

SOTERIOLOGY NOTES

STUDIES IN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN SALVATION

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Section 1b: The Doctrine of Sin

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a. Chart I

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VI. RESULTS OF SIN UPON THE UNSAVED MAN

A. Personally

- a. Alienation from God (Isa. 59:1, 2): Men are exiles, lost, enemies, dead, and have no fellowship with God. **POINT:** This accounts for man's soul restlessness; there is a hunger in a man's soul that only God can fill.
- b. Bondage to Sin (Jn. 8:31-34; Rom. 6:17; Eph. 2:3; Titus 3:3): Men have high ideals but weak wills. They are chained and imprisoned to sin.
- c. Men do not need a lecture but a savior, not education but a change of heart, not advice but power and control of themselves. **NOTE:** Sin is not merely outward acts or habits; it is a deep-seated, inward corruption. Sin manifests itself in a thousand different ugly ways (Mt. 12:33-35; Jer. 17:9; Mk. 7:21-23; Gal. 5:19-21).

- d. Selfishness (Mt. 12:37-40): Sin is the assertion of self against God and is manifested through both superiority and inferiority complexes.

B. Positionally

- a. Spiritually Dead (Eph 2:1)
- b. No Capacity for God (I Cor. 2:14)
- c. Rebellious (Rom. 8:9)
- d. Not Seeking God (Rom. 3:1-12)
- e. No Spiritual Understanding (Eph. 4:18, Rom. 3:11)
- f. Unable to Please God (Rom. 8:8)
- g. Have Not Faith (11 Thess. 3:2)
- h. Hardened (Eph. 4:18)
- i. No Love for God (Jn. 5:40, 42)
- j. Controlled by Satan (I Jn. 5:19)
- k. **POINT:** How can the unsaved man respond to Christ? Only if the Holy Spirit enables him to believe. There must be a sovereign work of God.

C. Spiritually

- a. He Cannot See the Kingdom (Jn. 3:3)
- b. He Cannot Hear Christ's Word (Jn. 8:43)
- c. He Cannot Receive the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:16, 17)
- d. He Cannot Please God (Rom. 8:9)
- e. He Cannot Be Subject to God's Law (Rom. 8:8)
- f. He Cannot Know the Things of the Spirit (I Cor. 2:12).
- g. He Cannot Cease from Sin (II Pet. 2:14)

VII. TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- A. Definition of Total Depravity: That inherent corruption which extends to every part of man's nature because he is a sinner with no spiritual good towards God or meritorious favor in the sight of God. Mankind is in a hopeless condition, unable in any way to save himself.
- B. Scriptures: Ps. 14:2-4; 1 Cor. 2:14; Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12; 11 Cor. 1:9; Eph. 2:1-3; Eph. 2:12; Jer. 13:23; Ps. 51:5; Jn. 3:3; Job 14:4; 1 Cor. 1:18; Acts 13:41; Prov. 30:12; Jn. 5:21; 6:53; 8:19; Mt. 11:25; II Cor. 5:17; Jn. 2:19; 1 Ki. 8:46; Ps. 130:3; Eccl. 7:20; Gen. 8:21; Jer. 17:9.

C. Key Passages: Rom. 3:10-20. God's appraisal of men is that none are righteous (Isa. 64:6; Ps. 14:1-3; Jn. 5:42), none understand (I Cor. 2:14; 11 Tim. 3:6, 7) and none seek God (Jn. 5:40; Ps. 10:4; Lk. 19:10).

D. What Depravity Does Not Mean

- a. It does not mean that all men express their depravity equally.
- b. It does not exclude the idea that there might be something in man that causes him to seek something higher than himself.
- c. It does not mean that the unsaved man cannot do good things.

E. What Depravity Does Mean

- a. It is total depravity in which man's total being (will, intellect, and emotion) is corrupted by sin. Man has no natural ability to respond positively towards God.
- b. Man is spiritually dead and must have a supernatural act to cause him to live spiritually.
- c. Man has an innate defect that separates him from God.
- d. Man has nothing but sin to offer God.

F. Total Depravity And Preaching The Gospel

- a. The Christian preaches a "whosoever will" gospel to the lost world. The offer of the gospel is universal.
- b. All humanity makes up a "universal won't" world.
- c. The Christian's responsibility is to tell the gospel.
- d. If it is God's will, He gives the lost one the ability to believe the gospel and that one trusts Christ. Our confidence is supernatural, for God takes dead men and causes them to live. Thus salvation is all by grace! (Mt. 1:21; Luke 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15; Luke 15:3-7).

VIII. THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

- A. Question: If man is not able to trust in Christ without Divine enablement, how is it that there are so many commands and exhortations in Scripture for the sinner to believe? Answer: There are several ways to answer this question: (1) Some say that the command to believe was given to show men that they cannot believe in their own strength; thus they will cast themselves on the sovereign mercy and grace of God to save them. (2) Others feel that the commands to believe are related to the offer of salvation to all. If a

person responds positively to Christ, efficacious grace was working in the person all the time. **NOTE:** No one denies that a sinner must trust in Jesus Christ by an act of his will, being free of any compelling of that will. No man has ever come to Christ against his own will, but the sovereign grace of God was quietly working in the person's heart to bring him to the place of faith and repentance.

- B. Question: Why does our Lord say to those Israelites in Jerusalem, "Ye would not come" (Mt. 23:37)? He did not say, "Ye could not come," but "Ye would not come," indicating man's free response to Christ's offer. Were Christ's plans thwarted because of Israel's rejection? Answer: Our Lord is looking over the whole history of Israel and sees that in large they have been rejecters. If any were saved, it was by pure grace. They would not come because they were basically sinful and rebellious. This section is primarily dealing with man's response and there is a mystery between man's response and God's sovereign purposes.

IX. THE DOCTRINE OF SIN IN HISTORY

- A. The early church, in its first few centuries of existence, had some controversy with the Gnostics over the sin question, but this early heresy was put down quite easily.
- B. In the late fourth century there arose the first great controversy over the sin question, dealing with the extent of man's depravity and the need of sovereign grace to save a person. The doctrine of sin had its first real test in the Pelagian-Augustinian Controversy. Pelagius was a British monk who denied original sin and that the sinner was helpless to save himself. Augustine was Bishop of Hippo in North Africa and he sought to set forth the biblical position on sin against Pelagius. The theological positions of the two men are as follows.
- a. Pelagius
 - i. Adam was created with free will and had a capacity for good or evil.
 - ii. Adam's mortality could not depend on his choice, for as a mortal he was already subject to the law of death.
 - iii. Adam chose to sin and this affected no one but himself.
 - iv. There is no hereditary transmission of a sinful nature or guilt to the human race; therefore there is no original sin.
 - v. All men are born in the same condition as was Adam-- free from sin and free from guilt.
 - vi. Adam was only a bad example to the human race.
 - vii. Man becomes a sinner by an act of his own will. In fact, man need not sin. If sin is universal, and Pelagius said it was, it was due to wrong education, bad example, and habit patterns of sinning.
 - viii. Man does not need God's help to turn from sin to Christ.
 - ix. There is no need for an inward working of grace to empower man to do that which is good, but God's grace

is seen in God's natural endowments of mind, the revelation of God in nature and Scripture, and in the example of Jesus Christ.

b. Augustine

- i. Adam's sin was of a voluntary nature under the sovereignty of God and was transmitted to his descendants with the guilt and corruption attached to it.
- ii. The whole human race was germinally in Adam and sinned when Adam sinned.
- iii. As a result of inherent and imputed sin, man is said to be totally depraved and unable to do any spiritual good.
- iv. Unsaved man is absolutely dependent on God for the realization of his destiny.
- v. Man is also dependent upon divine grace for regeneration and God's grace is irresistible.
- vi. The bestowing of God's grace is traced back to God's plan and predestination.
- vii. A regenerated person could be lost but the elect never die in an unregenerate state.

C. Pelagius advanced his view first at Rome (409-411 A.D.). His system was introduced into North Africa by his pupil Coelestius. The church gathered together to discuss the views of Pelagius and Augustine. In 431 A.D. the Council of Ephesus condemned Pelagianism as heretical. Augustine's doctrines on sin and grace were generally accepted in the Western Church but semi-Pelagianism continued in the Eastern Church.

D. Semi-Pelagianism was a compromise between the teachings of Pelagius and the teachings of the Bible on sin and grace. Semi-Pelagianism held the following: (1) Accepted election to salvation according to foreknowledge of a person's faith; (2) Both divine grace and human will needed in the renewal of man; (3) Did not deny human corruption but human nature was only diseased or weakened, not fatally injured, in the Fall; and (4) Man begins the work of regeneration by faith in Christ. **NOTE:** Semi-Pelagianism was condemned at the Council of Orange (529 A.D.) as heretical.

E. During the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Church in the West at first held to Semi-Pelagianism. The Roman Catholic Church came to accept synergism-- the human soul cooperates with God in salvation. Augustinianism was carried on by Gregory the Great and Anselm, but by the end of the Middle Ages, most churchmen had rejected these doctrines; thus the church was in a state of decline.

F. When the church had reached a state of deplorable corruption, God brought the Reformation that officially began in 1517. The Reformers went back to the teachings of the Apostle Paul and Augustine to establish their theology on sin and grace. Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli believed in total depravity, no autonomous will, and double predestination. The great thrust of these men was God's sovereign grace in salvation apart from human merit. Melancthon, who carried

on Luther's work, at first held to predestination but later avoided the topic as much as possible. Melancthon came to hold the Semi-Pelagian systems of theology.

- G. The Socinians, headed by Socinius, were a radical, reactionary group who opposed the teachings of the Reformers on sin and grace. Socinianism is simply a revival of Pelagianism.
- H. Early in the seventeenth century there arose in the Netherlands a group called Arminians, who were followers of James (Jacobus) Arminius. Arminianism was, in essence, the same as Semi-Pelagianism. The Arminians taught the following.
 - a. They believed in universal grace and free will, denied predestination (reprobation) and toned down original sin.
 - b. They believed that the fall of Adam had an evil effect on humanity but denied original sin as taught by the Reformers. The guilt of Adam's sin was not passed on but the *pollution* of Adam's sin was passed to humanity. Man is simply diseased, not totally depraved.
 - c. They believed that through the death of Christ God gave sufficient grace for all men to believe. **NOTE:** Arminianism was condemned by the Reformed Church in the Netherlands at the Synod of Dort in 1618.
- I. Today (when this was first written in 1968), all Christians are generally divided into two groups. They are either Arminian or Calvinistic; there may be modifications, but essentially this classification can be made. In America, those churches that come from the Reformed movement are essentially Calvinistic (Church of England, Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, etc.). Arminianism has crept into many of the Reformed churches today but shows up clearly in Methodist, Pentecostal, Assembly of God, Church of God, Brethren, and most Baptist churches. The Baptists originally were quite Calvinistic in their teachings of sin and grace but have deteriorated. They are quite strong on the orthodox position of sin and grace. America today is more Semi-Arminian than Calvinistic. **NOTE:** The twentieth century church is much like the church of the Middle Ages; it is corrupt and has a low concept of sin and grace. Perhaps we are ripe for a twentieth century reformation!

Chart 1: History of the Doctrine of Sin

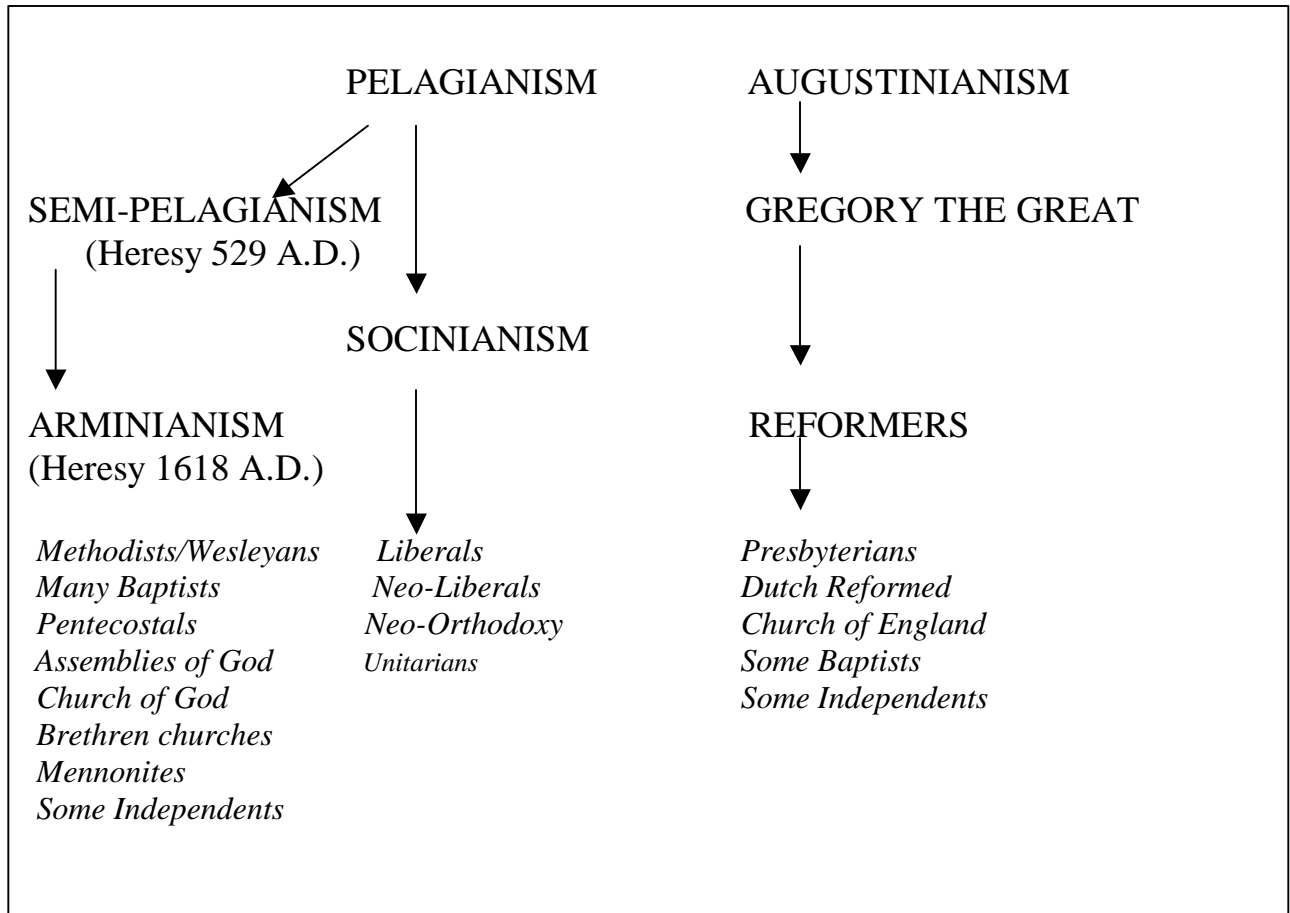
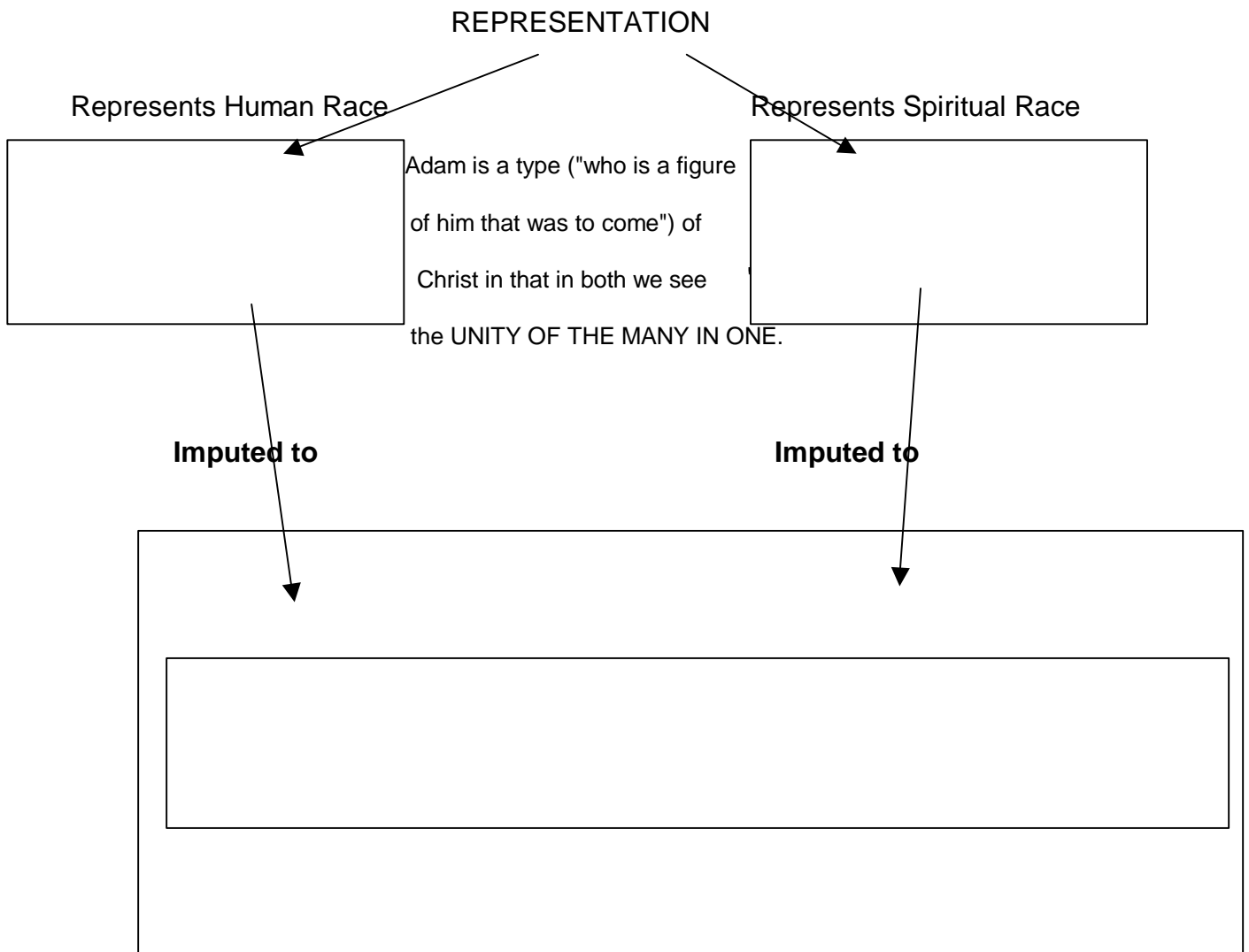


CHART II : Romans 5:12

Representative or Federal Head	Imputed Sin	All sinned in Adam
“Sin entered the world”	“...for all have sinned”	Physical Death
“Wherefore as by one man”	Human Race	“And death, by sin; and so death passed upon (through) all men.”
Seminal (seed) Head	Inherent Sin: All Receive Adam’s Nature	Spiritual Death

1. This chart explains the relationship between the world of mankind and the fall of Adam as the racial representative.
2. Sin entered the human race by one man, Adam; with that sin came death in the sense of the entire, collective, evil results of sin (physical, spiritual and eternal death), the emphasis of Scripture being upon physical death.
3. This death was distributed to every member of the human race, of whom Adam was the representative head. Men are thus born spiritually dead and headed for physical and eternal death. This explains how babies are sinners.
4. Men are constituted sinners, not because they are innocent victims of what Adam did but because they are guilty, for when Adam sinned they sinned. All men sinned in Adam's rebellion and this sin is imputed directly to them.
5. God has sovereignly imputed the sin of Adam to the whole human race, just as Christ's righteousness has been imputed sovereignly to every Christian. Adam's sin is imputed to his descendants in the same way that Christ's righteousness is imputed to those who believe in Him. Adam's descendants are, of course, no more personally guilty of his sin than Christ's redeemed are personally meritorious of His righteousness. But while men are not personally guilty of Adam's sin, they are nevertheless liable to punishment for it.
6. THEOLOGICAL QUESTION: Is it fair for God to impute sin to all men and punish them for it? ANSWER: This is difficult to understand and it is hard to give a rational explanation as to why God did it, but He clearly says He did do it, and He has the sovereign right to do anything. However the thought of many being affected by the, sin of one is clearly seen in different portions of Scripture.

CHART III: Representation Principle of Romans 5:18-19



Context of Chart III: These verses (Romans 5:18,19) are the conclusion of the argument begun by Paul in Romans 5:12. There is an analogy by contrast between what Adam did for the people whom he represented and what Christ did for the people whom He represented. The fall of Adam and the imputation of his sin to his people is compared to the redeeming work of Christ and the imputation of His righteousness to His people. In verse 18 the Apostle stresses the extensive-ness of the respective work of each man. Every man in Adam reaped the results of Adam's fall, just as every man in Christ has reaped the benefits of His work in salvation. In verse 19, the Apostle emphasized the effectiveness of each man's work and relates the representative head of his respective people by designating them not as simply "man" but "the many." Even as Adam's transgression did not simply bring the possibility of his people becoming sinners, so Christ's work did not simply bring the possibility that men might be righteous; as Adam's sin constituted the human race sinners, so Christ's work constituted the elect of God righteous.

Adam acted for all men of whom he was the representative head, the result being all whom he represented have his sin imputed to them, are under condemnation, and are constituted sinners. Christ acted for "all men" (the elect) of whom He was the representative Head, the result being all whom He represented in his death, burial, and present intercession have His righteousness imputed to them, are justified, and are constituted righteous.