

Associated Gospel Churches - Articles of Faith and Doctrine

The Fall of Humanity & The Total Depravity of Humans

December 18, 2005

The Fall of Humanity

V. The Fall of Humanity

We believe that human beings, originally created in the image and after the likeness of God, fell from their high and holy estate through disobedience, by eating the forbidden fruit, and in consequence, the threatened penalty of death was then and there inflicted, so that they totally lost all spiritual life, becoming dead in trespasses and sins, and subject to the power of the devil.

Genesis 1:26, 2:17; Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 3:8; 1 Timothy 5:6; John 5:40, 6:53

The Total Depravity of Humans

VI. The Total Depravity of Humans

We believe that this spiritual death, or total corruption of human nature, has been transmitted to the entire race of human beings, the man Christ Jesus alone excepted; and hence that every child of Adam is born into the world with a sinful nature.

Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 17:9; John 3:6; Psalm 14:1-3, 51:5; Romans 5:12-19

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

V. The Fall of Humanity

VI. The Total Depravity of Humans

- articles about ‘anthropology’
- essentially unchanged from previous version
 - ‘**Humanity**’ and ‘**Humans**’ replaced ‘**Man**’

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

The Fall of Humanity

- Man created in the image & likeness of God
 - **Genesis 1:26-27**
 - ‘high and holy estate’
 - in original state, *posse non peccare et mori* (i.e. able not to sin and die)

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

The Fall of Humanity

- Sinned & fell by eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
 - **Genesis 2:17, 3:1-6**
- the ‘threatened penalty of death was there and then inflicted’
 - **i.e. ‘totally lost all spiritual life, became dead in trespasses and sins, subject to power of the devil’**
(John 6:53, Eph. 2:1-3, 1 Tim. 5:6, 1 John 3:8)

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

The Fall of Humanity

– ‘spiritual death’

- **separation from the life of God (Eph 4:18)**
 - e.g. prodigal son: “This son of mine was dead...” (Luke 15:24)
 - ‘...dead even while she lives.’ (1 Tim 5:6)
- **unable to understand and appreciate spiritual things (1 Cor 2:14)**
- **no sensitivity toward God; no capacity in himself to please Him (e.g. Psalm 14:1-3, Gen 6:5)**
- **thus, need new life from God (e.g. John 6:53)**

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Total Depravity

- Total lack of spiritual good and inability to do good before God (e.g. Isa 64:6)
 - i.e. ‘total corruption of human nature’
 - not to deny that humans are able to do good in some senses of the word (e.g. in secular realm, education, science, medicine, etc.)
 - created in God’s image and still enjoy His Common Grace (e.g. through civil laws, family expectations, etc.)
 - but completely unable to do spiritual good in terms of relationship to God (Isa 64:6)

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Total Depravity

- not *utter* depravity, but *total* depravity
 - **Man is not as evil as he could be - restrained by Common Grace**
 - **rather, every aspect of human being is corrupted**
 - emotions, desires, will, intellect, bodies, etc.

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Original Sin (i.e. “inherited” sin)

– all human beings ‘inherited’ sin from Adam

- ‘...this spiritual death or total corruption of human nature has been transmitted to the entire race of man, the man Jesus Christ excepted..’

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned...for just as through the disobedience of one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of one man [Jesus Christ] the many will be made righteous.” (Rom 5:12-19)

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Original Sin (i.e. “inherited” sin)

– 2 aspects of inherited sin

1) Inherited guilt (or ‘original guilt’)

God counts all humans (i.e. Adam’s descendants) as having sinned when Adam disobeyed

“for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command...” (Rom 5:13-14)

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Original Sin (i.e. “inherited” sin)

– 2 aspects of inherited sin

1) Inherited guilt

- i.e. death reigned in all men because all were counted guilty on the basis of Adam’s sin, even though their own sins may not have been “counted” because they lived before the law was given

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Original Sin (i.e. “inherited” sin)

– 2 aspects of inherited sin

1) Inherited guilt

- when Adam sinned, all who would descend from him were counted as sinners (i.e. guilty like Adam) - even though they did not yet exist!

– “...While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom 5:8)

- Christ died for us before we were born
- even before we were born, we were considered sinners in need of salvation

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Original Sin (i.e. “inherited” sin)

– 2 aspects of inherited sin

1) Inherited guilt - 2 main theories of how Adam’s guilt applies to us

- ‘realistic’ - the human race was present in Adam (or at least partook of the human nature in Adam) when he sinned, so all sinned (cf. Heb 7:9-10)
- ‘representative’ - Adam was our representative, as head of the human race; as such, his guilt was imputed to us (i.e. counted as ours) when he sinned, therefore we are all counted sinners

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Original Sin (i.e. “inherited” sin)

– 2 aspects of inherited sin

2) Inherited corruption (or ‘original pollution’)

- **we inherit a sinful nature as a result of Adam’s sin**
 - tendency to sin that affects every aspect of our being
 - manifests even from birth
 - **Psalm 51:5 - sinful from birth, even from conception**
 - **Psalm 58:3 - “Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies.”**
 - **don’t need to teach children to disobey - it is in our nature to do so**

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Original Sin (i.e. “inherited” sin)

– 2 aspects of inherited sin

2) Inherited corruption (or ‘original pollution’)

- in our natures, lacking any spiritual good before God
- in our actions, unable to do any spiritual good before God
 - i.e. totally depraved
 - have fallen from *posse non peccare et mori*, to *non posse non peccare et mori* (NOT able not to sin and die)
 - we are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Original Sin - Is It 'Fair'?

– some responses

- everyone who thinks it unfair has also voluntarily committed many actual sins for which he is guilty
- 'we would have done no better than Adam'

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Original Sin - Is It 'Fair'?

– some responses

- **if it is unfair for God to consider Adam's sin as ours, then it is also unfair for God to consider Christ's righteousness as ours**

– process of imputation for Adam and Christ is the same according to Rom 5:12-21

- **Adam as a pattern for Christ (Rom 5:19)**
- **God views the human race as represented by Adam, it's head**
- **God views the new race of Christians as represented by Christ as its head**

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

A little history...

- major controversy in 5th c. over original sin
- Pelagius
 - a British monk; taught in Rome c. 410 AD
 - denied transmission of guilt or sinful nature from Adam to his descendants
 - thus, no such thing as original sin
 - Man born in same condition as Adam - free from both guilt and pollution
 - no evil tendencies or desires in human nature that result inevitably in sin

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

A little history...

– Pelagius

- **sin results not from sinful nature, but from bad examples, wrong education, bad habits, etc.**
- **every human is able voluntarily to sin or not to, and to choose God or not to**
- **thus, repentance and salvation is dependent on man's choice, not on God's grace**
 - **grace is helpful, but not necessary**

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

A little history...

– Augustine

- **bishop of Hippo**
 - baptized in 387 AD; became bishop in 395 AD
- **opposed Pelagius & his disciples (e.g. Celestius)**
- **his thought further developed later by Anselm & others**
- **agreed that sin is voluntary, but argued that man is unable to do good before God because of entrance of sin into the world**

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

A little history...

– Augustine

- **taught that Adam transmitted both guilt and corruption to all humanity**
 - thus Man is totally depraved
- **as a result, Man is completely unable to choose God**
 - Man is completely dependent on God's grace for salvation
 - requires grace of God just to believe in Christ
 - regeneration is 100% a work of God (not of man) -
“monergistic” view of regeneration

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

A little history...

- Pelagian vs. Augustinian doctrines of sin & grace
 - Pelagianism condemned as heresy by Synods of Mileve & Carthage, 416 AD
 - Council of Ephesus (431 AD) also condemned Pelagianism, as well as Nestorianism

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

A little history...

– Semi-Pelagianism

- a ‘**compromise**’ position
- **did not deny human corruption, but saw human nature as *weakened* by Fall, not totally depraved**
 - retains some freedom/ability to do & choose good
- **regeneration requires co-operation of God’s grace and Man’s free will, but it is Man who must ‘make the first move’**
 - ‘*synergistic*’ view of regeneration

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

A little history...

– Semi-Pelagianism

- **condemned at Council of Orange**
- **eventually gained strong footing in Eastern church**
- **Western (Roman Catholic) church held to Augustinianism/semi-Augustinianism for 2-3 centuries after Augustine, but also eventually drifted towards semi-Pelagianism**

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

A little history...

– Roman Catholic view

- **Man is by nature flesh + spirit**
 - neither holy nor sinful by nature
 - but conflict between flesh and spirit makes doing right difficult
- **‘original righteousness’ - a gift given by God to keep the inferior parts of man in proper subjection to the superior parts, and thus in subjection to God**

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

A little history...

– Roman Catholic view

- **original righteousness lost at Fall, but not any of Man's natural endowments**
 - thus Man fell back into state of conflict between flesh & spirit
 - neither holy nor sinful by nature, but supremacy of higher elements of Man's nature weakened by the Fall
- **thus, Man is not completely dependent of God's grace for renewal, but must co-operate with God in regeneration**

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

A little history...

– Views of the Reformers (e.g. Calvin)

- largely followed Augustine's & Anselm's constructs
- held to 'representative' view of inherited sin instead of 'realistic' (as Augustine & Anselm did)
- saw Man as totally depraved due to the Fall
 - thus, unable to do any spiritual good or to make any steps to recovery --> regeneration completely a work of God
 - but Man still able to do good in civil/secular realm as a result of God's common grace

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A little history...

– Views of the Reformers

- **opposed by Roman Catholic Church, especially wrt monergistic view of regeneration**
- **opposed by Socinus & followers, who revived a Pelagian position**
- **opposed by Arminius (17th cent.) & his followers, who took a modified semi-Pelagian position**

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A little history...

– Arminianism

- **argue that Adam's pollution passed on, but not his guilt**
- **BUT this pollution is not sin, just weakness**
 - does not result in condemnation in itself
- **Man not totally depraved - able to co-operate with God in regeneration, but God 'makes the first move'**
 - retains natural ability/power to do some spiritual good and turn to God
 - God gives all men enough grace to counteract effects of inherited pollution & co-operate with the Holy Spirit in regeneration

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A little history...

– Arminianism

- **Arminius likely closer to Reformed position than his later followers**
- **condemned at Synod of Dort (Netherlands), 1618**
 - rejected Arminianism
 - summarized and set forth clearly the Reformed (Calvinist) position

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Implications for today...

- **Different denominations have different views on these doctrines**
 - **impact many other doctrines (e.g. regeneration, justification, predestination)**
 - **semi-Pelagian - Roman Catholics (broadly)**
 - **Reformed - Lutherans (broadly), Presbyterians, Christian Reformed, some Baptists, AGC**
 - **Arminian - most Methodists, Wesleyans, many Pentecostals, some Baptists**

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Implications for today...

- Significant implications for worldviews
 - **viable worldviews must all address the questions**
 - Where did we come from? (Creation)
 - What's wrong with the human race and the world? (Fall)
 - How can we fix the problem? (Redemption)
 - **useful reference points for formulating Biblical positions on current issues**
 - **useful reference points for assessing other philosophies or worldviews**

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Implications for today...

- Significant implications for worldviews
 - **useful reference points for formulating Biblical positions on current issues**
 - e.g. the place of ‘rehabilitation’ in justice system
 - **total depravity means that people may be ‘trained’ to think or behave in certain ways (even to do good in some respects)**
 - **but core problem that causes people to commit crimes (i.e. sinful nature) can never be solved by education, counseling, etc.**

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Implications for today...

- Significant implications for worldviews
 - **useful reference points for assessing other philosophies or worldviews**
 - **e.g. Marxism**
 - at odds with Biblical worldview
 - what is our origin (i.e. ‘creation’)?
 - **self-originating matter**
 - reason for humanity’s problems (i.e. the ‘fall’)?
 - **the rise of private property**
 - the solution (‘redemption’)?
 - **revolution by the proletariat to cast off the oppressors**

Fall & Total Depravity of Man

Implications for today...

– Significant implications for worldviews

- **similar analyses could be done for other philosophies, worldviews, or religions**

- Buddhism

- humanism

- Hinduism

- feminism

- Islam

- psychology

- etc.

- **in many cases embraced uncritically by Christians even though their understanding of the problem and proposed solutions are fundamentally at odds with Biblical teaching**

Next class

**Salvation by Grace through
Faith**

January 1, 2006

References

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