

31 Murray, Imputation of Adam's Sin, 94–95: Christ "made sin for us" (II Cor. 5:21) and "made a curse" (Gal. 3:13), "yet we do not read that he sinned or was constituted a sinner. There is in this discrimination an index to the difference that must be posited between imputation as it applies to Adam's sin and as it applies to Christ's sin-bearing."

32 Josh. 7:1 ESV.

33 Josh. 7:11 ESV.

Calvin refuses the modern instinct that only the private actor can be named. “It is not new for the sin of one member to be visited on the whole body.” “Transgression is imputed to the children of Israel, while the guilt is confined to one individual.” God “wished by an extraordinary manifestation to remind posterity that they might all be criminated by the act of an individual.[34]” Keil names the legal category with school precision. The charge is *imputatio civilis*, not *imputatio moralis*: Achan, “a member of the nation, had robbed the whole nation of the purity and holiness which it ought to possess before God, through the sin that he had committed, just as the whole body is affected by the sin of a single member.[35]” A nation, Keil adds, “is one organic whole, in which the individuals are merely members of the same body,” and “the good or evil deeds of an individual affect injuriously or beneficially the whole community.” I do not equate Achan with Adam. I do say the text already knows how one member’s deed can be charged to the body under covenant.

2 Samuel 24 shows the same pattern from the throne. David numbers the people. The plague falls on the kingdom:

“But David’s heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the Lord, ‘I have sinned greatly in what I have done.’ … So the Lord sent a pestilence on Israel … And there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba 70,000 men. … Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, ‘Behold, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father’s house.’” (2 Sam. 24:10, 15, 17 ESV)[36]

34 John Calvin, Commentaries on the Book of Joshua (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1854), 103–5: “it is not new for the sin of one member to be visited on the whole body”; “transgression is imputed to the children of Israel, while the guilt is confined to one individual”; God reminded posterity “that they might all be criminated by the act of an individual.”

35 C. F. Keil, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: Joshua, Judges, Ruth (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1880), 74–76: imputatio civilis (not moralis); Achan “had robbed the whole nation of the purity and holiness which it ought to possess before God, through the sin that he had committed, just as the whole body is affected by the sin of a single member.”

36 2 Sam. 24:10, 15, 17 ESV.

Keil will not let the opening verse be soft. The census is "a manifestation of the wrath of God against Israel." "The kindling of the wrath of God against Israel a second time also presupposes guilt on the part of the nation." Jehovah "instigated David against Israel to the performance of an act which brought down a severe judgment upon the nation.[37]" The pestilence kills seventy thousand. David's flock prayer—"these, the flock, what have they done?"—names him the shepherd who sinned. Keil's warning is honest and I will keep it: "We must not infer, therefore, from this confession on the part of David, that the people, whilst innocent themselves, had had to atone only for an act of transgression on the part of their king.[38]" The nation is not wholly guiltless. The king's act still governs the collective under his jurisdiction. That is corporate dealing under a head. It prepares the reader for why Adam's one trespass and Christ's one act of righteousness can govern many in Romans 5—and why no one enters glory outside Christ's representation.

VI. Bridge

Everyone who is in heaven is there by virtue of Christ's sacrifice. The guilt is removed, or the righteousness is given, or—this is the gospel as Romans 5 writes it—both. That stake was already set in Romans 5. The wider federal frame does not create it. It shows that Romans 5 is not an isolated novelty. One legally representing the many is how Scripture already thinks. Refuse the federal sentence and the foils that follow become live options: a possible heaven without a Savior, or infants in heaven without the removal of guilt. Keep the federal sentence and those doors close. The foils that follow are pressure-tests, not system surveys.

37 C. F. Keil, Biblical Commentary on the Books of Samuel (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1880), 501–2: the census as "a manifestation of the wrath of God against Israel"; wrath "presupposes guilt on the part of the nation"; Jehovah "instigated David against Israel to the performance of an act which brought down a severe judgment upon the nation."

38 Keil, Books of Samuel, 509–10: on 2 Sam. 24:17, "We must not infer, therefore, from this confession on the part of David, that the people, whilst innocent themselves, had had to atone only for an act of transgression on the part of their king."

Part III — Why This Makes Christ Necessary for Everyone in Heaven

The stake is simple. Everyone who is in heaven is there by virtue of Christ's sacrifice. The guilt is removed, or the righteousness is given, or—this is the gospel as Romans 5 writes it—both. The Heidelberg Catechism will not split the gift: satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness; as if I had never committed sin, and as if I had myself accomplished the obedience. The debt is paid. The positive righteousness is imputed. Christ is not an assistant to the nearly innocent. He is the second head, and those who receive the gift receive it from him. I loathe "proof texting" regarding the plain interpretation of any passage, except as such provides context from the wider and whole Biblical corpus, such as John 14:6 and its "no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6 ESV). In heaven and in eternity, no human will be there who is not there completely and only because of and through Christ, period. That includes babies and infants prior to the age of accountability, all of which I believe its demonstrable through the example of David and Christ's statements in the gospels to show are all there, but the point here is that they are all there by virtue of Christ alone. I will not deny the Lord Jesus Christ his primacy, exclusivity, and supremacy, and any theological position that theoretically can or does must be rejected with the strongest of efforts.

That is why I will not leave the two pressure-tests as asides. They are not surveys of other systems. They are foils. They show what happens when the federal sentence is refused.

To elaborate further on the above parenthetical statement, and at the risk of obvious redundancy, I need to address again two alternative positions.

First, open theism. I actually heard Leighton Flowers in a podcast say that he had less problem with "open theism" than with Calvinism. Surely that is the flourish of overstatement for emphasis, but it is dangerous, and if it is his genuine position the two systems have an unanticipated parallel. I have not looked at open theism for over thirty years, and I will not pretend a literature I am not reading. One of its problems has always been its inability to anticipate theoretically whether there would ever be anyone who would actually be born and then live without sin, such that that person could go to heaven without Christ. I can already hear the cries of foul. Prove that this is not a theoretical possibility under that position and I will take it back. Until then the reductio stands. If the future free act is not known, and if guilt waits on the later personal act, then a sinless life is an open door, and a Savior is not strictly necessary for

every person who might be saved. Romans 5 will not have that door. “Death spread to all men because all sinned,” and that “all sinned” is the one trespass of the one man. There is no remainder of the race standing outside the first head, waiting to see whether they will need the second.

Second, provisionism. A similar situation exists if children are not guilty of Adam’s sin—if they inherit a nature inclined toward sin and not the guilt of the one trespass. Then those who die in infancy, or before an “age of accountability,” go to heaven based on their innocence. I hear the cries of foul, and in the next breath the emotional argument that children do not go to hell. I do not personally know a Calvinist who believes they do. What we believe, what I believe, is that all infants who die go to heaven based on the substitutionary atonement of Christ. That is not to say that hyper-Calvinists do not take the contrary position, but they too are wrong. The provisionist path is a different error. It gets the infants into heaven, if it does, without the removal of guilt, and at best with a grant of positive righteousness they were never said to lack because of guilt. That is not the full gospel need Romans 5 presses. Verse 16 says the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation. Verse 18 says one trespass led to condemnation for all men. Verse 19 says by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners. Even babies do not enter the world innocent. If they go to heaven, they go as those for whom the second head has done what the first head did in reverse: condemnation answered by justification, the many made sinners answered by the many made righteous.

Take the two streams together and you have what I will not leave as a whisper. If these men are right, there will be many people in heaven for whom Christ is not Savior—or not Savior in the sense Paul wrote, the sense in which he both pays the debt and provides the righteousness. I will not go further into their books. I cannot believe the implications. Language such as Calvinism being “another gospel” is Paul’s language in Galatians, and it comes with a condemnation. I will let that sit here, as I turn aside for the moment in fear and trembling for those who can so arrogantly throw such language around over the clear and historical understanding of the gospel and what Christ provides. My hope and prayer is that these men can recognize that their attacks are attacks on “hyper Calvinism”, not on the consistent Reformed Calvinism of Spurgeon, an attack that is justified, but an attack that has swept all into one point of opposition because these men have misunderstood the positions of the majority who aren’t “hyper” in their understanding.

Only the double bond closes both doors. Adam is seminal head, and the corrupt nature is propagated. Adam is representative head, and the one trespass is imputed. Keep only the first and you can still talk of a wounded infant who has not yet sinned, and you have not explained why he is condemned as proven by being subject to death. Keep neither and you can talk of a possible sinless life that never needed a cross. Paul keeps both, because he is speaking of a head who is both father and representative. The parallel in Christ is the same structure on the other side. Representation is the specific ground of the imputation in both directions. Descent explains how the first head's corruption reaches the race. The Spirit's uniting of those who receive the gift to Christ explains how the second head's obedience reaches them—including the infant who never lived to copy the first act and never lived to hear the gospel in the ordinary way. The infant is not an exception to the gospel. The infant is the test case of the gospel. If the smallest of Adam's posterity can be in heaven without the merit of Christ, then Romans 5 was not about heads. It was about a climate and a later choice. Paul did not write that.

So I will say it once more and stop. Everyone in heaven is there by virtue of Christ's sacrifice. Guilt is removed. Righteousness is given. The company of the redeemed, from the infant who never spoke to the thief who spoke only at the last, is a company found in the second head. Christ alone is Lord and King! Christ alone is the one to whom everyone will one day bow the knee and confess as Lord! Christ alone is the eternal subject and focal point of our eternal praise! Open theism and provisionism, as pressure-tests, leave a company that does not need him. Federal headship in Romans 5 will not. So, beware here young Samuel and take your grandfather's advice. Reject these aberrations and defend the doctrine of Christ's absolute and total necessity. Christ is the chosen means. The people are concomitant.

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