

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

I fully understand that this paper directly contradicts the western church's widely-accepted teaching of 'original sin' and 'total depravity.' I also fully understand that many will accuse me of 'Pelagianism', even though I do not agree that man is capable of never sinning. What I care about is being faithful to scripture, and accurately understanding the incarnation of Christ, in the spirit of according our Lord Jesus Christ the glory due to him as a result of His amazing accomplishment of overcoming sin on our behalf. The given Word that our God transmitted to us in the Hebrew and Greek scriptures is my guide for faith and practice, and it is in the spirit of being true to that Word that I submit this paper. If those who disagree with what I say here cannot find at least one scripture that directly contradicts anything I say here, then I respectfully ask them to refrain from criticizing what I say here until they can find a scripture that clearly contradicts what I say.

The Incarnation of Christ

In order to understand the incarnation of Christ, there are a number of concepts that must be grasped. First among them is the concept of original sin.

Original sin, according to Augustine and many other divines since, burdens every soul with the *guilt* of Adam before it is born. Not a tendency to sin, mind you, but the actual guilt of Adam himself. As if a newly conceived baby in the womb had committed all of the sin Adam had committed. Augustine was adamant about this concept, and devoted a considerable quantity of ink to defending his position. He based his position on his erroneous understanding of Romans 5:12, which came from Ambrosiaster's faulty commentary. That commentary quotes Romans 5:12 as saying "in whom all sinned", referring to Adam. The Reformers bought into his understanding, and because of the implications of being born with this concept of original sin, they developed the doctrine of total depravity, and from that, the Calvinist conception of predestination. After all, if you are saddled with the guilt of Adam before you're born, you are bound for Hell from the womb. It doesn't matter that you haven't done anything or haven't even yielded to temptation yet. You are human, and because of that, you are born guilty, bound for Hell, and completely incapable of doing anything good. In order to ensure the salvation of infants who would go to Hell if they died (and many died), the Reformers and early church fathers felt duty-bound to find some way to save their souls in case they died. Thus they practiced the doctrine of infant baptism, and as a necessary consequence, the doctrine of being spiritually saved by baptism. This wasn't new. Since very early in the western church, infant baptism had been practiced. Christian parents wanted to be sure their children were going to heaven. The thought that their child was infected with original sin caused parents to look for a way to save their child. Baptism had to be reinterpreted to mean being 'born of the Spirit' (John 3:3-7) to support the idea of infant baptism, even though all references to baptism in the new testament involve adults making a conscious choice to be baptized. Because of that, many Christians now believe baptism saves you. If water baptism saves infants, it saves anyone who gets baptized, which is heresy. Infants can't decide to get baptized (as required in Acts 8:37). So infant baptism, if it saves any infants, is a vicarious salvation, which is directly contrary to scripture. No one is spiritually saved by water baptism, or vicariously saved by someone else's actions, be they babe or adult.

This concept creates a huge problem with believing that Jesus Christ was born as a man. If he was born as we are born, then he was born guilty of sin and bound for hell from his mother's womb. That is, if you believe Augustine's take on original sin, and the doctrine of total depravity that derives from it. This generates the most bizarre of theological gymnastics to get around the fact that scripture says Jesus was just like us and was tempted like as we are. Untold quantities of ink have been spilled defending this unscriptural position.

Unfortunately, a large part of modern Christendom believes this concept of original sin propounded by Augustine. Carried to its logical conclusion, believing this doctrine of original sin damns every aborted baby to Hell, along with all miscarriages, and any and all unbaptized children who have not consciously given their lives to Christ. When questioned, those who believe this doctrine will say that God is fair and doesn't damn innocent children. OK, if that's true, how is your doctrine of original sin true? *You can't have it both ways.* Either you are born damned to Hell or not. Believing we are burdened with Adam's guilt before we are born, yet also believing

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that God doesn't damn innocent children is not just inconsistent, it's completely contradictory. It's saying black is white and up is down. Not only that, it also directly contradicts Ezekiel 18:20: "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." If the notion of federalism, as in Adam's guilt being imputed directly to us all, isn't directly contradicting that verse, logic is no longer valid.

It doesn't take a genius to observe that humanity has a sin problem. You can call it something else, but there is obviously a problem with people hurting each other, killing, war, robbery, adultery, etc. Human beings have a tendency to do bad things to each other. It seems that you can't have a culture that doesn't have a significant element of sin (or whatever else you want to call it). There is definitely a tendency for people to do bad things to each other. However, most people don't do grossly bad things to each other. There is a tendency to be selfish and disregard the needs of others, but most people are reasonably decent and don't descend into crime. Compared to God's perfect standard, no one measures up, but I hope you get my point.

The point is, every human being has a tendency to sin, and being that we all have sinful parents, we inherit that tendency, and sooner or later we're going to sin. It doesn't take long. No one leaves this life without having sinned in some way and thus deserves damnation from a Holy God who requires perfection.

Rom 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Sin entered into the world by Adam, and death passed upon all men, not because Adam sinned, but because 'all have sinned.' Death passed upon all men. They didn't inherit death or guilt because Adam sinned, but 'because all have sinned'. So federalism is an unbiblical concept. Death passed upon all men *because all men sinned*. Guilt is not imputed until sin is committed. Guilt leads to death. The reformed notion of guilt by involuntary association with Adam is not found in scripture. Sorry, my reformed brothers. Augustine developed it and you bought it.

However, we always have the opportunity not to sin. That also goes for people who don't believe in Christ. Christians as well as all other people on this earth have to deal with a tendency to sin. We always have the option of turning away from it, but we have to wrestle with the tendency. If you don't sin, you're not guilty of sin, which completely contradicts Augustine's version of original sin and total depravity. Augustine says we are guilty of sin before we're born. Our very constitution makes us *active* sinners—even in the womb. We're damned to Hell before we see the light of day, and we're stuck with a nature that is totally evil and completely *incapable* of good. Period. If you don't think this accurately reflects the modern doctrine of original sin, look at these quotes:

Be assured, and doubt not, that not only men who have attained the use of their reason, but also little children who have begun to live in their mothers' womb and have there died, or who, having been just born, have passed away from the world without the sacrament of holy baptism, administered in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, must be punished by the eternal torture of undying fire; for although they have committed no sin by their own will, they have nevertheless drawn with them the condemnation of original sin, by their carnal conception and nativity."

—Bishop St. Fulgentius

Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell ? Ans.—The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists of the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature."

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Doth original sin consist in a mere privation, or want of righteousness? Ans.—It consists also in the corruption of our whole nature. What is meant by the corruption of our whole nature? Ans.—The universal depravation both of soul and body, in all the faculties of the one, and members of the other. Is original sin of its own nature

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damning ? Ans.--Beyond all doubt!"
Fisher on Shorter Catechism

Our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them, whereby death came upon all, all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.
Baptist Philadelphia Confession

They maintain that mankind are totally depraved, in consequence of the fall of the first man, who being their public head, his sin involved the corruption of all his posterity; and which corruption extends over the whole soul, and renders it unable to turn to God, or to do anything truly good, and exposes it to his righteous displeasure, both in this world and that which is to come.
Buck on Calvinism

Babies in the womb haven't yet been tempted. They haven't yielded to temptation, because nothing yet has tempted them. The fact that babies are selfish simply reflects the reality of being a totally dependent being. Without constant care and attention to their needs, babies die. It has nothing to do with sin and everything to do with survival. The baby doesn't know anything other than expressing his legitimate needs in the only way he can: crying. To blame babies for being selfish and sinful is ridiculous. How would a baby express godly and unselfish behavior? The only way it can: by crying when it hurts and laughing or cooing when it feels good.

Just what is original sin?

To hold babies guilty of 'original sin' and condemning them to Hell simply because they are human is ridiculous. Yet, this is exactly what Augustine's doctrine of original sin does (see quotes above). So just what is original sin? Original sin is an inborn *tendency* to be selfish, which inevitably results in human beings sinning against one another and causing harm to others. At the same time, no one is forced to sin against their will by any internal inclination. We must freely choose to sin. We can also choose to do good. Which means that every human being has a choice to do good or evil. That's what free will is all about. If we don't have that choice, we don't have free will.

Let's look at what Ezekiel says:

Eze 18:20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Looking at what this verse says, it is impossible to reach the conclusion that Adam's sin is our sin, much less a newborn baby's sin. If "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father", how is it that the human race bears the guilt of Adam's sin in direct contradiction to what this verse (and the whole of Ezekiel chapter 18) says? The human race is Adam's children, and it clearly says here that the son *shall not* bear the iniquity of the father.

I will not argue the point that every human being has an inborn tendency to sin, and when nurtured and exercised enough, any human being can become a monster like Stalin, Mao, Hitler, or Charles Manson. But it takes some effort to get that bad. A six year old girl who plays with dolls certainly has a sinful nature, and her parents will readily acknowledge that. She also, if pressed, will admit to bad thoughts about her siblings or friends from time to time. So no one is denying that every one of us has a tendency to sin that expresses itself. Yet, to say that [her] "throat is an open sepulcher", "the poison of asps is under [her] lips", "[her] feet are swift to shed blood", destruction and misery are in [her] ways", etc., is to say things about her that simply aren't true. (See Romans 3:10-18). The tendency is certainly there, but the guilt of those things is clearly not there,

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because she hasn't done those things. Guilt derives from actually committing sin, not from a tendency to sin that can be resisted.

I don't claim to understand all of the implications of original sin, but I know that normal children raised in a good home do not fit the graphic description of sinful behavior found in Romans 3. Neither do most of us. Certainly, any one of us could become that bad, and our sinful nature inclines us to be selfish, which means we need God's help in managing that tendency. However, to say that *all of us* fit the description of sin in Romans 3 is to say that our world is populated with active, practicing monsters that we can't trust for a split second. You and all of your neighbors and colleagues are monsters. It is to say that every one of us is a completely untrustworthy, active, practicing monster that goes around murdering people. That simply is not true. Even Atheists do good things for other people. One doesn't have to be a born-again Christian to do genuine good. The notion of our reformed brothers that any good that counts must be done to glorify God defies what scripture clearly says in Ezekiel 18, and in many other places. Scripture does not add the qualification that all good "must be done to glorify God" like our reformed brothers say. God simply requires straight-up righteous behavior. Period. Read all of Ezekiel 18 and you won't find the qualification that righteousness "must be done to glorify God." That's an unscriptural invention of our reformed brothers.

Every human being has to deal with a tendency to sin. We always have the option of not sinning, whether or not we are born again Christians. How can God hold anyone guilty if they never had a chance not to sin? God is completely fair and does not unjustly judge anyone. Those who choose to sin and do not repent of their deeds are guilty before God. Those who choose to do good are not. The qualification here is that to avoid damnation one must never, ever succumb to the tendency to sin. None of us has done that save Jesus Christ himself.

Since Augustine's doctrine of original sin—that we directly inherit Adam's guilt—is such a theological juggernaut in the modern protestant church, I read John E. Toews' *The Story of Original Sin*, where he does an in-depth analysis of the origin and development of Augustine's doctrine, and says:

In short, we should be clear that there is *no* biblical basis for Augustine's doctrine of "original sin." There is no basis for it in the Genesis 3 text, or elsewhere in the Old Testament. There is no basis for it in the New Testament, and certainly not in the locus classicus for Augustine, Romans 5:12. Specifically, there is no biblical evidence for a universal human nature which was forever biologically corrupted by Adam's wilful act and for which all subsequent generations are now accountable. That is, there is no biblical evidence for the notion of "seminal identity" which asserts in one form or another that all humanity was present in Adam's genitals and that an infinitesimal part of Adam's corrupted soul has been transmitted to each subsequent person through the semen of his or her father through the process of sexual intercourse. The Platonic and Stoic foundations for such speculations about the origin and nature of the soul have been abandoned long ago. There is no biblical basis for such a theology, no theological justification for such a theology, and no scientific evidence for such a theology.

...The disobedience of Adam and Eve was a result of child-like immaturity rather than wilful intention. There is no such thing as "original sin" or "inherited guilt" Sin is always a personal act, never a function of nature.'

...One other historical note is important. The Jewish faith, which takes the Hebrew Scriptures as its sacred and normative text, has no theology of original sin.

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The bottom line, we should be clear, is that Augustine's doctrine of original sin is without biblical and historical foundation. The doctrine of "original sin," as James O'Donnell states, is Augustine's "most original and nearly single-handed creation."¹

To summarize: 'Original Sin' is an inborn *tendency* to sin that every human being has the option of successfully resisting in any given situation. It is *not* burdening every human being with the guilt of Adam, in direct contradiction to EZ 18:20, before we are born and damning us to Hell before we even have a chance to be tempted.

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Now that we understand original sin, we can try to understand the incarnation of Christ.

When Jesus was born, he received half of his DNA from Mary and half from God. Mary's DNA was infected with original sin, just like every human being is, which means Jesus inherited original sin from Mary. The Reformed bunch gets around this by teaching 'the Impeccability of Christ', which is simply the protestant version of the Catholic teaching of Mary's Immaculate Conception. Both teachings end up saying that no original sin was transmitted to Jesus in the womb, and for the same reason: to make Jesus Christ sinless. The reason this is necessary is to get around the belief that original sin necessarily transmits the guilt of Adam to every human being. Both teachings rely on Augustine's faulty understanding of original sin and total depravity, which directly contradicts the clear teaching of scripture.

Another example of theological gymnastics in getting around this simple fact is Traduceanism, which teaches that sin is transmitted only by the male line, and not from the female (this necessitates female DNA in the ovum being somehow stripped of original sin before conception). Thus, the fact that God himself fathered Jesus avoids Jesus inheriting original sin. There is a body of teachings that twist scripture into theological pretzels in order to get around the simple fact that Jesus inherited original sin from Mary.

Inheriting original sin is a simple fact about being born that has to be addressed. Before you have a heart attack, think about this: Jesus took on the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom 8:3). Sinful flesh is sinful, meaning it has yielded to its innate tendency to sin. Jesus had the *tendency* to sin inherited from Mary, yet he never yielded to that tendency. Thus, he had the *likeness* of sinful flesh. Had he yielded to the tendency to sin, his flesh would have been sinful flesh, not just the likeness of it. The fact is, unless you have a tendency to sin, you can't be tempted. Unless Jesus had original sin, he could not have been tempted like as we are.

[Heb 4:15](#) For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

There are three ways we can sin. The first is temptation, which is obvious. We all understand that. The second is deception, which is how Adam fell. He wasn't tempted, he was deceived. He couldn't be tempted, or have pride, or be willful, because he didn't have a sinful nature. Original sin didn't exist yet. The third method is by mistake. This happens when you go about doing something that you think is perfectly righteous, then find out later that you actually harmed someone. This is a derivative of deception.

Temptation necessarily involves lust, which leads to sin. Which means that Jesus was drawn away of his own lust, and enticed, yet he never yielded to the enticement.

[Jas 1:14](#) But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

[Jas 1:15](#) Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

1 Toews, John E., *The Story Of Original Sin*, p. 88

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So for Jesus to be tempted like as we are, he must have been drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Having a divine nature, he was able to resist that very strong tendency to sin. Lust is a necessary part of temptation. You can't be tempted if you don't have lust, and if Jesus didn't have lust, he could not have been tempted like as we are. This also demonstrates the accomplishment of living a completely sinless life. It wasn't easy. Imagine how severely lust comes upon us sometimes, and Jesus had to resist temptation that was likely much, much stronger than that.

In order to believe that Jesus never had original sin, one has to believe in magical thinking. Many theologians say Jesus never had original sin, yet he was tempted like as we are. How can anyone be tempted if they don't have lust or a desire to sin? If I have no desire to eat chocolate, I can't be tempted with chocolate. No matter how much chocolate you put in front of me, I won't be tempted to eat it. I just don't like it. There is no opportunity for temptation with me and chocolate (as an example. I really do like chocolate). Pornography is another matter. I like looking at sexy women, and I know I have to resist that tendency. There is a real temptation there that I have to deal with. And it is difficult to resist. Jesus was not without original sin (thus not having any tendency or desire to sin) and somehow magically experience temptation. For Jesus to be tempted, he had to have a desire to sin. That doesn't mean he yielded to it. For Jesus to have only a divine, sinless nature means he couldn't be tempted and he wasn't made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He had to have a human nature, complete with original sin—the *tendency to sin, not guilt*, per Augustine—as well as a divine nature. That also means that original sin is not guilt. It is a *tendency to sin* that can be resisted, and Jesus resisted it. What do you think Jesus was struggling with in the Garden of Gethsemane? Why was he sweating 'great drops of blood?' Because he was struggling with the temptation to avoid the cross, which he could have done. He had an extremely strong temptation to avoid the cross. He fully understood, as no other man can, the depth of suffering and pain he was facing in his father rejecting him. Like any normal human being, he didn't want to go through that suffering and pain. He was tempted—yes, that desire to turn away from his God-ordained purpose was there—and he struggled with the desire to yield to that temptation. If he did not have original sin—the *tendency to sin, not the guilt of sin*—he would not have struggled. There wouldn't have been any temptation. The fact that he struggled with sin and overcame that tendency makes him fully deserving of the Glory and Praise we give him. Had he not overcome the original sin in his own flesh, he could not have redeemed us and would not be worthy of the praise we give Him.

If Jesus had no tendency to sin, he would be fully God, but not fully man (which is essentially what the Immaculate Conception and the Impeccability of Christ teach), and his coming here as God and not sinning would not have accomplished anything. God is God and cannot sin, and if he doesn't sin, so what? That doesn't accomplish anything. Only if he *could sin, as a man*, and was in real danger of sinning, does his becoming a man mean anything.

The original sin that Jesus had—the *tendency to sin*--is the one part of his being that was less than perfect. Again, before you have a heart attack, think about this. For Jesus to overcome sin, he *had* to overcome his own *tendency to sin*. That's why Hebrews says

[Heb 2:10](#) For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

[Heb 2:11](#) For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

We are all of one sinful nature with Christ. Again, a sinful nature does NOT necessitate sin *or guilt*. It is a *tendency to sin*. By his overcoming his sinful nature, he became the captain of our salvation. He gave us the example of how to do it. Not that we can do it, but we follow him and make use of the power he gives us to overcome our sinful nature.

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[Heb 5:2](#) Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

He was made perfect. That means there was something about him that wasn't perfect. He had an infirmity. His infirmity was his original sin—the very human *tendency to sin, not the guilt of sin*. He never gave in to sin. He never yielded, yet he was 'compassed with infirmity'.

[Heb 5:7](#) Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

[Heb 5:8](#) Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

[Heb 5:9](#) And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

He learned obedience by resisting his tendency to sin. The practice of resisting sin develops a stronger resistance to it. Jesus was never in danger of giving in to sin, yet he strengthened his resolve not to sin by resisting it. In other words, he learned obedience by suffering through temptations without yielding to them. Adversity is the source of strength. Jesus resisted the incredibly strong human tendency to sin, and completely overcame it.

By spending his entire life resisting sin, never giving in to it, although the desire to do so was there, and quite strong, he was made perfect—by totally overcoming his tendency to sin—and became the author of our eternal salvation. He is the only being in the Universe that has ever completely overcome original sin—which is a *tendency to sin, not the guilt of sin*. There is no guilt in original sin. Guilt is a result of actual sin. Some time during his life, up to the time he died on the cross, Jesus Christ fully overcame original sin in his flesh, and was made perfect in every way.

Jesus Christ earned the title 'Redeemer of Mankind' and became the captain of our salvation by fully overcoming his tendency to sin. If he never had a tendency to sin, he could not have overcome it and would never have become our savior.

[Jas 1:13](#) Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

[Jas 1:14](#) But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

[Jas 1:15](#) Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

[Heb 4:15](#) For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin.

If Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, what scripture says about temptation also applied to him. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." So Jesus had lust, and was enticed, just like we are. Yet he never gave in to the temptation, so lust never conceived, and he never sinned. His birth began a process by which he was subjected to temptation and sinful tendencies the same as we are, yet he overcame all of those temptations and tendencies to sin. Even as a child, he exercised his godly character to resist temptation.

Because Jesus completely overcame the original sin – the *tendency to sin, without any guilt* – he inherited directly from Mary, he was perfected and became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him. Because of his astounding accomplishment, he deserves all the glory and praise we give him for the rest of eternity.