

**DOES MAN INHERIT  
A SINFUL NATURE?**

*A Discourse on the Human Constitution*

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“Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made men upright; but they have sought out many inventions.”

*Ecclesiastes 7:29*

“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.”

*Romans 1:26-27*

“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.”

*Romans 2:14-15*

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

*Romans 6:13*





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## SECTION I

### IMPORTANCE OF THIS DISCOURSE

The question, “Does man inherit a sinful nature?” is a question that has been discussed throughout Christian history. In our day, this question is very important and relevant. We live in a society that primarily does not take personal responsibility for moral actions. Criminals are victimized and excused through philosophies of circumstantial, mental, and genetic determinism. Sinful musicians sing songs justifying their sin by saying, “I was born this way.”

The sin excusing philosophy of the world is nearly identical to the sin excusing theology of the church. As I travel the country preaching in the open air, calling sinners to repentance, both professing Christians and unbelievers declare together in perfect harmony, “I can’t help it. It’s my nature. I was born this way.” If sin is ever justifiable or excusable, the entire system of the gospel is destroyed and an understanding of salvation is entirely distorted. Augustinian theology has taught the church that sin is unavoidable and inevitable, being a necessity of the nature that we are born with. The result is a victimized mentality that excuses wicked behavior, relieves the mind from the weight of guilt, and makes impossible the conviction of personal responsibility that justifies accountability and shows the need for pardon through Christ.

Natural inability to obey God, rooted in the notion of an inherited sinful nature, is the most common excuse for sin. More times than I can count have I heard sinners declare, “Sin is my human nature.” Instead of taking full responsibility and blaming themselves by saying, “Sin is my free choice,” they blame their Creator by saying, “Sin is my nature.” Instead of humbly admitting that sin is the choice of their will, they comfort themselves by saying that sin is the defect of their design and constitution.

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If the Christian church is going to see genuine converts, who repent of all their sin and turn to Christ for salvation, the excuses of unbelievers must be overcome. We cannot have genuine revival otherwise. There can be no genuine conversion without genuine conviction. Conviction is a legal term, when all the evidence in the court of law results in the verdict of guilty. Conviction in the legal sense is when the mind of a sinner is convinced of their guilt and deservingness of punishment. There can be no genuine conviction if the mind holds on to an excuse that removes personal responsibility. As long as men try to convince their minds that sin is not their fault, they will never admit that they deserve eternal punishment and, consequently, need God's merciful pardon through the atonement of Christ. Since only those who deserve wrath are in need of mercy, and

*There can be  
no genuine  
conversion  
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conviction*

since only those who deserve damnation are in need of salvation, sinners must be shown and convinced in their minds that they deserve the wrath and condemnation of God if they are going to be genuinely saved. Those who are convinced that sin is not their personal fault, but is the defect of their inherited nature instead of the deliberation of their own free will, must be shown and convinced otherwise if we are going to have revival.

If men think that they are victims of sin, rather than criminals through sin, they will not look to Christ for merciful pardon but will think that they deserve liberation from any penalties on account of sin. Salvation will only be seen as an act of grace and mercy on God's part, if sin is seen as entirely and completely inexcusable and unjustifiable. And sin is only inexcusable and unjustifiable if sin is not inevitable but entirely avoidable. The Augustinian doctrine of a sinful nature, however, gives sinners the greatest excuse they could ask for.

Alfred T. Overstreet said, "Can a man really be guilty for possessing the nature with which he is born? Can God show him mercy, and pardon his guilt if it is true that he has suffered the misfortune of being born into this world a sinner? What kind of grace would it be that would save a man from the misfortunate of being born into this world a sinner? It would not be a grace that would save him; it would be justice. And how can a man sincerely repent and

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condemn himself for his sins if he believed that he was born a sinner and could not avoid sin because of an inborn sin nature? All the fundamental doctrines of the Bible are emptied of their meaning and become contradictory and confusing if the doctrine of original sin is accepted.”<sup>1</sup>

### DEFINITIONS OF A SINFUL NATURE

The term “nature” and especially “sinful nature” is often left too ambiguous and undefined for a proper scientific theological discussion. Our discussion on the issue must begin with definitions to understand the terms and phrases that are used. The term “sinful nature” means different things to different theological camps. To some, a sinful nature is a constitution that is in and of itself a sin, which necessitates the will to choose to commit sin, and for having such a nature we are born under the wrath of God. To others, a sinful nature has meant that we inherit a nature which, in itself is not a sin, but which inclines us towards sin. They say that we are born with a constitution which is so biased towards sin that we, inevitably and unavoidable, will sin. The assumption for both views, however, is that the original sin of Adam somehow changed our constitution. And the latter seems to be confusing the temptations of our flesh with a “sinful nature” and thus confuse temptation with sin by calling temptation sinful. Others speak of the “sinful nature” of man, but it is evident by the way that they use the term that they are referring to man’s moral character or manner of living, not his created constitution or structure. A clarification of terms is evidently necessary in our discussion on this topic. Effective communication necessitates the defining of words. Therefore, the word “nature” must first be defined before we can ask if man inherits a “sinful nature.”

The word nature in the Greek can refer to a person’s “mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature”<sup>2</sup> (Eph. 2:3; Gal. 2:15; 2 Pet. 1:4). Adam Clarke said that the word nature in the Scriptures is sometimes used to describe “a disposition formed by

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<sup>1</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, p. 106-107

<sup>2</sup> Thayer’s definition of “phusis.”

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custom and habit.”<sup>3</sup> Through continual choice, a certain behavior can become like “second nature” to you. In other words, choices create habits, through which, a way of life can become like nature.

Pelagius was a student of the Greek language<sup>4</sup> and wrote books on nature and free will. In one of his letters he wrote, “Doing good has become difficult for us only because of the long custom of sinning, which begins to infect us even in our childhood. Over the years our sin gradually corrupts us, building an addiction and then holding us bound with what seems like the force of nature itself.”<sup>5</sup>

Pelagius also commented, “from what is by nature a wild olive tree. For long ago their fathers had fallen away from nature because they had forgotten the law of nature, and, when habit had become fixed through repeated sinning, they came to be bitter and unproductive as it were by nature.”<sup>6</sup>

*Choices  
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which, a way  
of life can  
become like  
nature.*

This understanding of the meaning and usage of the word “nature” in the Scriptures, referring to second nature formed by habits, gives us great understanding of what was meant by the Apostle Paul when he said, “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” (Eph. 2:3).

Adam Clarke said, “The words in the text have often been quoted to prove the doctrine of original sin, but... it is not, in my opinion, intended here; it is rather found in the preceding words, the lusts of the flesh, and the desires of the flesh and of the mind. The apostle appears to speak of sinful habits; and as we say Habit is a second nature, and as these persons acted... from the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, they thus became, by their vicious habits, or second nature, children of wrath - persons exposed to perdition, because of the impurity of their hearts and the wickedness of their lives.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Adam Clarke’s commentary on Eph. 2:3.

<sup>4</sup> Unlike Augustine, who did not know Greek, who taught that we are born with a sinful nature.

<sup>5</sup> Letter to Demetrius, VIII

<sup>6</sup> Pelagius’s commentary on Romans 11:24

<sup>7</sup> Adam Clarke’s commentary on Eph. 2:3.

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Winkie Pratney said, “A sinful nature is not a transmitted, inherited, physical thing. It is something that is made and created by his own choices in rebelling against God... I believe man has a sinful nature until he gets saved. But I don’t believe it’s physical and I don’t believe it’s inherited and I don’t believe Adam gave it to him. I believe he gave it to himself. In other words, I believe that sin is original - very original. It originates with the sinner.”<sup>8</sup>

The truth that men are capable of so perverting themselves as to create for themselves a sinful nature also helps us to understand what the Bible means when it says that sinners have “corrupted themselves” (Gen. 6:12; Exo. 32:7, Deut. 9:12, Deut. 32:5, Jdg. 2:19, Hos. 9:9). In this sense, it is not a sinful nature which necessitates the choices of their will, but the choices of their will which create and form their sinful nature. A sinful nature developed by free choice is something which sinners can be rightly blamed and justly punished for, but a nature that they are created with or inherited is involuntary on their part so that they cannot be responsible or held accountable for it.

A type of sinful nature, developed by continual choice and habit, is what is meant in the Scriptures when God said to Israel, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” (Jeremiah 13:23). The Hebrew word used for “accustomed” means “instructed: -accustomed, disciple, learned, taught, used.”<sup>9</sup> It is the same word used for disciple (Isa. 8:16). This extremely hardened sinful condition Jeremiah was rebuking Israel for was not the natural condition that Israel was created or born into but a way of living that they learned overtime and disciplined themselves in. Their wicked way of life became like nature to them.

Paul mentioned the power of sinful habit in his hyperbole of the struggle a convicted sinner has against sin. He wrote, “Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom. 7:17, 20). Notice Paul said, “it is no more I” which means that it previously was him. The man put himself into that bondage to sin. Pelagius commented that the man in this chapter was battling with “habitual

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<sup>8</sup> Winkie Pratney, 1971 Hilo School of Evangelism, Original Sin Lecture

<sup>9</sup> Strong’s definition of “limmûd limmûd”

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desires.”<sup>10</sup> Sinners choose to live in sin and can develop such a strong sinful addiction in their flesh that it is like their sinful habits take over and they continue to sin, even when their conscience is awakened by the law and the inner man of conscience doesn’t want to sin. Those who have struggled with drug addiction know what it is like to struggle with the habits and desires you have developed even after you no longer want to live that way.

The more you over-indulge your appetites and desires, the stronger their demands grow. Habitual choice of indulgence can create strongholds of addictions. If you properly control these appetites and desires as God intended when He gave them to you, the strength of these appetites and desires can be subdued and can fulfill their rightful place in life. Through wrongful and over indulgence, the members of your nature can become accustomed to being gratified through sinful means and can be perverted. This is how we can develop the “law of sin which is in my members” (Rom. 7:23) that Paul spoke of, which is in opposition to conscience or the “law of my mind” (Rom. 7:23, 25).<sup>11</sup> A law is a rule of action. A law of sin in your members and the law of God in your mind is that which demands or desires you to live and conduct yourself in a certain way.

*Habitual  
choice of  
indulgence  
can create  
strongholds  
of addictions.*

Many have fallaciously assumed that the “sin that dwelleth in me” and “the law of sin which is in my members” was some sort of sinful nature inherited from Adam, when this Paul never mentions. Notice that Paul never even mentions Adam, birth, or inheritance in the entire chapter. This law of sin in his members or sin that dwelleth in him was not something that he was born with but something that he

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<sup>10</sup> Pelagius’s Commentary on Romans 7:23

<sup>11</sup> Many have mistakenly assumed that the law of sin which Paul described as in his members in Romans seven, and the sin that dwelleth in him, were inherited from Adam at birth. These verses have been interpreted so as to refer to “original sin” and a “sinful nature.” This assumption is completely exegetically unfounded, as the chapter mentions nothing at all of birth, Adam, Adam’s original sin, or inheritance.



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had developed by his own choices. Sinful choices create sinful habits, until sinning itself becomes like nature to you.

However, the primary discussion on this book is about whether we inherit a sinful nature, not so much if we develop a habit of sin over time so that sin becomes like nature or “second nature” to us. That type of “sinful nature” is not transmitted from your parents or inherited from your ancestors; it is developed by your own free choice. A habit is developed not inherited, so this is not the primary meaning of the term nature in this discourse.

The word nature, as used in this discourse, is defined as your constitution, make up, structure, design, composition, substance, and essence. Human nature would include our faculties of intelligence, emotion, free will, and all of the elements of spirit, soul, and body. Our constitution is both physical and spiritual. Therefore, to ask if man has a “sinful nature,” is to ask if man’s design is evil, if his composition is sinful, or if his constitution and substance is morally wicked.

*God is the  
architect,  
designer, and  
engineer  
of our  
constitution.*

### THE CREATOR AND DESIGNER OF OUR NATURE

First, we must understand that God is the author of the nature that we are born with. That is, God is the architect, designer, and engineer of our constitution. Neither Adam nor the devil forms our nature. The Bible says that God personally forms our constitution in the womb (Gen. 4:1; 6:7 Ex. 4:11; Deut. 32:18; Isa. 27:11; 43:1; 43:7; 44:2; 44:24; 49:5; 64:8; Jer. 1:5; Ps. 26:10; 82:6; 95:6; 100:3; 119:73; 127:3; 139:13-14, 16; Prov. 20:12; 26:10; Ecc. 7:29; Job 10:8-11; 31:15; 35:10; Mal. 2:10; Acts 17:29; Rom. 9:20; Eph. 3:9; 4:6; Col. 1:16; Jn. 1:3).

“Thy hands have made me and fashioned me” (Psalm 119:73). “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works...” (Ps. 139:14). David was praising God for having a wonderful and marvelous nature because it was God who was his maker. It would make no sense to praise God for his wonderful and marvelous structure and design, if God was not the maker of it.

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Augustinians have taught that God created Adam's nature, Adam corrupted that nature and someone make it sinful by his choice to commit a sin, and we simply inherit that sinful nature from Adam. Augustine thought that this would alleviate blaming the God of nature for the existence of a sinful nature. However, God did not merely create Adam and the universe and then step back. That is what Deism claims. The Bible says that men "are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). Someone might think, doesn't the Bible say that God "had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Gen. 2:3)? Yes, but does that mean that God never created anything or worked after that? No. It means He rested on that particular day from all His work to enjoy His creation. Thousands of years after creation, we read Jesus saying, "My Father worketh hitherto..." (John 5:17). Jesus was saying that God the Father continues to work "even now."<sup>12</sup> The Bible explicitly says that God creates new things now which were not created in the very beginning. The Lord said, "I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. They are created now, and not from the beginning" (Isaiah 48:6-7).

At conception, God creates a new soul, forms a new body, and gives that child a brand new nature that never before existed. Biblically, our nature is not the product of mere "natural generation" as if God was not involved in our formation. God is personally the Creator of all. The development of a child inside the womb is a miracle. It is, in a sense, supernatural because God is involved. The work of designing and creating a baby, physically and spiritually, is God's own personal work. That is why God takes personal responsibility for the condition of our constitution at birth. "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them" (Prov. 20:12). "And the Lord said unto him, who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?" (Exo. 4:11). Whatever the faculties of our constitution are at birth, they are such by the creation and design of God.

Just as the Bible says that God *formed* Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:7-8; 1 Tim. 2:13), the Bible uses the same words and language to say that God forms us in the womb. To say that God only created the

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<sup>12</sup> Strong's definition of "heōs" and "arti"

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natures of Adam and Eve is a Deistic perspective. A proper Theistic view says that God is the creator of every man's nature.

The Bible says, "Know ye that the LORD he *is* God: *it is* he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves" (Ps. 100:3). "Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about... thou hast made me as the clay... Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews" (Job 10:8-9, 11). "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them" (Prov. 20:12). "The great God formed all things..." (Prov. 26:10). "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all" (Ecc. 11:5). "Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things..." (Isa. 44:24). "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?" (Mal. 2:10). "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (Jn. 1:3). "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36). "God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph 3:9). "One God and Father of all" (Eph. 4:6). "For by him were all things created... all things were created by him... by him all things consist" (Col. 1:16-17). The "all things" that have been made by Christ include all the human natures which are made and created inside the womb.

The Psalmist said, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Ps. 127:3). When Eve had her first child, she knew that this child was given to her by God. "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have begotten a man from the Lord" (Gen. 4:1). The Lord was the maker and designer of Cain. The Lord created His composition and constitution. In other words, the nature that Cain had was the product of the holy hands of God Himself.

Cain was made in the image of God just as Adam was (Gen. 1:26-27; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7). The Bible says that men are "made after the similitude of God" (Jas. 3:9) even after the fall of Adam. Despite the clear teaching of Scripture, some theologians object to the idea that the image of God survived the fall of Adam. They will point to the fact that Seth was made in the image of Adam (Gen. 5:3). Yes, Seth was made in the image of Adam, but Adam was made in the image of God; and therefore, Seth was made in the image of God.

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The descendants of Adam were made in the likeness of Adam, and Adam was made in the likeness of God, and therefore the descendants of Adam are made in the likeness of God.

God clearly spoke to Cain, after the sin of Adam, as a free moral being with a nature capable of choosing either virtue or vice. “And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him” (Gen. 4:6-7). It is interesting to note that “sin” was spoken of in this passage as something that was external to him, not something he was born with

*Sin is  
something  
that is  
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alien to  
human  
nature.*

on the inside of him, but something at the door trying to ambush him, and something that he had the power to rule over. Clearly, the free moral agency of man survived the original sin of Adam. And sin is something that is foreign and alien to human nature, even after Adam’s sin.

### **GOD DESIGNED OUR NATURE FOR HOLINESS**

As we just saw, mankind is described as being made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7). The Bible says that men are “made after the similitude of God” (Jas. 3:9), even after the fall of Adam. That is why when it comes to sin, the Bible says that sin is actually contrary to nature (Rom. 1:26-27; Rom. 2:14-15). God wanted mankind to imitate Him in choosing holiness (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26; Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:16). God did not design us to live wickedly. Therefore, sin is an abuse and misuse of our created constitution.

God did not intend, plan, or design for Adam, Eve, and their descendants to use their mental, moral, spiritual, or physical abilities for sin. That is why the Bible says that sinners do that which is “against nature” (Rom. 1:26-27). Through the freedom of their will, they choose to do what is contrary to the design of their own constitutions and that which is contrary to the constitution of the universe itself. Nothing in the entire universe is more unnatural than sin itself. It was never God’s intention or plan for man to sin and be sinful (Gen. 6:5-6; Matt. 25:41; Eph. 1:4; 1 Thes. 4:3). God actually would have preferred a sinless universe that needed no atonement at

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all, since to obey is better than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22). Since sin was contrary to God's plan or intention for mankind, God has made sin contrary to the design of our constitution.

The Bible says, "all things were created by him, and for him" (Col. 1:16). Therefore, our human nature is created by God and it is created for God. The Bible says, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: or thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). Clearly then, God created our human nature and He created it for His pleasure. Paul said, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor" (1 Thes. 4:3-4). God wants us to use the members of our nature, not for sin, but for righteousness (Rom. 6:13, 19; Rom. 12:1; 1 Thes. 4:3-4). Jesus commands us, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark. 12:30). We are commanded to love God with all of our nature, that is, with all of the faculties of our constitution. We are to love God with all of our natural abilities. Our nature was created by God and for His pleasure. We are, therefore, to love God with all of the abilities of our nature. Our constitution was not designed to be used for the purposes of sin. Sin is contrary to the intended use our Creator had for our nature since the designer of our being made us for Him, not for sinning against Him.

*Our nature  
was created  
by God and  
for His  
pleasure.*

Harry Conn said, "...any sin is not natural to man, but is a violation of his created design."<sup>13</sup>

Jed Smock said, "Sin is a perversion of our nature. We were not designed to sin. We were designed to live holy. And sin is using our nature selfishly instead of using our human nature lovingly."<sup>14</sup> He also said, "...as an automobile is not designed to be used as a tractor,

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<sup>13</sup> The Incipency of the Will vs. Determinism

<sup>14</sup> Debate on Total Depravity, Jed Smock vs. Peter Allison, produced by Destiny Ministries

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our minds and bodies are not designed to plow the fields of sin... sin is contrary to man's design and nature."<sup>15</sup>

Joseph Butler said, "vice is contrary to the nature and reason of things... it is a violation or breaking in upon our own nature... virtue consists in following, and vice in deviating from it... man is born to virtue, that it consists in following nature, and that vice is more contrary to this nature than tortures or death..."<sup>16</sup>

Joseph Butler also said, "If the real nature of any creature leads him and is adopted to such and such purposes only, or more than to any other; this is a reason to believe the Author of that nature

*Our nature  
reveals to us  
what we were  
made for and  
how we were  
intended or  
designed  
to live*

intended it for those purposes... A man can as little doubt whether his eyes were given him to see with, as he can doubt of the truth of the science of optics deduced from ocular experiments. And allowing the inward feeling, shame; a man can as little doubt whether it was given him to prevent his doing shameful actions, as he can doubt whether his eyes were given him to guide his steps."<sup>17</sup>

Our nature reveals to us what we were made for and how we were intended or designed to live and conduct ourselves. That we have a mind necessarily indicates that we were designed to think and live intelligently. That we have a sex drive necessarily indicates that we were designed to reproduce, raise children and be parents. And that we have a moral conscience necessarily indicates that we were designed to live moral lives, created for righteous living, and were designed to be virtuous beings.

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<sup>15</sup> The Campus Ministry USA Email Newsletter, Plowing Through, Published Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009

<sup>16</sup> The Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature: Also, Fifteen Sermons by Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham, With the life of the Author, a Copious Analysis, Notes, and Indexes, by Joseph Angus, pg. 339

<sup>17</sup> The Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature: Also, Fifteen Sermons by Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham, With the life of the Author, a Copious Analysis, Notes, and Indexes, by Joseph Angus, pg. 373, 374

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The entrance and spread of sin in the world broke the very heart of God (Gen. 6:5-6). Nothing could have been further from the intention of God's heart for mankind than wicked acts. While God created and designed the universe with the possibility of sin, the actual existence of sin is contrary to its design. Therefore, nothing could be more unnatural for men and angels than sin. A free moral agent who lives sinfully is living unnaturally by violating God's intended purpose, the design of his own constitution, and the structure of the universe itself.

### CONSCIENCE IS A FACULTY OF OUR NATURE

Joseph Butler said, "virtue consists in following man's nature, and vice in deviating from it... From man's nature or constitution, as thus explained, it is shown that virtue is following nature; i.e., it is obedience to the principles of action which that nature is composed in due subjection to the laws which subsist among them... There is in man a conscience or reflex sense, whereby we survey ourselves and pass sentence on our acts."<sup>18</sup>

A man who lives holy is actually living in accordance with his nature. That is, our nature demands us to walk in holiness. Our nature tells us how God wants us to live and what type of actions He wants us to avoid. God designed our constitution or nature with a conscience so that we have the natural tendency, a constitutional bent, or a compositional influence to obey the moral law of God and live in the way of virtue. The moral law of God is in perfect harmony with man's nature, in fact, the nature of man tells him to obey the moral law of God.

The Apostle Paul said, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Rom. 2:14-15).

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<sup>18</sup> The Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature: Also, Fifteen Sermons by Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham, With the life of the Author, a Copious Analysis, Notes, and Indexes, by Joseph Angus, pg. 355, 356

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Joseph Butler said, “The Apostle asserts, that the Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law... it [nature] is spoken of as good, as that by which they acted, or might have acted virtuously. What that is in man by which he is naturally a law to himself, is explained in the following words: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another... there is a superior principle of reflection or conscience in every man, which distinguishes between the internal principles of his heart, as well as his external actions; which passes judgment upon himself and them; pronounces determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust. Which, without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself, and approves or condemns him the doer of them accordingly... It is by this faculty, natural to man, that he is a moral agent, that he is a law to himself; but this faculty, I say, not to be considered merely as a principle in his heart, which is to have some influence as well as others; but considered as a faculty in kind and in nature supremely over all others, and which bears its own authority of being so... This gives us a further view of the nature of man; shows us what course of life we were made for... that this faculty was placed within to be our proper governor; to direct and regulate all under principles, passions, and motives of action. This is its right and office: thus sacred is its authority. And how often soever men violate and rebelliously refuse to submit to it...this makes no alteration as to the natural right and office of conscience”<sup>19</sup>

Paris Reidhead said, “And when I went to Africa, I discovered that they weren't poor, ignorant, little heathen running around in the woods looking for someone to tell them how to go to heaven. That they were monsters of iniquity!! They were living in utter and total defiance of far more knowledge of God than I ever dreamed they had! They deserved Hell! Because they utterly refused to walk in the light of their conscience, and light of the law written

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<sup>19</sup> The Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature: Also, Fifteen Sermons by Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham, With the life of the Author, a Copious Analysis, Notes, and Indexes, by Joseph Angus, pg 377, 378, 381-382



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upon their heart, and the testimony of nature, and the truth they knew!”<sup>20</sup>

Alfred T. Overstreet said, “God has created man upright and without sin. He has created man in his own image and likeness with sensibilities, intellect, reason, conscience, and free will. Man has all the faculties and powers of moral agency. He knows right from wrong. The law of God is written in his heart. He is free and knows himself to be free and able to obey the law of God. His conscience approves his right conduct and condemns his wrong conduct. All men, everywhere, have these same moral faculties and powers. A heathen man may be ignorant and primitive, but the law of God is written in his heart. His conscience approves his right conduct and condemns his wrong conduct. He has the same moral consciousness of a standard of right and wrong as any man who knows the Bible.”<sup>21</sup>

*Paul taught  
that man’s  
nature  
demands  
virtue and  
condemns sin.*

The Bible, which speaks of man’s “conscience” thirty three times, assigns this moral faculty of our nature to both sinners and saints alike (Jn. 8:9; Act 23:1, 24:16; Rom. 2:15, 9:1, 13:5; 1Cor. 8:7, 8:10, 8:12, 10:25, 10:27-29; 2 Cor. 1:12, 4:2, 5:11; 1Tim. 1:5, 1:19, 3:9, 4:2; 2 Tim 1:3; Tit. 1:15; Heb. 9:9, 9:14, 10:2, 10:22, 13:18; 1Pet. 2:19, 3:16, 3:21). It is interesting to note that all of the explicit references to “conscience” are found in the New Testament, primarily from the writings of the Apostle Paul. This is of note because it is usually the writings of Paul that are appealed to by those who teach that we inherit a sinful nature at birth. However, we clearly see that Paul taught that man’s nature demands virtue and condemns sin. It seems nobody in the Scriptures wrote more about this truth about man’s nature than the Apostle Paul, as nobody mentioned man’s “conscience” as much as he did.

The meaning of the Greek word used in the Scriptures for “conscience” means a “moral consciousness”<sup>22</sup> or “the soul as

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<sup>20</sup> A sermon called Ten Shekel’s and a Shirt, preached at Bethany Fellowship Summer Conference in the mid sixties.

<sup>21</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, p. 48

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distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending one, condemning the other.”<sup>23</sup>

Pelagius said that “the conscience is apprehensive when one sins and rejoices when sin is overcome.”<sup>24</sup> He said, “The law of my mind. Namely, of natural conscience, or of the divine law, which resides in the mind.”<sup>25</sup>

Albert Barnes said, “Their conscience - This word properly means the judgment of the mind respecting right and wrong; or the judgment which the mind passes on the morality or immorality of its own actions, when it instantly approves or condemns them. It has usually been termed the moral sense, and is a very important principle in a moral government. Its design is to answer the purposes of an ever attendant witness of a man’s conduct; to compel him to pronounce on his own doings, and thus to excite him to virtuous deeds, to give comfort and peace when he does right, to deter from evil actions by making him, whether he will or no, his own executioner... By nature every man thus approves or condemns his own acts; and there is not a profounder principle of the divine administration, than thus compelling every man to pronounce on the moral character of his own conduct.”<sup>26</sup>

Albert Barnes commented, “By nature... The expression means clearly by the light of conscience and reason, and whatever other helps they may have without revelation.”<sup>27</sup>

Henry C. Sheldon said, “In Romans. ii. 14 he speaks of the Gentiles as doing ‘by nature’ the things of the law. Now, evidently he did not mean that they were born doers of the law, but only that they were born with a nature adapted to provide in due time for a sense of moral obligations.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Strong’s definition of “suneidēsis”.

<sup>23</sup> Thayer’s definition of “suneidēsis”.

<sup>24</sup> Pelagius’s commentary on Romans 2:1

<sup>25</sup> Pelagius’s commentary on Romans 7:23

<sup>26</sup> Albert Barnes’s commentary on Romans 2:15

<sup>27</sup> Albert Barnes’s commentary on Romans 2:14

<sup>28</sup> System of Christian Doctrine, Jennings & Graham, Cincinnati, 1912, pp. 311-321

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If conscience is part of our nature and our conscience tells us the law of God and demands that we obey it, and the law of God is the law of love, than a person who chooses to be a benevolent person is choosing in accordance with his nature, while a person who chooses selfishness is choosing contrary to his obligations revealed to him by his nature. A selfish man does not enjoy peace of mind when his conscience analyzes his motives and actions. He is miserable, because he is living in violation of his nature. To violate your conscience is to violate your very nature.

Regeneration is the renovation or transformation of a person's moral character, so that they go from being a selfish person to a benevolent person. Since selfishness is forbidden by our natural conscience and benevolence is required, regeneration in this sense is when a person is brought back into alignment with their God given nature and they begin to live the way that they were designed to live. The Christian life is spoken of as having a "good conscience" (1 Tim. 1:5; 1:19; 1 Pet. 3:16; 3:21). The Apostle Paul, as a regenerate man, lived with a good conscience before God (Acts 23:1; 24:16; Heb. 13:18; 2 Tim. 1:3). That means that as Christian he was living in accordance with his God given nature and was living the way that he was designed by God to live.

The truths of conscience are often referred to as "natural revelation" or "the light of nature." This is why our natural composition gives us a natural disposition, or a constitutional inclination, to obey the law of God. By divine design we have a constitutional bias against sin. God has designed our nature to be in favor of virtue by writing His law upon our hearts. Sinners have to sin against their better knowledge.

Sin is described by Jesus as an unintelligent choice (Matt. 7:24-27). Sin is to choose against what you know to be right and good. Sin is to choose what you know to be wrong or evil. "Jesus said unto them, if ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth" (Jn. 9:41). "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:17).

The declaration that "all have sinned," therefore, presupposes that "all" know the law of God through their conscience, as only those who have knowledge are capable of rebelling against it. Therefore, the very declaration that "all have sinned" is a declaration that God has designed the constitution of all men to be against sin,

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since God has given the light of conscience to all. “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (Jn. 1:9). Calvinists have fallaciously supposed that the fact that “all have sinned” implies that sin is natural for all, or that all men have a sinful nature. But in reality, it shows the opposite. This is because “all have sinned” implies that conscience is part of the nature of all, and therefore that sin is contrary to the nature of all.

The Scriptures declare that when a man sins, his own “thoughts” will accuse him. His own conscience or nature is “bearing witness” against him (Rom. 2:15). Deep inside of man, within his very essence or embedded in the nature God has given him, there is the still small voice of conscience that cries against his every act of sin and commands obedience to the moral law of God. Therefore, a man chooses contrary to the influence of his nature when he chooses to be a sinner.

*A sinner has  
mutinied  
against the  
light of his  
own nature.*

Every sinner is at variance with his conscience. A sinner is fighting against the moral knowledge that he naturally has. A sinner has mutinied against the light of his own nature! He is at war with his own constitution! Truly, “the way of the transgressor is hard” (Prov. 13:15). God, wanting us to live pure lives free from sin, has built into our constitution and design road blocks for the path of sin. Men sin against the nature that God has given them when they do wickedly. In order for a man to rebel against God, they have to literally rebel against their own nature.

C. S. Lewis said, “Now this Law or Rule about Right and Wrong used to be called the Law of Nature. Nowadays, when we talk of the “laws of nature” we usually mean things like gravitation, or heredity, or the laws of chemistry. But when the older thinkers called the Law of Right and Wrong the Law of Nature, they really meant the Law of Human Nature. The idea was that, just as falling stones are governed by the law of gravitation and chemicals by chemical laws, so the creature called man also had his law – with this great difference, that the stone couldn’t choose whether it obeyed the law of gravitation or not, but a man could choose either to obey the Law of Human Nature or to disobey it. They called it Law of Nature because they thought that every one knew it by nature... First, human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to

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behave in a certain way, and can't really get rid of it... They know the Law of Nature; they break it."<sup>29</sup>

Joseph Butler said, "There is a principle of reflection in men, by which they distinguish between, approve and disapprove their own actions. We are plainly constituted such sort of creatures... This principle in men, by which he approves or disapproves his heart, temper, and actions, is conscience... And that this faculty tends to restrain men from doing mischief to each other, and leads them to do good, is too manifest to need being insisted upon... It cannot possibly be denied that there is this principle of reflection or conscience in human nature."<sup>30</sup>

Apart from an internal knowledge that sin is wrong and ought not to be chosen and that righteousness is good and ought to be chosen, we never could experience any guilt, remorse, regret, or conviction. And if we did not assume that others know better than to sin, through the conscience God gave them as part of their nature, we never could blame anyone for their wrong actions or expect them to act differently. In this way everyone presupposes, either consciously or unconsciously, that our nature reveals to us our moral obligations as the Bible claims, and that sinners are not living in accordance with their God given nature.

### FREEDOM TO OBEY OR DISOBEY OUR NATURE

Irenaeus said, "Men are possessed with free will, and endowed with the faculty of making a choice. It is not true, therefore, that some are by nature good, and others bad."<sup>31</sup> Even Augustine at one point said, "Sin is volitional. No one is compelled by his nature

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<sup>29</sup> The Case for Christianity, p. 4, 7; published by Macmillan Company, 1950.

<sup>30</sup> The Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature: Also, Fifteen Sermons by Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham, With the life of the Author, a Copious Analysis, Notes, and Indexes, by Joseph Angus, pg. 365

<sup>31</sup> Against Heresies, Book IV, Chapter XXXVII

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to sin.”<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, Martin Luther said that man “must will, desire, and act according to his nature...”<sup>33</sup>

The doctrine of the Necessitarians is that the will of a being is necessitated by the nature that the being has. The mode of the wills operation is that of necessity. The doctrine of Libertarians, however, is that the will of a being is free to act according to or contrary to the nature that they have. The nature one has may influence their will, but it does not cause their choices. The mode of the wills operation is that of liberty. The doctrine of the former and not of the latter is what is affirmed by the Scriptures and what is presupposed consciously or unconsciously by everyone. We would never blame ourselves or blame others for what they choose, or ever feel any remorse, regret, or conviction over any of our actions, if we thought that the will was forced by nature to choose sin.

*The nature  
one has may  
influence  
their will, but  
it does not  
cause their  
choices.*

If the will of a being was not free, but was necessitated by their nature, the fall of angels and men would have never occurred.

Sin is the proof of free will. When God created everything He said it was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Lucifer himself was created as an angel, not as a demon, who had a good nature. The Bible says, “Thou wast perfect in all thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (Eze. 28:15). Lucifer became a devil by sinning against his nature. His sin was not the creation of God but was his own creation. His sin and character was not the product of his nature, but was the product of his free will. Five times the Bible blame’s Lucifer’s will, “For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isa. 14:13-14).

We can see from the example of the angels who were created with good natures that the nature of a free moral agent does not cause or necessitate the choices of their will. A person’s will is free to

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<sup>32</sup> Divine Nescience of Future Contingencies a Necessity by L. D. McCabe, published by Philip & Hunt, 1882

<sup>33</sup> The Bondage of the Will, Sovereign Grace Publishers, p. 88

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choose according to or contrary to their nature (Rom. 1:26-27). The relation between your nature and your will is not causation but influence. That is, your nature may influence your choices but it does not cause your choices. The choices of the will are self-determined. Free will is the power of self-determination. The faculty of the will has this marvelous ability to originate moral choices, free from all internal or external necessity.

As we just saw, the rebellion of Lucifer was not committed by any necessity of his nature but occurred through the freedom of his will. Likewise, God created Adam and Eve with a good nature. Yet despite their good nature, they sinned. Their will was free to choose according to or contrary to their nature. The tragedy of mankind is that God has created every single one of us, like He created our first parents, and we too have freely chosen to sin against the nature God has given us, just like our first parents did.

Alfred T. Overstreet said, "We, as free moral agents, are able to obey or disobey the law of our nature."<sup>34</sup>

### SIN IS UNNATURAL

Calvinists say, "You don't have to teach children to sin. They do it naturally." Well, we were created with intelligence and can think of how to sin on our own. The Bible talks about sinners who are "disobedient to parents" also inventing new ways to do evil (Rom. 1:30). Children can think in their own minds, "I want that. I'm going to take it." Certainly, nobody ever taught the devil how to sin but it was not his nature. Also, sometimes it is learned by example. My three year old daughter never lied until she saw another child doing it. And my one year old son never hit until he played with another boy who did. There is a host of bad examples in this world that children can learn from. And of course, there is still the devil and the demons who are tempting or teaching children to sin. Adam and Eve had no sinful nature. They learned from the devil. On the other hand, you don't have to teach your children to feel guilt or shame. If my daughter does what she knows is wrong and I hold her hands and talk to her in the eyes about it, she drops her head in shame and guilt. She

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<sup>34</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, p. 56

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has a hard time looking me in the eye. That is because of her moral nature God gave her.

The fact that men naturally feel guilty for their sin is proof that it is not man's nature to sin. The reason that we naturally feel guilty if we sin is because God is the author of our nature and He has designed us for a life of holiness, not for a life of sin. People do not feel guilty by choice, but by nature. You don't have to teach a moral being to feel guilty when they do wrong. We naturally feel guilty for sinning because God designed our nature that way. The pains of conscience are a natural reaction to an unnatural and unlawful choice of the will.

*You don't  
have to teach  
a moral  
being to feel  
guilty when  
they do  
wrong.*

Alfred T. Overstreet said, "God created all men with a good nature. All sin is a corruption of man's nature, it is a perversion of man's nature. It is rebellion against our nature – it is rebellion against the 'law of God written in our hearts' and against the God who has written his law in our hearts."<sup>35</sup> He also said, "The nature we are born with teaches us to reject evil and choose good... Men must go against their nature to sin."<sup>36</sup>

Winkie Pratney said, "God made human nature; God did not make sin! Sin is never natural. It is horribly un-natural. Sin is never 'human'. It is horribly in-human. Sin creates remorse, guilt, and shame; every time a man feels these three witnesses in his soul, they tell him sin is not natural. Even the simple lie-detector can tell us this. The whole body reacts adversely when a man sins... God never planned sin for man. It is the most un-natural thing in the moral Universe... Do not dare say sin is 'natural'! God hates sin with perfect hatred; He loves humanity."<sup>37</sup>

Jed Smock said, "Sin is unnatural. Whatever the sin might be, it is unnatural. It is contrary to our nature to have sex with the opposite sex outside of marriage. That's contrary to our nature. It is

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<sup>35</sup> Over One Hundred Texts From The Bible That Show That Babies Are Not Born Sinners, p. 8

<sup>36</sup> Over One Hundred Texts From The Bible That Show That Babies Are Not Born Sinners, p. 6-7

<sup>37</sup> Youth Aflame, published by Bethany House, p. 78



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contrary to our nature to lie, to steal. That is why when you first started lying or stealing, you had a guilty conscience.... A guilty conscience is to your soul what pain is to your body. You get pain around your heart especially, you think 'I better get a check up, that's not normal, something is wrong'... You get a guilty conscience, your conscience is trying to tell you your behavior is wrong. You weren't designed to lie, steal, or cheat, or fornicate, whatever it is your doing that's selfish."<sup>38</sup>

Charles Finney said, "The constitution of a moral being as a whole, when all the powers are developed, does not tend to sin, but strongly in an opposite direction..."<sup>39</sup>

When conscience is developed, a man's own nature stands against him when he sins. His own constitution and composition fights him and condemns him. But when he obeys his conscience and does what is right, he has perfect peace of mind. As Paul said, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit" (Rom. 8:1). If we are living carnal and establish our own self-gratification as the ultimate end for which we are living, we will have the condemnation of our conscience and of God. However, if we are living in accordance with intelligence, reason, and conscience, which are faculties of our spirit, then our conscience and our God does not condemn the way we are living.

*A man's  
own nature  
stands  
against  
him when  
he sins.*

We all know experientially through consciousness that we have been so created by God that we naturally feel the pains of conscience when we do what is wrong and we naturally have peace of mind when we do what is right. This has been the universal phenomenon of all moral beings that have chosen either right or wrong. When the idea of right and wrong is developed within the mind, or when we have a developed conscience with moral principles, we naturally feel good when we choose to do what is right and we naturally feel bad when we choose to do what is wrong. It is not by choice that we feel that way, it is by nature. By divine design, our

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<sup>38</sup> Jed Smock, Open Air Sermon, Oklahoma University, Dec. 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Lectures on Systematic Theology, 1851 Edition, Published by BRCCD, p. 348

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sensibilities naturally respond or react when our will chooses contrary to or in conformity with the knowledge of our mind. While sin may at first bring physical pleasure to the flesh, it afterwards results in pain to the soul through the conscience.

Gordon C. Olson said, “God endowed man’s constitution with profound abilities and reactions to enable him to achieve great heights of comprehension and moral character in imitation of his Creator. Just as virtuous actions would deposit uplifting characteristics in the inner personality, so sinful indulgences would degrade our inner being and bring about disturbing agitations.”<sup>40</sup>

Jed Smock said, “It is through self-denial... that we ultimately find self-fulfillment. And I think all of you know that through experience. Think of the time that you’ve had the most sense of well-being – perhaps when you helped someone. You made a sacrifice and you helped someone and at the end of the day, you felt pretty good about yourself. You thought, ‘I made a difference today.’ On the other hand, think of the time you’ve taken advantage of someone, you’ve cheated someone, you exploited someone. Well, if you have any conscience left, at the end of the day you feel badly about yourself. You think, ‘I should not have behaved that way. That was very selfish.’ So live the way you were designed to live - for God and others.”<sup>41</sup>

It is evident that if we live for our own self-gratification and pursue our own selfishness, contrary to and above the well-being of others, our own conscience naturally condemns us and we feel badly about ourselves. On the other hand, if we live for the highest well-being of all and behave benevolently, our conscience naturally approves of us and we feel good about ourselves. The fact that this is the way that we are constituted shows both the goodness of our Creator and also that He intended for us to live virtuous lives of benevolence free from vice or selfishness.

### OUR CONSCIENCE DELIGHTS IN THE LAW

Romans chapter seven gives us a description of what occurs when the mind of an unconverted sinner is convicted by the law. Using a literary technique, Paul uses the present tense to tell the

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<sup>40</sup> The Truth Shall Set You Free, Published by BRCCD, p. 141

<sup>41</sup> Open Air Sermon, LSU Baton Rouge, February 2013.

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narrative. As many stories begin with “once upon a time,” Paul said, “For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Rom. 7:9). He then proceeded in his narrative to discuss what happens when the mind of an unconverted sinner encounters the law of God.

Some suppose Romans chapter seven to be a description of the Christian life, as opposed to a description of an unconverted yet convicted state. All of the early church, for hundreds of years before Augustine<sup>42</sup>, understood Romans seven to be a description of an unconverted yet convicted sinner. Biblically, we know Paul is not referring to his own converted state because he already said in this epistle that Christians have been made “free from sin” (Rom. 6:18, 22). The man in Romans seven was not “free from sin” and, therefore, he was not a Christian.

Paul also said that, “There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1). Yet the man in Romans chapter seven was still walking after the flesh and was under condemnation. Therefore, he still needed to be saved by Jesus Christ as he himself proclaimed (Rom. 7:24-25).

And Paul also said that, “to be carnally minded is death” (Rom. 8:6). But the man in Romans chapter seven said, “I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14). Therefore, the man in Romans chapter seven did was not yet converted from death unto life because he had not yet truly repented or changed his carnal mind.

And finally, Paul said that as a converted man he lived with a good and pure conscience that was void of offense (Acts 23:1; Acts 24:16; Heb. 13:18; 2 Tim. 1:3). That means that Paul was unaware of any sins in his life. The man described in Romans chapter seven is deeply disturbed by his conscience and was fully aware of his sinning (Rom. 7:16). Therefore, the description given in Romans chapter seven was not of the converted life of the Apostle Paul. It is a narration describing what happens when an unconverted sinner’s

*Paul said that  
as a converted  
man he lived  
with a good  
and pure  
conscience that  
was void of  
offense.*

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<sup>42</sup> See this expounded further in Asa Mahan’s “Misunderstood Texts of Scripture Expounded and Explained.”

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mind encounters the law of God and is convicted by it. At best, it described the legal experience of Paul when he was Saul and lived as an unconverted Pharisee under the law.

In the seventh chapter of Romans, we can see that even an unconverted transgressor can say, "I consent unto the law that it is good" (Rom. 7:16). This is because of the law of his mind (Rom. 7:23). A sinner can say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:22). This is a classic way of referring to our God given conscience. The conscience of a sinner, or inner man, consents unto the goodness of the law and even delights in it. It is natural and normal for a man's conscience to do this.

*Man's moral nature is a "sine qua non" to salvation and the gospel itself.*

The supernatural revelation of "thou shalt not" given in the Ten Commandments is automatically affirmed by the natural revelation of our conscience. If the unregenerate did not consent unto the goodness of the law, they could never be convicted and, consequently, they never could be converted. Conviction is necessarily antecedent to conversion. Conversion proceeds from conviction; and therefore, conviction must precede conversion.

And since there can be no conversion without first conviction, and there can be no conviction without first a conscience, there can be no conversion without first conscience being a faulty of our nature. That sin is contrary to the nature of sinners is utterly essential for the possibility of the conviction and subsequent conversion of sinners. In this way, man's moral nature is a "sine qua non" to salvation and the gospel itself. That means that man's moral nature is an essential ingredient and that salvation cannot occur without it. If there were no conscience in our nature that would mean that there could be no conviction in our mind and this would mean that there could be no conversion to Christ.

The unregenerate could never feel guilty or be convinced that they are justly condemned for violating the law, if their conscience did not consent to the goodness of the law. A man would certainly feel justified in violating a law his mind thought was a bad law, but a man would feel condemned for violating a law he knew was good law. If the law is wrong, the transgressor is right. If the law is right, the transgressor is wrong. A man can only feel guilty, and his mind

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can only recognize that he was wrong for his transgression, if his mind is first convinced that the law which was violated was a good law. Therefore, God created us with a natural recognition of the goodness of His law.

It is the sinners will that is in opposition to the law of God, not his God given nature or constitution. While sinners are voluntarily hostile in their will toward holiness, they necessarily approve in their conscience of holiness. The will is under the law of liberty but the mind is under the law of necessity. The will of a sinner freely rejects what his mind necessarily approves of.

Charles Finney said, “Moral agents are so constituted, that they necessarily approve of moral worth or excellence; and when even sinners behold right character, or moral goodness, they are compelled to respect and approve it, by a law of their intelligence... The vilest sinners on earth or in hell have, by an unalterable constitution of their nature, the necessity imposed upon them, of paying intellectual homage to moral excellence... But this being altogether an involuntary state of mind, has no moral character.”<sup>43</sup>

Since God has created our nature with a conscience, or a natural knowledge of right and wrong, we naturally approve of the moral attributes of God and other benevolent beings. And we naturally disapprove of the character of the devil and other selfish beings. God is good because He is loving. He lives for the highest good of all. The devil is evil because He is selfish. He lives supremely for his own good. Our constitution has been so designed by God to approve of the good and disapprove of the evil. We naturally know that benevolence is right and selfishness is wrong. We cannot help but to know this. God is good and therefore He designed us that way.

Epic tales of good vs. evil in both literature and Hollywood depend upon mankind’s ability to distinguish between good and evil. They depend upon mankind’s natural approval of the good and natural disapproval of evil. Think of any famous tale of good vs. evil. Think of any story that has a “good guy” and a “bad guy.” What was it that made the “good guy” so good? It was that he cared about other people. We naturally know what the Bible says, that love is the

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<sup>43</sup> Finney’s Systematic Theology, 1878 Edition, Published by Bethany House Fellowship, p. 149

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:10; Gal. 5:14). And what was it that made the “bad guy” so bad? It was that he cared supremely for himself and disregarded the well-being of others.

Alfred T. Overstreet said, “Novelists know that all men have the same standard of right and wrong revealed to them in their nature... For to write a novel in which the hero is evil and unjust would offend the conscience of both wicked and good men. The hero of the novel is never described as a bad man. He is always described as a good man, a just man, and a courageous man. And when the reader (even the reader who is wicked and unjust) sees that he is just and fights against evil, he will identify with him and experience satisfaction when he finally triumphs.”<sup>44</sup>

As God’s creation, we naturally admire and respect a man’s good moral character and naturally abhor and disrespect a man’s evil moral character. Through our conscience, we naturally know that a benevolent being is a good being, and that a selfish being is an evil being. It is because of our conscience, or the natural moral knowledge God has given us, that we naturally approve of what is right or good, and we naturally disapprove of what is evil or wrong. It is our human nature to approve of what is good and to disapprove of what is evil.

*The  
wickedness  
of man is  
despite our  
nature, not  
because of it.*

Broadcasted through the airwaves each year are pictures and videos of suffering children and starving masses across our world. Which heart does not naturally break at the sight of such agony, grief, and misfortune? These commercials are meant to be appeals to our “humanity.” God designed us with a natural compassion for the weak, hurting, and dying. People are naturally caring and compassionate and it is against their nature to be cruel or to ignore the cries of the hurting. When a person cries for help there is something naturally within us that wants to reach out and help them. It takes effort and perseverance to become a cruel person, as it is not natural. The tragedy of humanity is that despite our humanity, despite our natural compassion, men still choose to be selfish and wicked. The wickedness of man is despite our nature, not because of it.

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<sup>44</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, p. 53-54

## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

Even animals have a natural instinct to protect and care for their young. Humans have this natural parental instinct as well. How unnatural it is for a man to have no affection for his children, no care or concern for their well-being, etc. If a man is viciously hurting his own children, this is not the fruit of his nature but of his own selfishness. It is not our human nature to hurt the innocent; rather, the opposite is our nature.

An amazing story was published on NBC News of an Ethiopian girl who had been kidnapped and beaten by men trying to force her into a marriage.<sup>45</sup> Lions came, who likely associated her crying and whimpering with that of a young cub, and protected her. They chased off her attackers and stood by her guarding her for half a day until the Police arrived. Now, tell me, which of them acted according to their nature - the lions or the attackers? I would dare to say that the lions acted in more accordance with human nature than the attackers themselves did. These lions protected the young, weak, and hurting, as our own human nature influences us to do. It is not a man's nature to abuse another fellow human being, especially not a young helpless girl. It is our human nature or natural instinct to protect her. These men acted according to the selfishness that they had chosen, not according to the nature God had given them. In a sense, these animals acted more like humans and these humans acted more like animals.

*The lions acted in more accordance with human nature than the attackers themselves did.*

I remember as a young child, on the playground of my elementary school, seeing a little boy being picked on by another boy. I remember being naturally outraged at the abuse the child was suffering by the bully. I naturally knew that the way he was being treated by the bully was wrong. Consequently, I naturally felt upset over it and intervened. Having care and concern for the young and innocent is a "natural affection" according to the Bible (Rom. 1:31; 2 Tim. 3:3). In fact, the Bible defines it as "inhuman" to be "without natural affection."<sup>46</sup> These thoughts and feelings I had were not

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<sup>45</sup> NBCNEWS, Ethiopian Girl Reportedly Guarded by Lions, 6/21/2005

<sup>46</sup> Thayer's definition of "astorgos."

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originated by my own choice but were the result of the design of God. It was by nature and not by choice that I was disturbed over this unjust treatment. It is natural to be upset over the abuse an innocent person suffers at the hands of a bully. It is unnatural not to be.

I can also remember when my brother and I were very young children and our mother took us for a walk to the local corner store. My brother wanted a candy bar but my mother denied his request. After getting back home, my mother saw my brother walking around with the candy bar. My mother asked, "Where did you get that?" Apparently he had stolen it. Immediately my brother burst into tears. Obviously, nobody had to teach my brother to cry or even tell my brother to cry. Shame and guilt came naturally. His conscience convicted him. Eventually he remorsefully confessed to stealing the candy.

*It is natural  
to feel bad  
for sin. It is  
unnatural  
not to.*

My brother felt awful about his theft and I did too. I remembered how nice and friendly the owner of the store had always been to us. I felt very bad that my brother would steal from him. My mother had my brother walk back to the store, return the candy bar, and apologize to the owner.

Both my brother and I had very sensitive consciences as children. It is natural to feel bad for sin. It is unnatural not to.

## CORRUPTING YOUR CONSCIENCE

The voice of conscience to some is as a megaphone, which loudly echoes through the soul. To others, the voice of conscience has become a still small voice whispering in the heart. Through the habitual choice of sin, a moral being is capable of numbing and nearly silencing their conscience. Through continually ignoring the claims and demands of your conscience, you can desensitize yourself and callous your conscience. The Bible speaks of sinners as "having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2). John Wesley said, "having their own consciences as senseless and unfeeling as flesh that is seared with a hot iron." This state of insensitivity is not a natural state, but an unnatural state. It is a degenerate state which is arrived at through habitual choice. Men must corrupt themselves to be in such a state.

God speaks about Israel after they continually rebelled against Him and said, "Where they ashamed when they had



## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

committed abominations? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush” (Jer. 6:15; 8:12). This state of being is not how God made them or how they were born. It was how they made themselves through their own free will. Shame over doing wrong is natural and normal or part of our design. It is unnatural and abnormal not to feel shame over doing wrong.

Extreme cases of this degenerate state would be sociopaths and serial killers, who generally express no remorse or sorrowful feelings over their terribly selfish and heartless actions. Of course, these are the exceptions and not the rule for mankind. The average or normal person does feel good when doing right and feels bad when doing wrong. That is normal or natural and how God designed us. Anything else is an abnormal and unnatural perversion of our being.

### **VIRTUE AND VICE RELATES TO MORAL CHOICES NOT NATURAL CONSTITUTION**

It should be understood that a man is not virtuous because he feels bad for doing wrong. Even the unconverted can naturally feel bad for doing wrong. That is a natural reaction that our sensibilities have in response to our consciousness of the choices of our will which were contrary to the moral knowledge of our mind. Our feelings naturally react when our will chooses to obey or disobey our conscience.

But moral character is not determined by the states of the sensibilities but by the states of the will. Whether a man is good or evil is not determined by his nature but by his choices. A man is virtuous if he actually chooses what is virtuous. A man is not virtuous because he has a natural approval of virtue or because sin is against his nature and design. His will is free to live according to his nature or to choose that which is against his nature. Man’s character is derived from his will choosing according to or contrary to the conscience God implanted or embedded in his nature.

Hypothetically, suppose God formed individuals in the womb with “sinful inclinations” as certain theological camps claim. Would that mean that they were born sinful or born sinners? No, because a person is not sinful or a sinner merely because of the inclinations they are created and designed with. It is not a sin to have an inclination towards sin. If it is an inclination “towards sin,” then by definition, it is not a sin itself but only an inclination towards sin. An

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

inclination towards sin would be a temptation and not a sin because it is merely an influence to make a sinful choice and not a sinful choice itself.

If God formed infants in the womb with a nature that had sinful inclinations, that does not mean that they are born sinners or born sinful because moral character is not predicated upon a person's inclinations but upon their choices. This is evident from the fact that if a person is created with sinful inclinations, but they make holy choices, their character is holy and not sinful. Likewise, if a person is created with holy inclinations, but they make sinful choices, their moral character is sinful and not holy. Moral character does not consist of your constitutional inclinations nor is it determined by what

*Moral  
character  
does not  
consist  
of your  
constitutional  
inclinations.*

your nature inclines you towards. Moral character is determined by your personal free will choices or by what you actually choose to live for.

Gordon C. Olson said, "Moral character must be a voluntary choice of the person involved, as distinguished from a constitutional trait or natural attribute. A natural attribute is something we cannot help. It is an essential part of our beings, involuntary. Moral character is a term that describes what we are doing with our endowments of personality and the moral light which we possess. It cannot refer to something back of the will but is the choice of the will itself. If moral character is something fixed or something that controls the will in one direction or in another, then virtue or blame disappears, the law of cause and effect takes over, and moral action ceases to exist."<sup>47</sup>

Man's nature and man's character is a necessary and proper distinction. We must not confuse character with constitution, as did the Gnostics, Manicheans, and Augustinians. Nature and character must be distinguished between, lest we confuse our natural attributes with our moral attributes and assign moral qualities to involuntary states of nature. Our character is determined by our own will. Our constitution or nature is determined by God's will. Moral character has to do with voluntary states of the will, not involuntary states of

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<sup>47</sup> The Essentials of Salvation, Published by BRCCD, p. 41

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being. Nature has to do with involuntary states of being, not voluntary states of will.

There is no moral character in man's involuntary nature. Man did not consent to or choose what type of nature, design, or natural tendencies he would be created with. Therefore, his moral character does not consist in the nature, design, or natural tendencies that he is created with. God's moral law says absolutely nothing about man's nature, design, or natural tendencies. Consequently, man's nature, design, or natural tendencies, cannot have any moral qualities in and of themselves, since they cannot be in conformity with or contrary to the moral law of God.

Since the quality of your constitution is not determined by the phenomenon of the will but by the decision of our Creator, man's design does not show any virtue in man. Rather, the quality or condition of our nature shows the goodness of our Designer. God has given us our nature and therefore our nature reflects and reveals the character of God.

*The quality  
or condition  
of our nature  
shows the  
goodness  
of our  
Designer.*

Thomas Chalmers said, "There are certain broad and decisive indications of moral design, and so of a moral designer, in the constitution of our world... One patent example of this in the constitution of man, is the force and prevalence of compassion – an endowment which could not have proceeded from a malignant being; but which evinces the Author of our nature to be himself compassion and generous."<sup>48</sup>

In this way, our design reflects the goodness of our Designer; Man's make-up shows the greatness of our Maker; Mankind's constitution indicates the character of our Creator; and human nature signifies the intelligence of the God of nature.

### **MEN ARE SINNERS BY CHOICE DISPITE THEIR GOD GIVEN CONSTITUTION**

Some may think that if I am saying that mankind has a natural or constitutional influence towards virtue and against sin, that

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<sup>48</sup> The Bridgewater Treatises, On the Power Wisdom and Goodness of God as Manifest in the Adaption of External Nature to the Moral and Intellectual Constitution of Man, 1853 Edition, p. 251

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

mankind therefore is not sinful. The truth is that a sinner truly deserves punishment and therefore needs forgiveness through the atonement of Christ, because while God has given mankind the natural ability to obey Him, and He has given us the natural influence to obey Him, we have nevertheless chosen to sin anyway.

This is true not only of Adam, but also of all of us. Men sin against their conscience; and therefore, they sin against their nature. The influences of our nature can be obeyed or disobeyed, yielded to or resisted. Our nature, or conscience, does not necessitate our choices or else we would never have sinned. Despite all the efforts of

*Oh, how  
exceedingly  
sinful sin  
appears to be  
when we  
contemplate its  
opposition to  
our very nature.*

God, both internal and external to man, mankind has chosen to rebel against the good moral government of God, which has been revealed through man's natural conscience. Man's constitutional influence toward virtue exists despite man's choice to sin. And man's choice to sin exists despite man's constitutional influence toward virtue.

Sin is rendered utterly inexcusable and unjustifiable in light of this truth. This truth does not nullify the sinfulness of man, it magnifies it. How wicked and evil sinners truly are, how truly deserving they are of eternal torment, and how desperately they need a Savior, if they were capable of doing good and knew to do good but they choose to do evil instead! It is because men have a God given moral nature and yet they have sinned anyways that they are hell deserving criminal in need of a Savior. Oh, how exceedingly sinful sin appears to be when we contemplate its opposition to our very nature.

Alfred T. Overstreet said, "It is a solemn fact that sinners will be punished for ever and ever in hell. This fact is a fearful illustration of the boundless guilt and ill-desert of sinners. But if it were really true that men were born sinners, they could not be guilty in the least for their sins. They would be unfortunate, yes, but not guilty. However, sin is not a misfortune. It is the greatest outrage in the universe. It is a crime against man's nature and rebellion against the Creator of our nature. God has measured the crime, the outrage,

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the guilt and the ill-desert of sin by its awful penalty: everlasting punishment in hell's fire."<sup>49</sup>

Henry C. Sheldon said, "Any evil which is a matter of pure inheritance cannot rationally be made a ground of the moral reprobation of the person inheriting. To him it is calamity, and more properly calls for compassion than for condemnation. It may not be aesthetically pleasing. No more is congenital lameness aesthetically pleasing. If it is irrational cruelty to blame one for a bodily deficit which was thus given, rather than acquired by personal misconduct, it is, in like manner, gross injustice to blame one for a spiritual deficit which was imposed outright and in no part was acquired."<sup>50</sup>

Charles Finney said, "The fact that Christ died in the stead and behalf of sinners, proves that God regarded them not as unfortunate, but as criminals altogether without excuse... But if they were without excuse for sin, they must be without a sinful nature that renders sin unavoidable. If men are without excuse for sin, as the whole law and the Gospel assume and teach, it cannot possibly be that their nature is sinful, for a sinful nature would be the best of all excuses for sin."<sup>51</sup>

*Sin is  
universal  
because  
temptation  
and free will  
is universal.*

Someone might ask, "If men do not inherit a sinful nature, why is sin so universal?" The answer is that sin is universal because temptation and free will are universal. All men, at some point, have freely given into temptation. Nobody can say, "I'm just a poor sinner. It is not my fault. I was born this way." Sinners cannot say, "My nature made me do it." If a man is a sinner he is not worthy of pity as if he was unfortunate and had a hereditary disease. A sinner is a criminal worthy of punishment. It is his fault that he is a sinner. Sin is a moral crime not a constitutional calamity. A man cannot be justly punished for being born with a disease, but he can be justly punished for committing crimes after he was born. Sin is a crime because it

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<sup>49</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, p. 59

<sup>50</sup> System of Christian Doctrine, Jennings & Graham, Cincinnati, 1912, pp. 311-321

<sup>51</sup> Lectures on Systematic Theology, 1851 Edition, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 288

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relates to free choice and moral law, as the Bible says, “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 Jn. 3:4). A man’s sin is not the result of the nature God gave him, but of the choices that he has made.

The Bible says, “God hath made men upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Ecc. 7:29). “God hath made man upright” shows that we cannot blame our sin upon our Creator, nature, constitution, or birth. And when it says, “...they have sought out many inventions,” this means that we have personally chosen to go after sin and originated it ourselves.

It has been asked, “Do men sin because they are sinners? Or are they sinners because they sin?” Depending on how you look at it, the answer is both. A sinner, by definition, is a person who chooses to

*The  
sinfulness  
of each  
individual  
is self-  
inflicted.*

sin. You cannot be a sinner until you first choose to sin. A drunkard is a drunkard because he gets drunk and a fornicator is a fornicator because he fornicates, etc. If a drunkard did not get drunk, he would not be a drunkard. And if a fornicator did not fornicate, he would not be a fornicator. If a person did not choose, with their heart, to sin then they would not be a sinner. Sin does not exist before the sinner, as the sin is the choice of the sinner. In other words, sin does not cause sinners but sinners cause sin. Men choose to be sinners by choosing to cause sin. While at the same time, a person commits outward acts of sin because he has first internally chosen in his heart to be a sinner. He made the ultimate and supreme choice of selfishness or to serve his own self-gratification and all his outwards acts of sin are a manifestation of the fact that he is already a sinner in his heart.

The Bible says that sinful men have each “corrupted themselves” (Gen. 6:12; Exo. 32:7; Deut. 9:12; Deut. 32:5; Jdg. 2:19; Hos. 9:9). This means that the sinfulness of each individual is self-inflicted. A sinner is in a self-caused state of wickedness. The will is the source or cause of all our moral qualities and moral behavior. Sin is not the condition of man’s constitution but the quality of man’s choice. Sinfulness is not some involuntary condition which is inflicted upon us. Sin is not something which is helplessly forced upon mankind. Sinners are not wicked by design but by determination or deliberation.

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The Bible say's man's heart is evil from their youth (Gen. 8:21; Jer. 22:21; 32:30). The word youth here in the Hebrew does not mean birth or a state of infancy but refers to a state of juvenility.<sup>52</sup> That means that all men everywhere, at the age of accountability when they know right from wrong or have become moral agents, have personally and freely chosen to be sinners (Gen. 6:12, Ex. 32:7, Deut. 9:12, Deut. 32:5, Jdg. 2:19, Hos. 9:9, Ps. 14:2-3, Isa. 53:6, Ecc. 7:29, Rom. 3:23, Rom. 5:12).

God said, "Everyone one of them is gone back: they are all together become filthy, there is none that doeth good no, not one" (Ps. 53:2; 14:2). It is self-evident that only the morally innocent can become guilty and only the morally clean can "become filthy." There was a time, in our infancy, when we were morally innocent and clean but as juveniles we became morally filthy. This description of the sinful state of man describes a degenerate state or a condition which they have "gone back" into, as opposed to a state that they were helplessly born into. Men have deliberately chosen to "become" sinners.

The Bible says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way" (Isa. 53:6). The phrases "have gone astray" and "we have turned" signifies personal or individual volition. Scripturally, sinners are deliberate rebels against the moral government of God.

In fact, sin is something that each individual conceives in their own heart (Acts 5:4). It is something that men originate with their own will (Ps. 7:14; 58:3; Matt. 12:35, Lk. 6:45). Men, in a sense, give birth to sin. The Bible says that a sinner "travailleth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood" (Ps. 7:14). Sin is personal because it is originated by each person.

When the Bible says, "All have sinned" (Rom. 3:23; Rom. 5:12), this means that all men have personally and deliberately chosen to violate the revealed law of God. We have used our natural ability of choice to choose contrary to the design of our nature, to do what we knew to be sinful. The Bible says, "But unto the wicked God saith... thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee" (Ps. 50:17). All men have deliberately chosen to rebel against the

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<sup>52</sup> Thayer's definition of "nâ'ûr nâ'ûr n'e'ûrâh."

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

moral knowledge God has given them and to choose what they have naturally known to be wrong.

The Bible describes sinners as “servants of sin.” But does that imply that they were born this way? No, that is not necessarily implied at all. While some slaves were born into slavery (Lev. 25:44-47), there were some who became servants later in life (Lev. 25:39), some who were hired-servants (Deut. 24:14), and there were those who were servants voluntarily (Ex. 21:5-6; Deut. 15:16-17). And a person who is a servant of sin is such by his own free choice, just as Christians are voluntarily servants of Jesus Christ (Jn. 12:26; Rom. 6:16; Titus 1:1; Col. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:24; Jas. 1:1). Even Jesus is called

*Men voluntarily  
serve sin or  
righteousness—  
they give their  
own consent  
and make their  
own choice.*

a servant of God (Isa. 42:1; 53:11). The truth is that men voluntarily serve sin or righteousness— they give their own consent and make their own choice.

Paul said, “...ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity” (Rom. 6:19). To “yield” is to consent, surrender, or submit. Yielding indicates or implies choice. A servant of sin is someone who chooses to obey sin. “Jesus answered them, verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (Jn. 8:34). A person is a servant of sin because they are choosing to serve sin. You are the servant of whoever you choose to serve. You are the servant of whoever you choose to obey. “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom. 6:16). In the Greek, the word Paul used for servant means, “one who gives himself up to another’s will.”<sup>53</sup> Therefore, men make the choice to be ruled by sin rather than to rule over sin (Gen. 4:7).

Albert Barnes said, “To whom ye yield yourselves - To whom ye give up yourselves for servitude or obedience. The apostle here refers to voluntary servitude.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Thayer’s definition of “doulos”

<sup>54</sup> Albert Barnes’s commentary on Romans 6:16



## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

Charles Finney said, “God made men to be free, giving them just such mental powers as they need in order to control their own activities as a rational being should wish to. Their bondage, then, is altogether voluntary. They choose to resist the control of reason, and submit to the control of appetite and passion.”<sup>55</sup>

Pelagius said, “he sins of his own will...’But I am carnal, sold as a slave under sin.’ He indicates that while he was free he sold himself as a slave to sin.”<sup>56</sup> The Scriptures say, “Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves” (Isa. 50:1).

It is by a sinner’s own choice and consent that they are in the service of sin and the strongholds that they have developed to sin are the result of their own habits. Being a servant of sin, therefore, does not excuse their sinning. Rather, they are to blame for being servants of sin since it is not the nature they are born with that made them such but their own free choice.

To deny that man is sinful by nature is not the same as denying that man is sinful. To deny that man is sinful by nature is simply to deny the idea that man is involuntarily sinful or that he is wicked by necessity. To deny that man is a sinner by the nature he is born with is only to deny that man has a genuine justification or legitimate excuse for being a sinner. But you can deny that man is sinful by nature and still admit that man is sinful. To say that man is not sinful by nature, but that man is still sinful, is simply to affirm that man is sinful by voluntary choice. In this way, a man is the author of his own moral character. He is to be blamed for his wickedness because it is his own fault.

Gregory of Nyssa said, “For that any one should become wicked, depends solely upon choice.”<sup>57</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia denied the concept “that men sin by nature, not by choice...”<sup>58</sup> Ignatius said, "If anyone is truly religious, he is a man of God; but if

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<sup>55</sup> The Sinner’s Natural Power and Moral Weakness, The Oberlin Evangelist, August 13, 1856

<sup>56</sup> Pelagius’s commentary on Romans 7:14

<sup>57</sup> Views in Theology, Published by Truman and Smith, 1836 Edition, p. 55

<sup>58</sup> The Quarterly Christian Spectator, Volume Seven, Published by S. Cooke, 1825 Edition, p. 270

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he is irreligious, he is a man of the devil, made such, not by nature, but by his own choice."<sup>59</sup>

Gordon C. Olson said, "Sin is always a wrong voluntary attitude or purpose of life, or a wrong motive of heart. Sin is not a fixed something back of the will controlling its actions. The will determines the nature of character . . . We are sinners simply because we choose to sin or live selfishly. We are never held accountable for what we are not the author of. Ability is always the measure of responsibility."<sup>60</sup> He also said, "Moral beings themselves are the author of their own rebellion, which is an unintelligent abuse of their God-given endowments of personality.... It is man who has abused his God-given freedom."<sup>61</sup>

Since men are sinners by the liberty of their wills, as opposed to the necessity of their natures, we cannot blame anyone else for our sin. If we are found to be sinners, it is entirely our own fault. Many men refuse to acknowledge this truth because of the ugly picture it paints of mankind and because of the crushing weight of guilt and conviction that it brings. How horribly guilty sinners truly are if they are capable of avoiding their sin by their free will and sin itself is contrary to the nature God has given them and yet they sinning anyways!

When I look upon the masses of mankind, all created in the image of God and designed in their natures for virtuous living in obedience to Him, I see an enormous amount of moral potential that man has for good and for God. Saying this by no means undermines the sinful depravity of man, but in fact it magnifies it. How morally depraved sinners truly are if their nature does not necessitate them to sin but actually tells them not to sin and yet they sin anyways!

Calvinists have at times objected to the idea of all men becoming sinners by their own free will by saying certainly at least some men would not have sinned if they were born with a free will to obey God or not, and if they were not born with a sinful nature that forces them to sin. Certainly God would not object or be upset if nobody ever sinned. He no doubt preferred a sinless universe that

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<sup>59</sup> The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians chap 5, Long Version

<sup>60</sup> The Truth Shall Set You Free, Published by Biblical Research Corporation, p. 71-72

<sup>61</sup> The Entrance of Sin into the World, p. 31, 38

## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

would need no atonement at all over a sinful one that did (1 Sam. 15:22). But some teachers of the Bible have taught that “all have sinned” is a general rule for mankind, while there might be some exceptions throughout history of rare individuals who have never sinned. Calvinists like to teach that “all” does not really mean “all individuals,” to defend their limited atonement view. Yet they say that “all” means “all individuals” when it comes to sin. “All have sinned” may be a general rule, as the context is the Jewish and Gentile nations, and as Jesus Christ certainly never sinned. Jesus, as our example, showed us that it was possible for a human to go their whole life without sinning, though this is highly improbable.

Lactantius said, “It behooved for the Master and Teacher of virtue to become most like to man, that by conquering sin He might show that man is able to conquer sin.”<sup>62</sup>

Pelagius said, “But, granted that it [the Scriptures] has sometimes abstained, in a numerous crowd, from narrating the sins of all; still, in the very beginning of the world, when there were only four persons in existence, what reason have we to give why it chose not to mention the sins of all? Was it in consideration of the vast multitude, which had not yet come into existence? Or because, having mentioned only the sins of those who had transgressed, it was unable to record any of him who had not yet committed sin? It is certain that in the earliest age Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel their sons, are mentioned as being the only four persons then in being. Eve sinned, - the Scripture distinctly says so much; Adam also transgressed, as the same Scripture does not fail to inform us; whilst it affords us an equally clear testimony that Cain also sinned: and of all these it not only mentions the sins, but also indicates the character of their sins. Now if Abel had likewise sinned, Scripture would without doubt have said so. But it has not said so, therefore he committed no sin; nay, it even shows him to have been righteous. What we read, therefore, let us believe; and what we do not read, let us deem it wicked to add.”<sup>63</sup>

Abel<sup>64</sup>, Enoch, Melchizedek, Abraham, and others like them are sometimes given as examples of individuals who may not have

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<sup>62</sup> Ante-Nicean Fathers, Vol. VII

<sup>63</sup> Book on Nature

<sup>64</sup> It is also argued that Abel would not have made a sacrifice if he wasn't sinning. However, there were sacrifices other than sin and trespass

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personally sinned, since no record of their sin is mentioned in the scriptures but only that they lived holy and obedient lives. However, even if all individuals have sinned at some point in time, that does not negate the fact that none ever had to sin at any time, nor does it necessarily imply that all are born with a sinful nature. Adam, Eve, Lucifer, and the fallen angels all sinned without a sinful nature. Nobody ever taught Lucifer to sin, but he thought it up with his own mind. And temptation is now universal through the influence of the world and the demons.

Even Pelagius said regarding the verse, “all have sinned,”  
“Well, be it so, I agree; he testifies to the fact that all were sinners.

*If we were in  
Adam’s  
position we  
would have  
all done the  
same thing.*

He says, indeed, what they have been, not that they might not have been something else. Wherefore if all then could be proved to be sinners, it would not by any means prejudice our own definite position, in insisting not so much on what men are, as on what they are able to be.”<sup>65</sup>

But again, Calvinists have objected to the doctrine that all men become sinners by their own free will, instead of by the necessity of their nature, by saying that there would certainly be at least some men throughout history who would not have sinned, and since all have sinned they conclude that men are sinners by the necessity of their natures instead of by the freedom of their wills. Yet these very same Calvinists will say that Adam was our representative and acted for us, that his sin is imputed to us, and that we cannot complain because if we were in Adam’s position we would have all done the same thing. I can agree with the last part of their theory, that “if we were in his position we would have all done the same thing,” and by saying this they contradict their own objection that “certainly some would not have sinned if they were born with a free will and not with a sinful nature.” I contend for

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offerings. And Job made offerings as a perfect man for his sons (Job 1:1-8), so a sacrifice does not imply personal sin. The very reason that Cain’s sacrifice was not accepted was because he did not well (Gen. 4:7; Prov. 21:27), but the Bible records that Abel was righteous in character (Heb. 11:4; 1 Jn.3:12).

<sup>65</sup> Book on Nature

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what they themselves contend for, that if we were in Adam's position we would have done the same thing. Except that I contend that we all essentially were in Adam's position in that we were created with a nature that was opposed to sin, a body that was susceptible to temptation and capable of being misused, a devil tempting us and seeking to destroy us, and a free will ability to do that which was contrary to our nature or design.

Adam's disobedience to God, while it was a literal event, is certainly a figure or foreshadow of our own personal disobedience to God. It is not that the act of Adam was the act of the entire race, but that the entire race has acted like Adam. We have all followed his example of disobedience by becoming disobedient to God ourselves. There is no need for Adam's sin to be imputed to us, as we have made ourselves guilty of sin. We do not need to be born sinners or sinful by necessity, as we have chosen to be sinners freely.

### **SINNERS SEPARATE THEMSELVES FROM GOD**

The Bible says that God "be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27). Nevertheless, sinners are described in the Bible as being spiritually dead. This is analogous to the prodigal son who was "dead" relationally to his father by his choice to leave him and was not "alive again" until he choose to return (Lk. 15:24, 35). Spiritual death, or relational separation from God, is the result of each individual's personal sin. When a person chooses to sin, they are putting a barrier between themselves and God. The Bible says, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2). Notice that it says "your sins," which is both personal and plural. It is not for the single sin of another man, like Adam, that sinners are relationally dead to God. Rather, men become dead to God because of their own personal choice of sins.

The Bible says, "Even when we were dead in sins" (Eph. 2:3, 6). "And you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh" (Col. 2:13). Again, notice that these passages say "your iniquities" and "your sins," making the cause of this condition personal and plural, not impersonal or singular. It means that men are dead in their own sins, not spiritually dead merely for the single sin of Adam.

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

Since the Bible says that a sinner is spiritually dead because of their own personal sins, we can conclude that men are not born spiritually dead but become spiritually dead when they personally and freely choose to sin. As the Bible says, "...death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Spiritual death is not a birth defect but is a self-inflicted condition. Spiritual death is a relational separation from God caused by a person's own wickedness.

Paul specifically said that we are not spiritually dead for Adam's sin but for our own. After he said, "...death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," He said, "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Rom. 5:14). Paul here made a

*Spiritual  
death and  
spiritual  
life are not  
hereditary.*

distinction between our sin and Adam's transgression and clearly stated that we become spiritually dead, not for Adam's sin, but for our own. Adam's sin, he is saying, was not our sin. Our sin differs from Adam's sin. And spiritual death has passed unto us because we, like Adam, have sinned.

While Adam physically died a long time after he sinned (Gen. 5:5), Adam became spiritually dead the day that he sinned, just like God said that he would (Gen. 2:17). But does that mean that all his descendents inherit spiritual death from him? No. The parents who are spiritually dead do not transmit spiritual death at conception to their children, anymore than parents who are spiritually alive transmit spiritual life at conception to their children. Logically, if spiritually dead parents propagate spiritually dead children, then spiritually alive parents would propagate spiritually alive children. But spiritual death and spiritual life are not hereditary, since you do not inherit your spirit from your parents.

The Scriptures teach that spirits are not hereditary or inherited from parents (Traducianism), but spirits are created by God at conception (Creationism). God is known as "the God of the spirits of all flesh" (Num. 16:22; 27:16). This is because God "formeth the spirit of man within him" (Zac. 12:1). The Bible says, "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all" (Ecc. 11:5). God makes all spirits

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which is why He said, “all souls are mine” (Eze. 18:4). And this is why Paul said, “your body and... your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20).

Jesus said, “That which is born of flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Jn. 3:6). We receive our flesh from our parents who have flesh and we get our spirits from God who is spirit. Our parents are the “fathers of our flesh” but God is called “the Father of spirits” (Heb. 12:9). God creates men with a “living soul” (Gen. 2:17). God does not create us with dead spirits, but with living spirits. He creates us spiritually alive in a sense. That is, there is not yet any sin barrier between us and God. We become spiritually dead or relationally separated from Him when we first sin. Those who are spiritually dead still have a spirit, but it is not in any communion or fellowship with God because of sin. Paul said, “For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Rom. 7:9). “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me” (Rom. 7:11). We see that spiritual death occurs after we sin. Only the living can die. Therefore, only those who were once alive can become dead in sin. That is why Paul said “I was alive” before he said “I died.” And that is why the Scriptures said, “For this my son was dead, and is alive again” (Lk. 15:24). To say that he was “alive again” means he is relationally alive to the Father for the second time.

This understanding of “alive again” helps us understand Jesus who elsewhere said, “Ye must be born again.” This speaks of, not a spiritual birth, but a spiritual rebirth. It is not a first birth but a second birth. We must be born again, or born spiritually for the second time, because we became spiritually dead through our sin. It is not that we must be born again or spiritually reborn because we became spiritually dead through Adam’s sin, but because we became spiritually dead through our own sin, as the Scriptures explicitly teach. The prodigal son was alive to his father, then he was dead to his father, and then he was alive to his father again. Our spirits were created by God, then we became spiritually dead, and now we must become spiritually alive to God again.

Dr. Emmons said, “Nor can we suppose that Adam made men sinners by conveying to them a morally corrupt nature. Moral corruption is essentially different from natural corruption. The latter belongs to the body, but the former belongs to the mind. Adam

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

undoubtedly conveyed to his posterity a corrupt body, or a body subject to wounds, bruises and putrefying sores. But such a body could not corrupt the mind, or render it morally depraved. There is no morally corrupt nature distinct from free, voluntary, sinful exercises. Adam had no such nature, and consequently could convey no such nature to his posterity.

“But even supposing he had a morally corrupt nature, distinct from his free, voluntary, sinful exercises, it must have belonged to his soul, and not to his body. And if it belonged to his soul, he could not convey it to his posterity, who derive their souls immediately from the fountain of being. God is the father of our spirits. The soul is not transmitted from father to son by natural generation. The soul is spiritual; and what is spiritual is indivisible, is incapable of propagation. Adam could not convey any part of his soul to his next immediate offspring, without conveying the whole. It is, therefore, as contrary to reason as to Scripture, to suppose that Adam’s posterity derived their souls from him. And if they did not derive their souls from him, they could not derive from him a morally corrupt nature, if he really possessed such a nature himself.”<sup>66</sup>

Paris Reidhead said, “Are people in trouble spiritually because they inherit some spiritual defect from their parents or grandparents? No. They are in trouble because when they reach the age of accountability they deliberately turn their own way - they commit their will to the principle and practice of pleasing themselves as the end of their being. That is sin.”<sup>67</sup>

Paris Reidhead also said, "Now remember, sin is a crime. It is the committal of the will to the principle and practice of governing one's life to please one's self. In other words, when the Scripture says, 'all have sinned,' it is saying that upon reaching the age of accountability, every individual has chosen to govern and control his life to please himself... We know that upon reaching the age of accountability, each of us chose as the principle by which we would live: 'I am going to govern and control my own life.'"<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> The Works of Nathanael Emmons, Vol. IV, P. 489-490, published by Crocker and Brewster, 1842.

<sup>67</sup> Finding the Reality of God, pg 64-65

<sup>68</sup> Finding the Reality of God, pg 85



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Clement of Alexandria said about sinners and their relationship with God, “their estrangement is the result of free choice.”<sup>69</sup>

There are three types of death spoken of in the Bible: physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death. Mankind dies physically because of Adam’s sin (1 Cor. 15:22-23); sinners are dead spiritually because of their own personal sins (Isa. 59:2; Rom. 5:12; 7:9, 11; Col. 2:13); and sinners die eternally because of their own personal sins (Rev. 21:8).

### PERSONAL SALVATION FOR PERSONAL SINS

At the age of accountability, when our conscience was developed or our moral constitution reached the point where we could be held accountable, we all chose to sin. The very basis of our guilt is the fact that we have the natural ability to obey God (free will), and a natural knowledge or influence to obey God (conscience), and we have chosen to sin anyways. Without free will and conscience being elements of man’s nature, man could not be accountable for his actions at all. The faculties of free will and conscience are essential to moral agency; and consequently, they are necessary for any being to be subject to God’s moral government.

The fact that mankind has a nature that includes free will and conscience does not mean that mankind is not sinful. This is actually the precondition for man to even be sinful at all. A being is sinful if they freely choose to do what they know is wrong (Jn. 9:41; Rom. 1:18-21; Jas. 4:17). Men are sinners because they sin when they don’t have to, knowing that it is wrong but doing it anyways.

The very reason that men need God’s grace and mercy through the atonement of Jesus Christ is because sin is their own fault, since they have been sinners by choice. A sinner deserves punishment for his sin because his sin is the product or fruit of his own will, a choice which he has freely made, which he was free not to make. Since a sinner deserves punishment for freely choosing to sin, when he was free not to sin, this is the very reason that He needs God’s grace and mercy through Jesus Christ.

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<sup>69</sup> A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 287, Published by Hendrickson Publishers

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If a man was born a sinner, or was a sinner by necessity of his nature, then his sinful condition would not be his own fault; and consequently, he could not deserve punishment for it. Therefore, he wouldn't need God's grace and mercy through the atonement of Jesus Christ. If a man is a sinner by no fault or choice of his own, then he deserves no condemnation; and consequently, he needs no Savior. But if a man is a sinner by his own free choice, then it is his own fault and he deserves punishment. Consequently, he is in need of a Savior.

We don't need the atonement of Jesus Christ because of our birth. We need the atonement of Jesus Christ because of our sinful choices. It is true that infants are subjected to physical death because of Adam's sin; and therefore, they need the resurrection that comes through Jesus (1 Cor. 15:21-22). But infants are morally innocent because they have not yet sinned (Rom. 9:11). Therefore, they are in no danger of damnation in their state of innocence. Jesus did not die to save innocent babies from hell, because a God of justice does not send innocent babies to hell. Jesus said that only the sick need a doctor (Lk. 5:31). It is only sinners that need a Savior. Once a man chooses to be a sinner, they are in danger of damnation and are in need of salvation through the atonement of Christ.

*We need the  
atonement of  
Jesus Christ  
because of  
our sinful  
choices.*

The Scriptures nowhere teach that we need the atonement of Jesus Christ because of our ancestors. Rather, it declares that we need the atonement of Jesus Christ for our own sin. We need His atonement for our own personal rebellion. The Bible says, "JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Mat. 1:21). And it says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). It is for "your trespasses" that the Bible says you need forgiveness (Matt. 6:15; Mk. 11:25-26). Since "your trespasses" is spoken of as personal and in the plural, it shows that it is not for the single sin of Adam that we need forgiveness. It is not for what our ancestors did that we need forgiveness, but for what we have done that we need forgiveness.

Our need for salvation or our necessity for the atonement is because of our own free choices, not because of our involuntary birth. We do not need the atonement for merely existing. We need the

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atonement because of what we have done with our existence. We need a Savior, not for merely being born, but for being rebellious. It is not sinful to merely exist, or to be born, but it is sinful to make choices which are contrary to the moral law of God. Therefore, men are not in danger of hell for merely existing or for merely being born. And they do not need forgiveness in Christ for merely existing or for being born with a certain type of nature. But men are in danger of hell for personally and freely making sinful choices; and therefore, they need the forgiveness that is in Christ for their own sins.

If the problem is man's nature and not man's choices, all of the striving, calling, and commanding of God in the Bible toward man make no sense at all. If the problem is man's choices, then certainly man must be called upon, commanded, and strived with to fix the problem. But if the problem is man's nature, no amount of striving, calling, or commanding will avail anything in solving the problem. If the problem God had was man's nature or constitution, not man's free will choices or character, then there was no need for Jesus

*God could have simply zapped human nature in Genesis as soon as it became sinful and cured it by His mere omnipotent power.*

Christ to come and die for us or for the gospel to be preached in all the world. God could have simply zapped human nature in Genesis as soon as it became sinful and cured it by His mere omnipotent power. The whole plan of salvation, as presented in the Bible, would be completely unnecessary. If Adam somehow made human nature sinful with his own choice, God could have simply snapped His fingers or spoken the word and turned human nature good again. Certainly, the same God who created human nature in the first place had the power to recreate it or heal it if it became sinful. But as we see that God strives, calls, and commands men, and that everything from Genesis to Revelation in the plan of salvation was necessary, it is evident that the problem God has with mankind is not the nature that they are born with but the free moral choices that they make. The problem is not the constitution of man itself, but with how man chooses to use that constitution.

## THE PROPER FUNCTION OF THE FACULTIES OF OUR CONSTITUTION

REGENERATE STATE OF NATURE INTENDED DESIGN - MK. 12:33	UNREGENERATE STATE OF NATURE IMPROPER USE - COL. 1:16
<h1 style="margin: 0;">GOD</h1> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">LK. 24:25; JN. 14:17; 16:8; ACTS 17:30-31; ROM. 12:2; 2 TIM. 1:7</p> <p style="margin: 0 0 10px 0;">SPEAKS TO THE</p>	<h1 style="margin: 0;">EMOTIONS</h1> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">GEN. 3:6; JN. 12:43; PHP. 3:19; EPH. 2:3; 2 PET. 2:10; 2 TIM. 3:2; 1 TIM. 3:4; JUDE 16</p> <p style="margin: 0 0 10px 0;">DIRECT THE</p>
<h1 style="margin: 0;">MIND</h1> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">PS. 1:2; ISA. 26:3; JN. 1:9; ACTS 17:2,17:11; 24:25; ROM. 2:14-15; 12:2; EPH. 5:17; COL. 1:9; 3:10; PHP. 4:8; 1JN. 5:20</p> <p style="margin: 0 0 10px 0;">WHICH DIRECTS THE</p>	<h1 style="margin: 0;">WILL</h1> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">ISA. 14:13;14; JN. 5:40-44; ROM. 1:18-21; 2:5-8; 8:5-6,13; EPH. 4:19</p> <p style="margin: 0 0 10px 0;">WHICH SUPPRESSES &amp; ABUSES THE</p>
<h1 style="margin: 0;">WILL</h1> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">ROM. 6:17; 10:10; 1 TIM. 1:5; 2TIM. 1:13; 2 TIM. 3:14; TIT. 1:9</p> <p style="margin: 0 0 10px 0;">WHICH EFFECTS &amp; CONTROLS THE</p>	<h1 style="margin: 0;">MIND</h1> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">JN. 1:9-10; 3:19-20; 14:17; ROM. 1:25;2:15; 7:17; 7:23; 2 COR. 10:5; EPH. 4:17-18; COL. 1:21; 1 TIM. 4:2</p> <p style="margin: 0 0 10px 0;">WHICH IGNORES</p>
<h1 style="margin: 0;">EMOTIONS</h1> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">GEN. 4:7; ECC. 5:18; ROM. 6:13; 6:19; ROM. 8:13; 13:4; 13:14; 1 COR. 9:27 COL. 3:2; TIT. 2:12; 1 TIM. 6:17</p>	<h1 style="margin: 0;">GOD</h1> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">ISA. 17:10; 51:13; JER. 2:23; PS. 10:4; 106:21; ROM. 1:28</p>
<p style="margin: 0 0 10px 0;">LIVING FOR GOD ACTING ON MORAL PRINCIPLE LIVING BY INTELLIGENCE DOING WHAT IS KNOWN AS GOOD</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">ISA. 1:18; EZE. 18:28; ACTS 17:11; ROM.12:1; EPH. 4:23; 5:15; 2 COR. 5:15; COL. 3:10; 4:5; JAS. 4:17;</p>	<p style="margin: 0 0 10px 0;">LIVING FOR SELF IN PURSUIT OF PHYSICAL PLEASURE LIVING BY EMOTIONS DOING WHAT FEELS GOOD</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">1 COR. 10:6; 2 THES. 2:12; 2 TIM. 3:2; 2 TIM. 3:4; JAS. 1:14-15; 1 JN. 2:16</p>

SINNERS AND SAINTS ARE DIRECT OPPOSITES (2 COR. 6:14). THE  
FUNCTION THEY MAKE OF THEIR NATURES ARE EXACTLY REVERSED.

OUR CONSTITUTION WAS DESIGNED FOR VIRTUOUS LIVING IN  
OBEDIENCE TO GOD. SIN IS A PERVERSION AND MISUSE OF OUR NATURE.

**LAWFUL VS. UNLAWFUL GRATIFICATION  
OF OUR GOD GIVEN NATURE**

The faculties and members of our nature are in their rightful and natural order of things when we live holy, but they are in disorder and function unnaturally when we are sinning. Our nature was designed to live virtuously for God and only functions naturally and rightly when we do so.

Joseph Butler said in regards to the “frame of man,” “Appetites, passions, affections, and the principles of reflection, considered merely as the several parts of our inward nature, do not at all give us an idea of the system of constitution of this nature; because the constitution is formed by somewhat not yet taken into consideration, namely by the relation, which these several parts have to each other; the chief of which is the authority of reflection or conscience. It is from considering the relations which the several appetites and passions in the inward frame has to each other, and above all the supremacy of reflection or conscience, that we get the idea of the system or constitution of human nature; and from the idea itself it will as fully appear, that this our nature, i.e. constitution, is adapted to virtue...”<sup>70</sup>

*Our nature  
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Joseph Butler also said, “A machine is inanimate and passive, but we are agents. Our constitution is put in our own power; we are charged with it, and therefore are accountable for any disorder or violation of it. Thus nothing can possibly be more contrary to nature than vice; meaning by nature, not only the several parts of our internal frame, but also the constitution of it... vice was contrary to

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<sup>70</sup> The Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature: Also, Fifteen Sermons by Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham, With the life of the Author, a Copious Analysis, Notes, and Indexes, by Joseph Angus, pg. 341

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the higher and better part of our nature... virtue consisted in following nature...<sup>71</sup>

And again Joseph Butler said, “Morality, or the course God intends men to take, may be known from our nature... Ancient writers and Scripture concur nevertheless in affirming a ‘natural law,’ and in describing vice as deviation from that law... This law of nature is conscience, with the prerogative of supremacy over other principles... The constitution of human nature, thus explained, gives rules of virtue, and creates an obligation to obey them... A constitution is violated, not only by removing parts but by giving to the lower the supremacy; hence the saying that injustice is contrary to nature... Whence man, having in his make parts lower and supreme, is a law to himself.”<sup>72</sup>

M. B. Sharbrough said, “We have a lower nature in common with the animal world. A nature with instinctive desires, and impulsive passions. Above this we have intellect, in which is grounded the sentiments... In this higher nature we have the moral sentiments or principles, such as justice, chastity, truth, benevolence or unselfish love. And in harmony with this higher nature God has given us his law... Now because of this complex nature man may be tempted to violate the higher nature and the law of God which sanctions it, in order to gratify some craving of the lower. Temptation is the struggle of the lower nature against the higher, while sin consists in the yielding of the higher to the behests of the lower. A mere animal cannot sin nor be tempted to sin, since it has no higher nature, nor law of God to sin against. It simply follows out its nature modified by training and circumstances. It yields to the strongest impulse whatever that may be at the time. But man is capable of free and intelligent choices. He may balance motives and choose between a higher and a lower one just as he will. To choose the lower in the

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<sup>71</sup> The Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature: Also, Fifteen Sermons by Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham, With the life of the Author, a Copious Analysis, Notes, and Indexes, by Joseph Angus, pg. 342-343

<sup>72</sup> The Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature: Also, Fifteen Sermons by Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham, With the life of the Author, a Copious Analysis, Notes, and Indexes, by Joseph Angus, p. 372

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face of the higher is to be vicious, or sinful, however strong the craving yielded to. That is, however great the temptation. In so far as we can see God could not have created a being capable of free choices, and therefore of virtue or vice, without a complex nature of some kind. There must necessarily be motives high and low to be chosen from or moral choice would be impossible. And to have been made incapable of moral choice, would be to be incapable of virtue, no matter upon what plane we may have been placed. Evidently, there can be no higher class of being than a free moral agent, no matter what risks may attend him. Only such a being can enter into fellowship with God. Therefore have been made incapable of temptation would have involved the loss of man's highest power... God, good angels and good men, appeal to our higher nature and encourages us to virtue. Evil angels or devils and bad men play upon our lower nature and solicit us to vice. Thus we are tempted from without as well as from within... If the cravings of our lower nature were not strong there would be but little virtue in resisting them in favor of the higher. And if the higher nature was constantly appealed to from above, while the lower nature was never stirred from beneath, the conflict of the higher with the lower would be so insignificant that victory would merit no reward. That is to say that virtue would be reduced to the minimum."<sup>73</sup>

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conscience is  
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The desires of our flesh make up part of our constitution, but they are not exclusively our nature. Our passions, desires, or flesh is sometimes classified as our "lower nature," while our intellect, mind, or conscience is classified as our "higher nature." You will sometimes hear people say, "Let me appeal to your higher nature" as they address a person's conscience or "moral nature." Our lower nature, or passions and desires of the flesh, want to be gratified. But our higher nature, or conscience, dictates to us moral principle that ought to regulate our choices. Both our higher and our lower nature was given to us by God. But our lower nature was never meant, by God, to be

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<sup>73</sup> The Pacific, Volume 54, J. W. Douglas, 1904, p. 16

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supreme. Our lower nature was always meant to be governed by our higher nature. It is sinful and unnatural for our lower nature to become supreme – for us to live for our own pleasure despite and contrary to the dictates of our conscience.

Sin may appeal to our flesh, but it does not appeal to our conscience. Our flesh can be gratified by vice, but our conscience can only be appeased by virtue. While man’s physical constitution has many passions and pleasures, man’s mental constitution has moral principles and perceptions. Man was not meant to be governed by the former, but by the latter. It is our higher nature which was meant to regulate the use we make of our lower nature.

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Sin is contrary to both our higher and our lower nature. Sin is contrary to our higher nature, our intelligence and conscience, as it completely forbids it. And sin is contrary to our lower nature in that our passions and appetites were not created, intended, or designed to be gratified through sin. Sin is a misuse of our lower nature and is forbidden by our higher nature.

The Bible speaks of living “after the flesh” as sin (Rom. 8:12). Notice that it is not having flesh which is sinful, but living after it which is sinful. If the flesh is elevated to the right position of God in our lives, this is sin. A good example is our stomach, which is part of our flesh. The Bible speaks of those “whose god is their belly” (Php 3:19). They have elevated their flesh, in the pursuit of physical pleasure, to the rightful position of God. Their supreme object in life is not to glorify God but to gratify themselves. This is sin. Now, God gave us our stomach. He gave us our flesh. It is certainly not sinful to possess what God has given to us. But it is sinful to elevate our flesh out of its proper position and into the supreme position where God alone belongs. Hence, when the Scriptures seem to speak derogatory or negatively of the flesh, as if the flesh is sinful, it is not that the substance of our body is sinful but that living for our own pleasure and gratification as the supreme and ultimate object in life is sinful. This is how the Scriptures speak of Christians as “free from sin” (Rom. 6:22), and yet it says that we still “live in the flesh” (Gal. 2:20). It is not sinful to live in the flesh, but it is sinful to live after the flesh.



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Another example is the human sex drive. The natural sexual desires of the body were part of our design and necessary for reproduction. There is nothing inherently sinful in what God has created or given to us. However, if the supreme pursuit of a person's life is their own sexual gratification, this is sinful. We were not meant to live for pleasure, but by moral principle. Our conscience, which is the medium for God to give revelation of His moral law, was meant to be supreme over our passions and desires. Sinners are establishing their lower nature as their higher nature and are thus perverting the structure of their nature and being. It is sinful for a man to live exclusively or supremely for his lower nature, but this is not natural itself and therefore is no evidence that men are born with sinful natures.

When talking about the nature of man being "sinful," the proponents of the sinful nature theory often refer exclusively to our "lower nature" of flesh or mere passions and desires while ignoring the fact that a conscience or intelligence is equally part of our nature. They overlook the fact that our nature does not exclusively consist of its physical elements, as it also has mental properties as well, through which moral principle is received and known. This was stated by Paul when he said, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Rom. 2:14-15). Our nature, taken as a whole, does not tend toward sin and wickedness at all. A sinner chooses to ignore his conscience, to live contrary to his higher nature, and to live supremely for his own self-gratification. This is an abuse and misuse of his nature.

While it is true that our natural influence is for virtue as far as our conscience is concerned, but our natural influence is for self-gratification, as far as our flesh is concerned. Our flesh doesn't care if we gratify it naturally or unnaturally, lawfully or unlawfully, it just wants to be gratified. The reason many think that we have a "natural tendency towards sin," is because they are thinking exclusively of our

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flesh. But our flesh doesn't want "sin" as if "sin" was the end in mind or object sought. The flesh wants gratification, whether it comes through sin or through lawful means. And self-gratification is only a sin when it is our ultimate or supremely intention, as that is contrary to the greatest and second greatest commandment.

In the development of a human being, the flesh is developed long before the mind is. Before a child has moral principles developed in their mind, they have desires in their flesh that want gratification. It is not sinful for an infant to live exclusively for their "lower nature" as their "higher nature" does not exist yet, or at least is not fully developed. Only once their mind is developed to the point

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that they perceive the value and rights of others are they obligated to live accordingly. It is no sin in a child, who does not know to live better, to live supremely for themselves or to choose their own self-gratification as their primary object. Only once they know that others are their equals, and God is their superior, are they obligated to love God supremely and their neighbor equally. Before their mind reaches the state where their conscience is developed, which is commonly called the age of accountability, they have developed a habit of self-indulgence. Their will has habitually chosen according to pleasure, not moral principle. Once they have reached the age of accountability, when they know that they ought to love God supremely and their neighbor equally, they choose to continue in this pursuit of their own self-gratification. Now that they have moral knowledge, this choice is sin. Thus, men are sinners "from their youth" (Gen. 8:21; Jer. 22:21; 32:30), not from their birth. Men freely become sinners at the commencement of their moral agency and remain selfish in character until their moral character is regenerated by the truth of the gospel when they yield to the influence of God's grace.

Charles Finney said, "Self-gratification is the rule of action previous to the development of reason... When reason affirms moral obligation, it finds the will in a state of habitual and constant

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committal to the impulses of the sensibility... The will of course rejects the bidding of reason, and cleaves to self-indulgence.”<sup>74</sup>

Gordon C. Olson said, “Physical consciousness and experiences through the five senses are cultivated prior to the dawn of moral accountability... At the dawn of moral accountability, as obligation to God and other beings is beginning to be perceived, moral enlightenment appears to make a dim impact because of our already established manner of living... The will now determines to press on in this self-gratification against these new realizations, the habit of self-indulgence now becoming sinful and involves new concentrations in its pursuit...”<sup>75</sup>

Winkie Pratney said, “The feelings develop long before the reason, and both are deeply entrenched before the spirit begins to awaken to the claims of God. Much depends at this point on the parents. If they are faithful in their duty to God, they must train their child to yield up its own way when that self-willed way will interfere with the happiness of others. The child will learn at first obedience to its parents only in a love/discipline relationship; it is here that the habit of response to authority must be ingrained in the child’s soul, so that later, when God opens up the spiritual understanding, the child will surrender to Him... Since the feelings develop before the reason and conscience, the will begins to form the habit of obeying desire, which deepens every day. The obvious consequence is that self-indulgence becomes the master principle in the soul of the child long before it can understand that this self-indulgence will interfere with the right or happiness of others. This repeated bias grows, strong each day before a knowledge of right or duty could possibly have entered the mind. Finally, the moment of true moral responsibility arrives. The child is now old enough to understand wrong. (This will probably be earlier in a Christian home than in a non-Christian one.) Does the child approach this test in a perfectly neutral state? If Adam, in the maturity of his reason, with full consciousness of the morality of his actions could give in to such temptation, is there any doubt that a child will not? The moment that a child chooses selfishly, it sins.

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<sup>74</sup> Lectures on Systematic Theology, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 294

<sup>75</sup> The Truth Shall Make You Free, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 68

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From this point on (and not before) God holds the child responsible for its own actions and destiny. It is significant that all words of the Lord to sinners begin from their youth, and not from their birth, as some have supposed."<sup>76</sup>

If we inherit a body or flesh that desires gratification, does that mean that our nature is sinful? No, as already stated, gratification is not a sin unless it is our supreme intention contrary to our better knowledge. God has given us good and natural desires and He intended for us to gratify them lawfully and naturally, in their proper place. Sin is when our own gratification is elevated above its proper place, over against the rights and well-being of God as our superior

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and man as our equal. But if we love God supremely and our neighbor equally, and gratify our body or flesh through lawful means and regard our own interest in the proper order of things, our gratification is not sinful. Furthermore, as already stated, our flesh does not desire "sin" itself, but desires gratification, whether it comes through sin or not. Therefore, the fact that we are born with a flesh that desires gratification does not mean that we inherit a sinful nature.

We have a constitutional and natural desire for gratification that God Himself has given us. Our natural desires, with their legitimate means of gratification, are part of the design of God for His creation. The flesh and mind that God has given us has natural desires that can be gratified through the natural and lawful means He has established. God designed our body and mind to be gratified through these natural and lawful means. Sin, on the other hand, is the choice of the will to gratify these natural desires through unnatural and unlawful means.

F. Lagard Smith said, "We have a nature that is capable of being perverted from legitimate to illegitimate, from the natural to the unnatural, from the pure to the polluted."<sup>77</sup> He also said that sin is to "pervert... natural, legitimate, human desires."<sup>78</sup> Augustine even said,

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<sup>76</sup> Youth Aflame, published by Bethany House, p. 89-90

<sup>77</sup> Troubling Questions for Calvinists, page 134-135

<sup>78</sup> Troubling Questions for Calvinists, page 134-135

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"Evil is making a bad use of a good thing."<sup>79</sup> Tertullian said that the person who chooses to sin chooses to "make a bad use of his created constitution."<sup>80</sup> Paris Reidhead said, "sin is the decision to gratify a good appetite in a bad way."<sup>81</sup>

A perfect example of this is the narrative of Eve's temptation and sin. We are told that she was tempted, not because she had a sinful nature, but because she had natural God given desires which the devil tempted her to gratify through forbidden means. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gen. 3:6). A desire for food and wisdom, and a natural attraction to pleasant things is part of our created constitution. There were means available for Eve to gratify these natural desires without resorting to sin. All of the garden was beautiful for her to behold, the garden was full of fruit for food which she was allowed to eat from, and she had a relationship with God through which wisdom is available. But she chose, through the suggestion of the devil, to gratify these natural desires through unlawful means.

Moses Stuart said, "Adam in paradise, before his fall, certainly possessed a susceptibility of excitement to sin, and the power or faculty of sinning, (else how could he have been tempted and sinned as he did?) yet he was not guilty of sin because he possessed them, but for the abuse of them. It is not therefore the power or susceptibility which the Creator has given us, which makes us sinners; it is the abuse of them."<sup>82</sup>

The narrative of Jesus' temptation in the desert also shows the devil appealing to the natural desires that Jesus' human body had (Lk. 4:3). Eve and Jesus had natural desires, which were good in themselves, but the devil used them as the occasion for their temptation. These desires were not in and of themselves sinful, since

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<sup>79</sup> Confessions and Enchiridion, trans. and ed. by Albert C. Outler, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, N. D, page 326-338, section 36

<sup>80</sup> A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 285, Published by Hendrickson Publishers

<sup>81</sup> Finding the Reality of God, pg 141-142

<sup>82</sup> Commentary on Romans, W.F. Draper, Andover, 1868, pp. 327-328

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they were given to them by God. But they were the occasion for the temptations of the devil.

The Bible says, “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and is enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Jas. 1:14-15). The “lust” is only a source through which we are tempted, but when it is conceived, it then becomes sin. Evidently, there is a type of lust which is not sin, but is rather the source through which we are tempted. The desires of the body serve as a temptation upon our will when the suggestion is brought to our mind to gratify these desires in an unlawful way. Until our will yields to these suggestions and we seek to gratify our desires in an unlawful way, we have not yet committed sin.

*God has  
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The desires of the flesh do not necessitate our will, because a person has the power and ability to “deny himself” (Mk. 8:34). And the desires of the body are not in and of themselves sinful. Temptation is not sin, neither is sin physical. Moral qualities belong to states of the will, not to states of our body. God has given us our flesh for us to possess it, not for it to possess us. We must not be controlled by our flesh, but we must be in control of it. Our flesh was meant to be our servant, not our master (1 Cor. 9:27).

Our flesh has its proper God-given place, but we must choose to control it and use it the way God intended. Since the devil will tempt us to gratify the natural desires of our flesh in an unnatural and unlawful way, we must choose to keep our body under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27), and choose to deny ourselves (Lk. 9:23). As Paul said, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh” (Gal. 5:17). Our flesh wants us to be self-indulgent and practice self-gratification, but the Spirit tells us to practice self-control and self-denial, choosing to put our flesh in its proper place and make a legitimate use of it. Our flesh has its proper function and its desires have a natural and lawful way of being gratified. But sin is to misuse our flesh and gratify its desires unnaturally and unlawfully outside of its intended purpose and legitimate boundaries.

Michael Pearl said, “The root of all sin is founded in runaway indulgence of God-given desires... Drives which are not in

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themselves evil, nonetheless, form the seedbed on which sin will assuredly grow... As the body of flesh was the medium of Eve's sin and of Christ's temptation, so it is the implement of your child's development into selfishness – which, at maturity, will constitute sinfulness.”<sup>83</sup>

Rev. E. W. Cook explained the difference between the occasion of sin and the cause of sin. He said, “the occasion of gluttony is the natural appetite for food; but because that between this occasion and the gluttony there come in the free moral, and responsible being, under obligation to keep all his inclinations in due subordination to the higher dictates of reason and judgment therefore does he himself become the efficient cause of the sinful gluttony. For the occasion he is in no way responsible, while he shoulders the entire burden of responsibility for the sinful gluttony.”<sup>84</sup>

Charles Finney said, “All the constitutional appetites and propensities of body and mind, are in themselves innocent; but when strongly excited are a powerful temptation to prohibited indulgence. To these constitutional appetites or propensities, so many appeals of temptation are made, as universally to lead human beings to sin. Adam was created in the perfection of manhood, certainly not with a sinful nature, and yet, an appeal to his innocent constitutional appetites led him into sin.”<sup>85</sup>

He also said, “The bodily appetites and tendencies of body and mind, when strongly excited, become the occasions of sin. So it was with Adam. No one will say that Adam had a sinful nature. But he had, by his constitution, an appetite for food and a desire for knowledge. These were not sinful but were as God made them. They were necessary to fit him to live in this world as a subject of God's moral government. But being strongly excited led to indulgence, and thus became the occasions of his sinning against God. These tendencies were innocent in themselves, but he yielded to them in a sinful manner, and that was his sin.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> To Train Up A Child, No Greater Joy, p. 15-20

<sup>84</sup> The Origin of Sin, Published by Men for Missions, p. 2

<sup>85</sup> Sermons on Important Subjects, Published by John S. Taylor, 1836 Edition, p. 157-158

<sup>86</sup> You Can Be Holy, Published by Whitaker House, p. 215

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Sin is an illegitimate use of our body and mind. Sin is an illegitimate gratification of a legitimate desire. An example would be our sexual desires. The attraction between the sexes is a “natural attraction.” It is normal and natural and is not in and of itself wrong. God created our nature and He gave us our sex drive. These desires are God given. He programmed them in us and designed us to have them. And everything God creates is good (Gen. 1:31).

Paris Reidhead said, "When God made us He gave us many different appetites... But God looked at the being He made and to whom He had given all these appetites and urges and said, 'It is good!'"<sup>87</sup>

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God intended for man to populate the world and He designed us in such a way as to make that possible. God told Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiple” (Gen. 1:22, 28). Sex, its physical passions, was God’s idea and creation. God designed our human bodies for the physical union between a male and a female. Sexual desire is natural and normal and is part of God’s intelligent design, as the devil certainly did not design our bodies!

Augustinianism, in accordance with Gnosticism, believed that our flesh is sinful. More specifically, Augustinianism says that the physical passion or the “concupiscence” of the flesh is a curse of the original sin of Adam, that all physical passion in sex is sinful, that all are born sinful on account of being born out of that physical passion, and that all are born sinful because they involuntarily inherit physical passion. This theology says that God punished all of mankind, on account of Adam’s sin, with sin – the sin of sexual desire.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Finding the Reality of God, p. 85

<sup>88</sup> This is also a Lutheran theological view, as Luther learned much of his theology from studying the teachings of Augustine. Luther taught that concupiscence or the physical inclination or temptation to sin is sin itself. Lutheranism teaches that "original sin is concupiscence" or "the constant inclination of the nature" and, "the entire person with its entire nature is born in sin as with a hereditary disease." (Apology of the Augsburg Confession 2.38-41). Like Augustine, Lutherans view sin as a hereditary



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Augustine said, "Sensual lust belongs to the nature of brutes; but is a punishment in man."<sup>89</sup> He said sexual desire was "a disease—a wound inflicted on nature through the treacherous counsel given by the devil—a vice of nature—a deformity—an evil that comes from the depravity of our nature which is vitiated by sin."<sup>90</sup> He taught that no man was born sinless, because, "No man is now born without concupiscence."<sup>91</sup> He said that "all descending from his [Adam's] stock" are 'infected... with the occult disease of his carnal concupiscence,'<sup>92</sup> and that, "The guilt of concupiscence is forgiven through [infant] baptism."<sup>93</sup> On the other hand, Augustine taught that Christ alone was born sinless because Christ alone was born without sex and the desires involved, being born of a virgin.<sup>94</sup> He said, "the virgin conceived without that sensual passion; on which account, he [Jesus] alone was born without sin, when he condescended to be born in the flesh."<sup>95</sup>

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disease of nature instead of exclusively a crime or a personal choice of the will. A crime relates to law and choice and can be justly punished, but a hereditary disease is an unfortunate calamity and only an unreasonable and unjust person would blame and punish someone for inheriting a disease.

<sup>89</sup> Historical Presentation of Augustinianism and Pelagianism, Published by BRCCD, p. 110

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p. 110

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p. 110

<sup>92</sup> De. Pec. Mer. I.

<sup>93</sup> De Nupt. et Conc. I. 26

<sup>94</sup> Augustine's negative views on sex seems to stem from his extremely sensual life prior to conversion, his time in the Manichean sect, and his struggles with sexual desire after taking a vow of celibacy. Augustine had a son out of wedlock, named Adeodatus, with his concubine. Augustine even said that prostitution was necessary for society. "If you expel prostitution from society you will unsettle everything on account of lusts" (Richards, 118). Thomas Raush, Chair of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University said, "It's regrettable that St. Augustine's influence and the negative appraisal of sexuality, based on his own struggles to be chaste, has so impacted negatively with Christian tradition."

<sup>95</sup> De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia

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Augustine was rightly accused by Julian of Eclanum of teaching, “sexual impulse and the intercourse of married people were devised by the devil, and that therefore those who are born innocent are guilty, and that it is the work of the devil, not of God, that they are born of this diabolical intercourse. And this, without any ambiguity, is Manichaeism.”<sup>96</sup>

Albert Henry Newman said, “Augustine, the greatest of the Latin Fathers, was for many years connected with the Manichaeans and his modes of thought were greatly affected by this experience.”<sup>97</sup>

Harnack said, “We have, finally, in Augustine’s doctrine of sin a strong Manichaean and Gnostic element; for Augustine never wholly surmounted Manichaeism.”<sup>98</sup>

Dennis Carroll said, “Manichaeans also taught that sexual intercourse was satanic. Augustine taught that through sexual intercourse we pass on evil or sinfulness to our children. So I see these significant parallels between these two systems.”<sup>99</sup>

Harnack said, “The most remarkable feature in the sexual sphere was, in his [Augustine] view, the involuntariness of the impulse. But instead of inferring that it could not therefore be sinful – and this should have been the inference in keeping with the principle ‘omne peccatum ex voluntate’ – he rather concludes that there is a sin which belongs to nature, namely, to natural vitiate, and not to the sphere of the will. He accordingly perceives a sin rooted in nature, of course in the form which it has assumed, a sin that propagates itself with our nature. It would be easy now to prove that in thinking of inherited sin, he always has chiefly in view this very sin, the lust of procreation.”<sup>100</sup>

Harnack said, “...and Augustine imagined paradisiacal marriages in which children were begotten without lust, or, as Julian says jestingly, were to be shaken from the trees. All that he here maintains had been long ago held by Marcion and the Gnostics. One would have, in fact, to be a very rough being not to be able, and that

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<sup>96</sup> Letter to Rome.

<sup>97</sup> Manuel of Church History, Vol. I, p. 197

<sup>98</sup> History of Dogma, Vol V. Russel & Russel, New York, 1958, p. 102

<sup>99</sup> Interview for the film Beyond Augustine, produced by Inlight Productions

<sup>100</sup> History of Dogma, Vol V. Russel & Russel, New York, 1958, p. 197

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without Manichaeism, to sympathize with his feeling. But to yield to it as far as Augustine did, without rejecting marriage in consequence, could only happen at a time when doctrines were as confused as in the fifth century.”<sup>101</sup>

Alfred T. Overstreet said, “Augustine’s doctrine of sin, with his belief in the inherent sinfulness of the physical constitution, is wholly Manichaeic. His idea that sin is propagated through the marriage union, that sexual desire is sin and that sexual lust in procreation transmits sin is also Manichaeic. Augustine built his doctrine of original sin upon this premise – that sexual lust in procreation transmits sin.”<sup>102</sup>

Julian of Eclanum refuted this error of Gnosticism in Augustine’s theology by saying, “the sexual impulse—that is, that the virility itself, without which there can be no intercourse—is ordained by God.”<sup>103</sup>

While Adam and Eve realized that they were naked after they sinned and their eyes were opened (Gen. 3:7), this does not mean as Augustine thought, that they did not have any physical or sexual attraction one for another before they sinned. It simply means that in their former state ignorance, their nakedness did not have any moral connotations like it did now (Gen. 2:25). With their eyes opened, they had moral principles developed in their minds which were not previously there, thus they felt it necessary to cover their bodies, not because they did not previously have physical attractions or passions, but because they did not previously view these attractions and passions in any moral light.

Adam and Eve were physically designed for each other at their creation and were intended to multiply themselves through physical intercourse before they sinned (Gen. 1:22, 28). It is self-evident that God actually designed the bodies of men and women for each other. Physical attraction is by God’s design and is therefore not

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<sup>101</sup> History of Dogma, Vol V. Russel & Russel, New York, 1958, p. 212

<sup>102</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, p. 37

<sup>103</sup> Letter to Rome.

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sinful in and of itself. If a man and a woman commit themselves to each other through marriage, and engage in a normal sexual relationship with each other within that marriage, they are naturally and lawfully satisfying or fulfilling their God given desires. As the Bible says, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).

A person is not “born a sinner” because of sexual desire, as sexual desire does not develop until puberty. Sexual desire is not a sinful nature or a perverted desire that we are born with. Sexual desire is not a hereditary original sin. Natural attraction is a normal state of the flesh and is not itself sinful. But lust in the sinful sense is a state of the will. It is a sin to intentionally look at a woman, whom you are not married to, lustfully (Matt. 5:28). But there is no sin in marital sex or in the fleshly passions which are involved, so long as these desires are fulfilled lawfully and naturally. Sin is not the choice to gratify some type of sinful nature, but sin, like sexual immorality, is choosing to fulfill natural desires in an unnatural and unlawful way.

*God designed  
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physical union  
between a  
male and  
a female.*

Lust or concupiscence, in the sinful sense, is the deliberate desire to gratify a natural appetite in an unlawful way. The natural desire itself is not sinful, as it was given by God and is involuntary, but the deliberate desire to gratify it unlawfully is sin. When the Bible talks of concupiscence or lust, in the sinful sense, is not referencing mere desire but “desire for what is forbidden.”<sup>104</sup> This is what is meant when the Bible says, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5). And, “That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God” (1 Thes. 4:4-5). Notice that it classifies “evil concupiscence” and “the lust of concupiscence” and not mere desire itself. It is only evil or forbidden desire that is sinful. It is the desire of the will to gratify a desire of our nature through the means of sin

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<sup>104</sup> Thayer’s definition of “epithumia.”

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which is sinful, and not necessarily the desire of our nature itself which is sinful.

I once called into a Calvinist radio show that was promoting the hereditary sinfulness of babies. The topic of the show was original sin, total depravity, and sinful nature. I asked the host, “Is human nature sinful?” He said, “Yes.” I asked, “Is homosexuality a sin?” He said, “Yes.” I asked, “Is homosexuality human nature?” He said, “No!” I then asked, “How can there be a sin which is contrary to our sinful nature?” He was silent. He didn’t know how to answer that question. If human nature is sinful, and homosexuality is a sin, how can homosexuality be against human nature? A sin which is against a sinful nature? This doesn’t make any sense.

The truth is that when a person engages in any form of sexual immorality, such as fornication, homosexuality, sodomy, pedophilia, or bestiality, they are choosing contrary to God’s intention for his creation and contrary to the design of our constitution. These sins are against our nature because they are contrary to our design, even after the original sin of Adam. Adam’s sin did not make these perversions natural to us. Sexual perversions are not the “natural use” of the body (Rom. 1:26-27). They are a perversion of our design. Through these sins men are trying to satisfy or fulfill their God given sexual desires in an unnatural, unlawful, and selfish manner. The Bible speaks of the wicked as being forward or perverse (Prov. 2:14), which means that they are not natural. The sexual desires of our body, like other desires of our flesh, are capable of being perverted and corrupted so that we can develop unnatural desires by our own choice to abuse the natural desires we started off with.

*If human nature  
is sinful, and  
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is a sin,  
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homosexuality  
be against  
human nature?*

John Gill commented on Romans 1:26 which said “changed the natural use into that which is against nature” and he said they did this “by making use of such ways and methods with themselves, or other women, to gratify their lusts, which were never designed by nature for such a use.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> John Gill’s commentary on Romans 1:26

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

Pelagius said, “For their women changed their natural relations into relations which are against nature. Those who turned against God turned everything on its head: for those who forsook the author of nature also could not keep to the order of nature.”<sup>106</sup>

The Bible says that fornication is a sin against our body (1 Cor. 6:18), that homosexuality is against nature or against the natural use of the body (Rom. 1:26-27) and that sodomy is an abuse of our flesh (1 Cor. 6:9). Men are not fornicators or homosexuals by birth or by design. Men are sinners by choice. Our will is free to choose to gratify our flesh lawfully or unlawfully, naturally or unnaturally. The natural desires of our flesh become the occasions of sin.

While many sins are motivated by the desire to gratify the physical aspects of our constitution, other sins are motivated by a desire to gratify the mental aspects of our constitution. Sinners are “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind...” (Eph. 2:3). While the “lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes” have to do with the physical aspects of our constitution, the “pride of life” relates to the mental aspects of our constitution (1 Jn. 2:16). Sinners try to gratify themselves by pursuing physical and mental satisfaction. Eve was tempted to gratify her desire for food, which was a physical desire, and to gratify her desire for knowledge, which was a mental desire (Gen. 3:6).

While God wants us to be happy and satisfied, He has given natural and lawful means for this. The problem is when a person selfishly establishes their own happiness as the supreme pursuit of their life, when they ought to be benevolent and live supremely for the happiness of God and equally for the happiness of their neighbor (Lk. 10:27).

The fact that our nature or our body and mind is susceptible to temptation does not mean that we have a “sinful nature,” a “sinful flesh,” or a “sinful body.” We must distinguish between sin and temptation. The desires of the body and mind are the occasions of temptation (Jas. 1:14-15), but sin itself is a choice of the will (Jn. 5:14; 8:11; Rom. 6:12; 6:19; Eph. 4:26; 1 Jn. 3:4).

Charles Finney said, “...the appetites and passions tend so strongly to self-indulgence. These are temptations to sin, but sin itself consists not in these appetites and propensities, but in the voluntary

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<sup>106</sup> Pelagius’s commentary on Romans 1:26

## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

committal of the will to their indulgence. This committal of the will is selfishness.”<sup>107</sup>

An example of how sin is contrary to the design of our constitution, or how sin is an abuse and misuse of our body and mind, is the sin of drunkenness. Drunkenness is an unnatural state of body and mind. Sobriety is a natural state. Drunkenness is an “induced” state. Liquor and beer require an “acquired taste.” Our body naturally rejects alcohol when the body becomes inebriated or intoxicated. Our body rebels by reacting with vomiting and headaches. A hang-over shows that the sin of drunkenness is contrary to our nature or that it is contrary to our design. Alcohol destroys the liver. Drunkenness is contrary to the proper function of our flesh.

We have to corrupt our body to crave alcohol and drugs. Our bodies do not naturally have those enjoyments or cravings. It is through choice that we corrupt our flesh, degenerate our nature, or pervert our body to enjoy and crave drugs and alcohol. Even then alcohol still damages your kidneys and destroys your liver, further testifying of how unnatural it is to be a drunkard.

*It is through  
choice that we  
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flesh, degenerate  
our nature, or  
pervert our body  
to enjoy and  
crave drugs  
and alcohol.*

Another example of how sin is unnatural and contrary to the design of our body is smoking. The lungs of our body were made for oxygen, not smoke of any kind. Smoking is an unnatural abuse of our body. The body initially reacts with rejection of the smoke by coughing and the smoke causes headaches. But through the perseverance of the will, the desires of the body can become perverted and corrupt. Our flesh does not naturally enjoy inhaling smoke of any kind. An addiction to nicotine is developed and is unnatural. The body itself was not designed to be used or treated in this way. Smoking even causes lung cancer.

The choice to do wrong is a sin, but the unnatural desires of the flesh which are developed do not, in and of themselves, constitute sin. Drug babies for example cannot be considered “sinful” just because they inherit a flesh that has these unnatural cravings. A

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<sup>107</sup> Lectures on Systematic Theology, 1851 Edition, Published by BRCCD, p. 348

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

person is not a sinner because of the involuntary cravings and physical desires that they inherit, but because of the moral choices that they make. Sin or sinfulness does not consist in the states of the body or in the states of the sensibilities. All moral character consists in the states of the will. A drug addict could decide to no longer abuse mind altering substances and his flesh will go through withdrawals. If a person's body craves drugs, but he chooses not to gratify these cravings, then he is experiencing temptation but is not sinning.

Charles Finney said, "If these feelings are not suffered to influence the will... if such feelings are not cherished, and are not suffered to shake the integrity of the will; they are not sin. That is, the

*Sin or sinfulness does not consist in the states of the body or in the states of the sensibilities. All moral character consists in the states of the will.*

will does not give in to them, but the contrary. They are only temptations. If they are allowed to control the will, to break forth in words and actions, then there is sin; but the sin does not consist in the feelings, but in the consent of the will, to gratify them."<sup>108</sup>

Paris Reidhead said, "Now temptation is not sin. Temptation is the proposition presented to the mind that you can satisfy a good appetite in a forbidden way. Temptation leads to sin.... Sin is the decision of the will.... sin is the decision to gratify a good appetite in a bad way."<sup>109</sup>

Even Augustine at one time said, "Nobody can help what comes into his mind; but to consent or to dissent from involuntary suggestions, is the prerogative of our own will."<sup>110</sup> And he said, "Whatever may determine the will, if it cannot be resisted, is complied with without sin; but if one can resist it, let him not comply with it and it will not be sin."<sup>111</sup>

Winkie Pratney said, "Don't mistake temptation for sin.

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<sup>108</sup> Lectures on Systematic Theology, 1851 Edition, Published by BRCCD, p. 191

<sup>109</sup> Finding the Reality of God, pg 141-142

<sup>110</sup> Aug. De Litera Spiritu, cap. 34.

<sup>111</sup> An Historical Presentation of Augustinism And Pelagianism by G. F. Wiggers, p. 128-129



## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

Temptation is a suggestion to gratify a desire in an illegal way or amount. Temptation is not sin. Jesus was tempted.”<sup>112</sup>

### OUR FLESH IS NOT SINFUL

As stated earlier, there are those who object to the position that a sinful nature is not inherited by all mankind and say, “If we do not inherit a sinful nature, there certainly would be some who have chosen not to be sinners.” But say, does this sinful nature force us to sin or does it incline us toward sin? If the former, how can sinners be blameworthy for being sinners and the choice of sin be punishable? If the latter, the objection can equally fall on itself. For if our nature does not force us to sin but rather inclines us to sin then there might have been some who have chosen not to sin despite the inclination of their nature.

Furthermore, a nature that inclines toward sin is not sin itself and should not for that reason be properly called a “sinful nature,” as that confuses temptation with sin. The position maintained by this book is that, like Adam and Eve, we have a nature that is susceptible to temptation. The devil uses our nature as the means of our temptation, by suggesting to our minds to gratify our natural desires in unnatural and unlawful ways. However, if the position of a universal “inclination toward sin” is sufficient to answer for the universality of sin, then the position of our natural susceptibility to temptation would be equally sufficient to answer for the universality of sin. If the universality of sin can be accounted for by men freely obeying a “natural inclination toward sin,” then the same fact of the universality of sin can be accounted for by men freely obeying a “natural susceptibility of temptation to sin.”

*We cannot say that our flesh or body is “sinful” or that we have a “sinful nature” just because our flesh or nature is susceptible to temptation.*

The Apostle Paul said, “And my temptation which was in my flesh” (Gal. 4:14). Here Paul speaks of his flesh being an occasion for temptation. We cannot say that our flesh or body is “sinful” or that we have a “sinful nature” just because our flesh or nature is susceptible to

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<sup>112</sup> Youth Aflame, Bethany House, p. 83

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

temptation and capable of becoming perverted and corrupted. Temptation is not sin. It is not sinful to be tempted or else Jesus Christ was sinful. Jesus was “tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Therefore, temptation is not sin. If Jesus was “tempted like as we are” and we are tempted by the devil through the desires of our nature, then Jesus too was tempted by the devil through the desires of his nature. And if Jesus was “yet without sin,” despite his temptations through the desires of his nature, then the desires of our nature are not in and of themselves sin. Temptation is the suggestion of the devil to gratify a natural desire in an unnatural and unlawful way, and neither the temptation nor the natural desire itself is sin. The sin consists in the consent of the will to the temptation or the choice of the will to obey the suggestion of the devil.

The idea of our flesh being sinful overlooks the most basic or fundamental definition of sin. The Scriptures are explicit that sin is transgression of God’s law (1 Jn. 3:4). God’s law tells us what type of choices we should and shouldn’t make (Exo. 20:3-17). The moral law never states what type of body or nature we should or shouldn’t have or be born with. Therefore, our choices can be sinful but our body or a nature cannot be. And as the law says nothing regarding what type of desires our body should or shouldn’t be born with, the desires of our body that we are born with cannot be sin because their existence is not in violation of any of God’s commands.

*Choices  
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sinful, but  
a body or  
a nature  
cannot be.*

Our flesh is nothing more than dirt from the earth that God created (Gen. 2:7, Gen. 3:19). Clearly then, our flesh cannot be sinful. You cannot have sinful dirt. Dirt does not have any moral qualities in and of itself. Dirt is physical, not moral. Dirt does not violate any commandment at all. There is no commandment that says, “Thou shalt not be made out of dirt.” Such a command would not even be a proper command, because a command is supposed to be a requirement as to what type of choice you should and shouldn’t make. What you are made out of is not a choice that you are free to make. Therefore, you cannot be properly commanded to be made out of a certain substance, and consequently, your substance cannot be sinful because it is not a violation of any moral obligation.

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Our moral character cannot consist in our composition or in our body because we do not choose what type of body we have (Matt. 5:36; 6:27). Even if there was such a commandment that forbade being composed of a certain type of substance, our violation of that command would not be our fault but God's fault, since we did not create ourselves but it was God who made the dirt and then made us out of the dirt (Gen. 4:1; Ex. 4:11; Deut. 32:18; Isa. 27:11; 43:1; 43:7; 44:2; 44:24; 49:5; 64:8; Jer. 1:5; Ps. 26:10; 95:6; 127:3; 139:13-14, 16; Ecc. 7:29; 31:15; 35:10; Mal. 2:10; Lk. 11:40; Jn. 1:3; Rom. 9:20; Eph. 3:9; 4:6; Col. 1:16). So if our flesh is sinful, this sinfulness is not our fault but God's fault because God is the one who creates us with flesh. The Bible says, "Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about... thou hast made me as the clay... Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews" (Job 10:8-11).

God is the creator of our composition and constitution, and since God is holy and doesn't want us to be sinful, He certainly would not create us out of some type of sinful substance. Otherwise Job would be blaming God for his sinful condition by saying to Him, "Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together sinfully. Thou hast made me of sin. Thou hast clothed me with sinful substance and fenced me with an evil constitution." Job would be saying that men are sinful, not for choosing to break God's law, but for being created by God Himself!

To even apply the word "sinful" to an involuntary substance of our composition, or to our overall constitution itself, is to assign a moral quality to an involuntary state, which is an intrinsic contradiction. Moral qualities can only be predicated upon voluntary states of being or else such qualities cannot truly be considered moral. Moral qualities are not inherent in matter itself, so it is impossible to be created out of a sinful substance.

Some modern translations of the Bible, like the New International Version (NIV), will translate the word "flesh" and other such words into the phrase "sinful nature," thus applying moral qualities to our composition and constitution, which are involuntary on our part because they are not caused by our own will. But to

*Moral qualities  
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such qualities  
cannot truly be  
considered  
moral.*

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

translate the word “flesh” into “sinful nature” is a completely arbitrary translation, since the actual Greek word for sin and the Greek word for nature is not used in the original text at all in these passages. And out of all the possible meanings of the Greek word “sarx” which is used, the phrase “sinful nature” is not one of them.

The Greek word for "sinful" is “hamartolos” and the Greek word for "nature" is "phusis." If there is such a thing as a “sinful nature” you would expect to find “hamartolos phusis” in the Greek Scriptures. But these two Greek words are not found anywhere in the entire Bible next to each other or side by side in order to make the term "sinful nature." In fact, these two words cannot even be found in the same sentence anywhere in the Bible.

The single word "sarx" which means "flesh" is what is mistakenly and inconsistently translated as "sinful nature" by the NIV, but this is really an interpretation and not a translation. The term “sinful nature” is not a term found anywhere in the Greek New Testament at all and therefore we ought not to find it in our English translations. The Bible versions which translate words into “sinful nature” are practicing “eisegesis” not “exegesis”, which means that they are trying to fit their theology into the Bible, rather than deriving their theology from the Bible.

The fact that their translation is arbitrary is shown by the fact that they translate “sarx” or “flesh” into “sinful nature” all throughout their Bible version, but when the very same word in the Greek is used to describe Jesus Christ, they do not translate it as “sinful nature.” This is their happy inconsistency. If they were consistent in their interpretation, the Bible would state, “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the sinful nature [flesh] is not of God...” (1 Jn. 4:3). And also, “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the sinful nature [flesh]” (2 Jn. 1:7). “God was manifest in the sinful nature [flesh]” (1 Tim. 3:16). These verses are perfect reasons why the word flesh does not mean sinful nature and should never be translated as such.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> The entire notion of the flesh being sinful is nothing more than the ancient heresy of the Gnostics, which was brought into the church from Augustine when he joined the church out of that Gnostic sect Manicheanism. The Gnostics taught that the God of the Old Testament

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Flesh is not sinful in and of itself, but it can be used sinfully. It is sinful to selfishly live after the flesh (Rom. 8:13), or to be living to gratify our flesh (Rom. 8:7). But it is not sinful to simply have a flesh. The moral law of God does not forbid that we have flesh, but it does forbid selfishness. That is why it is sinful to live after the flesh, but not sinful to simply have flesh.

We know with absolute certainty that it is not sinful to have a flesh because Jesus Christ was sinless (2 Cor. 5:21) and yet He had a flesh (Lk. 24:39, Jn. 1:14, Rom. 1:3; 9:5; Heb. 2:14; 5:7; 1 Tim. 3:16, 1 Pet. 3:18; 4:1 1 Jn. 4:3, 2 Jn. 1:7). Jesus said, "...for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Lk. 24:39). "And the Word was made flesh" (Jn. 1:14). "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same..." Therefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:14, 17). "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). "In the body of his flesh" (Col. 1:22). "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh" (1 Pet. 4:1). "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:3). "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist" (2 Jn. 1:7). Notice that these verses not only say that Jesus Christ had a flesh, but that He "took part of the same" and "in all things" Christ was "made like unto his brethren."<sup>114</sup> Since Jesus Christ was sinless,

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was an evil being who created the material world out of sinful substance. They denied that Jesus came in the flesh but only appeared to have a body, because they viewed the flesh and all matter as itself sinful. Augustine modified this view and said that the desires of the flesh became sinful by the original sin of Adam and Christ avoided the inheritance of a sinful flesh because he was born of a virgin. Augustinianism is, therefore, semi-Gnosticism or modified Manicheanism. Augustine took heretical principles and tried to make them compatible with orthodox Christianity.

<sup>114</sup> Augustinians have taught that God created Adam with a good flesh but through original sin, that flesh became sinful. We inherit that sinful flesh from Adam, but Christ did not inherit the sinful flesh that we inherit. Instead, God created Christ with the same type of original flesh

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and yet He had the same type of human flesh that we have, we can logically conclude from this that our human flesh is not intrinsically evil or inherently sinful and our flesh is not a sinful nature.

Some have supposed that the virgin birth was necessary in order for Jesus to avoid the inheritance of a “sinful nature.” However, the Scriptures nowhere state that Jesus was born of a virgin to avoid the inheritance of some type of sinful substance. Rather, the Bible says that He was born of a virgin as a sign unto the people and because His Father was God. “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall

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call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). “And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Lk. 1:35).

Though Jesus was born of a virgin and His Father was God, Jesus did not have a different type of flesh from the rest of us. He had the same type of flesh that we have.

Jesus was not made physically perfect until the third day when He was raised with a glorified body (Lk. 13:32; Heb. 5:9). If Jesus was born with a glorified flesh, or if He did not take upon Himself a physically depraved flesh like we have, which was subjected to death, He could not have tasted death for every man; and therefore, could not have made atonement at all. It was necessary for Christ to be made with the same type of physically depraved body that we have, so that He could be capable of physical death.

The Bible says, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man... For as much as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same: that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.... For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he

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that Adam first had. However, these verses clearly say that Christ not only had a flesh, but that He was made in all things liken unto us.

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took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren..." (Heb. 2:9, 14, 16-17).

Consider the syllogisms which can be drawn from this text:

*Major premise:* Jesus was made in all things like us.

*Minor premise:* Jesus was not made sinful.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, we are not made sinful.

*Major premise:* Jesus was made a partaker of flesh and blood.

*Minor premise:* Jesus was entirely sinless.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, flesh and blood are not sinful.

*Major premise:* Jesus had the same type of flesh that we have.

*Minor premise:* Jesus was not sinful in anyway.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, our flesh is not sinful.

If Jesus was made "in all things" like we are made, we can conclude that he "took part of" the same type of physical substance that we took part of. In this way Jesus was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3), which doesn't mean that physical flesh is sinful, but means that Jesus was "made in the likeness of men" (Php. 2:7) and "in fashion as a man" (Php. 2:8). The word "flesh" is sometimes used synonymous with men (Gen. 6:12; Matt. 16:17; Gal. 1:16), so to say Jesus was made in the likeness of sinful flesh is the same as saying that Jesus was made in the likeness or similitude of sinful men.

Jesus was made in the likeness or form of men, in that he had the same human nature and flesh that we all have, but unlike all other men, he never chose to sin. The Bible tells us that Jesus was morally perfect (2 Cor. 5:21), even before He had a glorified, resurrected, or perfect body. He was morally perfect even while he had a physically imperfect body which was subjected to death (Lk. 13:32; Heb. 2:14). That is because sin is not a substance or state of the body, but is a choice of the will.

We are told that Elijah was a "righteous man" even while he "was a man subject to like passions as we are" (James 5:16-17). This shows that moral character does not consist in the passions and appetites of your body or constitution, but in the state of your will.

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When the Bible speaks of a “vile body” being changed into a “glorious body” (Php. 3:21), this does not mean that our body goes from a sinful state to a sinless state. Rather, the Bible speaks of the “corruptible” being changed to become “incorruptible”, which is when the “mortal” puts on “immortality” (1 Cor. 15:52-53). Our body which is physically corrupt, dishonorable, weak, and natural, will be raised incorruptible, honorable, powerful, and supernatural (1 Cor. 15:42-44). We know that these terms like corruptible does not refer to a sinful state, but a mortal or temporal state, because of how Paul uses

*You can have a  
pure and perfect  
heart or be  
morally perfect  
in this life even  
while you have a  
fallen and  
corrupted body  
or are physically  
imperfect.*

the same word in the same epistle to describe earthly crowns (1 Cor. 9:25). Paul said “our outward man perish” (2 Cor. 4:16). Our time in this “tabernacle” is temporary (2 Cor. 5:1, 4; 2 Pet. 1:13).<sup>115</sup> Our body is “vile” in that it is corruptible or subjected to disease, decay, and death. The word “vile” means of “low estate”<sup>116</sup> and is translated as “low” and “humiliation” in other verses (Lk. 1:48; Jas. 1:10; Acts 8:33). Our bodies are not therefore “vile” in the sense of being sinful themselves.

The command to “put away evil” (Deut. 13:5; 17:7, 12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21; 22:22, 24; 24:7; Jdg. 20:13; Ecc. 11:10; Isa. 1:16), implies that evil is a choice of our will and not a substance of our nature. The command to “cease to do evil” (Isa. 1:16), and to “sin no more” (Jn. 8:11), implies that all sin is volitional. It implies that sin is not some involuntary substance dwelling inside of you which you cannot get rid of. And therefore, you don’t need a new body or a new substance in order to be free from sin. The idea that you cannot live free from sin until you get a glorified body presupposes a Gnostic moral philosophy.

Scripturally, you can have a pure and perfect heart or be morally perfect in this life even while you have a fallen and corrupted body or are physically imperfect. This is evident since the Bible

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<sup>115</sup> Strong’s defines “skēnos” which is translated as “tabernacle” as a “temporary residence.”

<sup>116</sup> Thayer’s definition of “tapeinōsis.”



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described certain men as being perfect in heart in this life, even while existing in their corrupted, depraved, or fallen flesh (1 Kin. 6:61; 11:4; 15:3; 15:14; 20:3; 1 Chron. 12:38; 28:9; 29:9; 29:19; 15:17; 16:9; 19:9; 25:2; Job 1:1, 8; Ps. 102:1; Isa. 38:3). “And the Lord said unto Satan, hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? (Job 1:8). “Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight” (Isa. 38:3). Notice that these are examples of holy men that existed after Adam and before Christ.

Clearly, you can be morally perfect, or completely obedient to God in heart, even while you’re physically depraved. Your heart can be right with God, in obeying all the moral knowledge that you have, even while your body does not sustain perfect health. Though your flesh is corrupt, your moral character does not have to be. Your will can obey all the moral knowledge of your mind, thus creating a perfect moral character, even while your body or flesh is fallen and depraved, or even while you are physically imperfect.

Someone might ask, “If God gives us our flesh, how can you say that our flesh is corrupted?” Our flesh, while not sinful, is corrupted. It is depraved because it is being deprived of the fruit of the tree of life, which contained an ingredient that would sustain the perfect health of the body. The body was designed and constituted so that its life and health depended upon the consumption of food, and without the fruit of the tree of life we cannot have the perfect health of our bodies or sustain its life forever. And since God removed that fruit from us (Gen. 3:22-23), it is God who corrupted or depraved our flesh as a consequence of Adam’s sin and He had good and benevolent reasons for doing so, as He wanted to put a restraint upon the sin of man. But this deprivation of the body is physical depravity, not moral depravity.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> The human body is truly remarkable. The design and function of the body is not comparable to anything else in creation. Its intricate design is genius. From its immune system to skeleton structure, that an intelligent mind engineered our body is evident. God created our body good (Gen. 1:31), and though He has subjected our physical frame to temporal existence, it is still very good in many ways. “I will praise thee; for I am

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The distinction between the moral and the physical must be kept in our minds. We must differentiate between moral depravity (Rom. 3:23), and physical depravity (1 Cor. 15:22-23). And we must distinguish between moral perfection (1 Kin. 8:61; Php. 3:15), and physical perfection (Lk. 13:32; 1 Cor. 15:42; Php. 3:11-12).

For example, Paul said, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52). Paul was not saying that our moral character would be changed, but that our body would be changed. He said, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that it is written, death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:53-54). Paul was not talking about being made morally perfect, but physically perfect. He was not saying that we become morally incorruptible, as if we lose our free will in Heaven, but that we become physically incorruptible, since we lose our fallen body in the resurrection. The bodies that we have which are subjected to death will be taken away, so that death is swallowed up and gone. It is mortality that is taken away, not moral choice.

Another example of the distinction between physical and moral perfection is when Paul said, "...not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" (Php. 3:12). When Paul said he had not yet attained perfection, he was talking about being free from physical corruption and attaining physical perfection. This is obvious since he said in the verse right before, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Php. 3:11). The context of verse eleven gives clarity to the meaning of verse twelve. Paul was saying that he had not yet attained physical perfection because he had not yet attained a glorified body, as that occurs in the resurrection.

Paul was not saying that he was sinful and had not yet been made free from sin, as Calvinists teach, since Paul already said that Christians have been made "free from sin" (Rom. 6:18, 22), and that he had a "conscience void of offense" (Acts 24:16; see also Acts 23:1; 2 Tim. 1:3). Paul was certainly not saying that moral perfection

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fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works..." (Ps. 139:14).

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is unattainable in this life, as many misunderstand him to be saying, since only two verses down he said, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" (Php. 3:15).

Clearly, Paul was writing about two different types of perfection. One type of perfection Paul said he had attained and one type of perfection which he said he had not yet attained. Paul was making a clear distinction between physical perfection and moral perfection and stated that the former is only attainable in the next life while the latter is attainable in this life. Moral perfection is attainable in this life while we are still in our flesh, since our flesh is not sinful in and of itself, and our flesh does not necessitate our choices, but we are free to live after it or to deny it (Matt. 16:24; Rom. 8:13; 1 Cor. 9:27).

Jesus Christ made a distinction between moral perfection and physical perfection when He said, "and the third day I shall be perfected" (Lk. 13:32). Jesus Christ was morally perfect or sinless His entire life because he "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21), but He was not born or created physically perfect. He had the same depraved flesh that we have. Jesus lived a sinless life without a glorified flesh, while he inhabited a corrupted flesh! He was born with a physically depraved body that was subjected to suffering and death and it was not until He was resurrected on the third day that He received a glorified body; and therefore, became physically perfect.

The physical and the moral must always be properly distinguished or differentiated between, because what is physical relates to the flesh, but what is moral relates to the will. The former relates to the quality of our substance, while the latter relates to the quality of our heart or motive. Moral states cannot be inherited but what is physical is hereditary. As Jesus taught, "that which is born of flesh is flesh" (Jn. 3:6). Diseases and death is physical and has to do with our flesh, but sin is moral and has to do with our will. That is why diseases and death can be transmitted and propagated through semen or sperm, but sin cannot be transmitted or propagated through natural reproduction.

Julian of Eclanum said, "...death passed to us by Adam, not sins."<sup>118</sup> And he said, "...all sin descends not from nature, but from

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<sup>118</sup> Letter To Rufus Of Thessalonica

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the will.”<sup>119</sup> Alfred T. Overstreet said, “...sin is not a substance. It has absolutely no material or physical properties. Sin is an act, and so it is impossible for it to be passed on physically... A child has no moral character at birth...”<sup>120</sup>

Moral character cannot be inherited or transmitted for the same reason that moral character cannot be borrowed or lent out. You cannot inherit the moral character of another person anymore than you can lend your moral character to somebody else. Moral character is not transferable. Moral character is not a “thing” that has any material existence. Moral character is not physical. It cannot get wet or be hung out to dry. Moral character is immaterial. It is moral, not physical. A person is either sinful or holy based upon their personal choice and individual intention of their heart, not based upon the quality of their composition or the state of their constitution. Therefore, moral character cannot be bought and sold or be transmitted, transferred, or inherited from one person to another.

While we do inherit physical depravity, or a body of flesh that is subjected to death (Gen. 3:22; 1 Cor. 15:22), we do not inherit moral depravity (Eze. 18:19-22). Moral depravity is our own fault. Moral depravity is a state of sinfulness and sin is a personal choice of the will. Moral character is not hereditary through our nature but is originated through our will. Righteous parents do not give birth to righteous children and sinful parents do not give birth to sinful children. A righteous moral character, or a sinful moral character, requires personal choice. A man is the author of his own character. Moral character cannot be “transmitted through natural generation” or inherited by posterity.

Babies are not born righteous, as the Bible says “he that doeth righteousness is righteous” (1 Jn.3:7). Since babies have not yet done anything righteous, they consequently are not righteous. There is no passive righteousness, or righteousness of being apart from active choice. The same moral principle applies to sin (Rom. 9:11). Babies are born neither righteous nor sinful, but are born morally innocent which is the only way they possibly can be born. There can be no moral character apart from free choice, so to be born or created

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<sup>119</sup> Letter To Rufus Of Thessalonica

<sup>120</sup> Are Men Born Sinners? Evangel Books Publishing Company, p.17

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with a moral character is a natural impossibility. Therefore, infants are not born righteous or sinful but are born morally innocent.

The Bible repeatedly describes infants as being “innocent” (2 Kng. 21:16; 24:4; Jer. 13:26-27; Ps. 106:37-38; Matt. 18:3). For example, when Israel would sacrifice their babies to false gods, God said that they were shedding “innocent blood.” Evidently, God views infants as morally innocent. If words have any real meaning or definition, or if the inspired writer meant what he wrote, God was literally calling infants “blameless,” “clean,” and “guiltless,” when He said that they were “innocent.”<sup>121</sup> That is what the Hebrew word literally means.

*Infants are  
not born  
righteous or  
sinful but  
are morally  
innocent.*

Infants are innocent because they are not yet sinful or guilty. You cannot be sinful before you commit sin or be guilty before you commit a crime. Infants don’t yet have any moral character at all because they haven’t yet “done anything” morally “good or evil” (Rom. 9:11). Moral knowledge plus moral choices equals moral character. Those who are not yet moral agents cannot possibly have moral character. To apply the words “sinful” or “sinner” to those who don’t even know right from wrong, and who haven’t yet made any moral choices, is to empty these words of any meaning at all. No one can be “sinful” or a “sinner” if they don’t even know what sin is and if they haven’t yet committed any sins.

Consider these truths in logical syllogisms:

*Major premise:* Moral character is determined by moral choices.

*Minor premise:* Infants have not yet made any moral choices.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, infants cannot have a righteous or sinful moral character.

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<sup>121</sup> Strong’s definition of “nâqîy nâqîy’.”

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*Major premise:* Without possessing moral knowledge, a person cannot possess any moral character, either good or evil.

*Minor premise:* Infants are without moral knowledge.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, infants cannot have moral character, either good or evil.

*Major premise:* Without moral knowledge and without moral choices, a person cannot yet be guilty of doing anything wrong but are necessarily innocent.

*Minor premise:* Infants are without moral knowledge and without moral choices.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, infants are not guilty of anything wrong but are necessarily morally innocent.

These biblical truths are at an antithesis to the teaching of John Calvin who said, “we all sinned before we were born...”<sup>122</sup> He also said, “Even before we see the light of day, we are in God’s sight impure and sinful...”<sup>123</sup> And he said, “infants themselves, as they bring their condemnation into the world with them, are rendered obnoxious to punishment by their own sinfulness...”<sup>124</sup>

Calvin held to the notion that mankind all sinned in Adam. He taught that we participated in Adam’s original sin by existing in his loins and that we are therefore personally sinful, guilty, and hell deserving before we are born and before we do anything sinful in our own individual lives.<sup>125</sup> The philosophical idea is that our souls

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<sup>122</sup> Essay’s, Lectures, Etc, Upon Select Topics in Revealed Theology, Published by Clark, Austin & Smith, 1859 Edition, p. 172

<sup>123</sup> Essay’s, Lectures, Etc, Upon Select Topics in Revealed Theology, Published by Clark, Austin & Smith, 1859 Edition, p. 172

<sup>124</sup> Institutes of the Christian Religion, translated by John Allen, Published by Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1844 Edition, p. 229

<sup>125</sup> John Calvin and even modern Calvinists like John Piper have taught in some cases infant salvation. However, this necessarily implies infant damnation, as only the damned are in need of salvation. If infants are sinners, they deserve the eternal wrath of God. They teach that infants are born damned for what Adam did, yet if they die in infancy, somehow they are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. Infant salvation is a

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literally existed and acted in Adam's loins. Calvin learned much of his theology from Augustine and Augustine taught that the soul was hereditary or inherited from your parents instead of created at conception as the Pelagians affirmed. Therefore, Augustinianism taught that we existed and acted in our ancestors and we are therefore responsible and accountable for their actions. We were created the same day Adam was and literally lived and sinned in Eden.

Jonathon Edwards was a Calvinist familiar with both the writings of John Calvin and Augustine. Jonathon Edwards said, "God in every step of his proceeding with Adam, looked on his posterity as being one with him. This will naturally follow on the supposition of there being a constituted oneness or identity of Adam and his posterity in the affair."<sup>126</sup>

Jonathon Edwards also said "The sin of the apostasy is not theirs merely because God imputes it to them, but it is truly and properly theirs, and on that ground God imputes it to them."<sup>127</sup>

Albert Barnes comments, "Edwards is supposed, therefore, to have held the notion that there was a constituted identity between Adam and us; in such a way that we are held answerable for the original guilt as being ours; that it was not made ours by imputation, but being ours by the identity; or being properly ours, in the same sense as the guilt of A. B. in childhood, is the guilt of A. B. in manhood, it is justly chargeable on us; and this is what is meant by imputation. This is believed to have been the original structure of Calvinism—this the doctrine of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith."<sup>128</sup>

The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself but for his posterity, all

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contradiction in their system, as it denies justification by faith as the only hope for sinners in this life. Infants cannot have faith in the gospel as they have no knowledge of the gospel. Therefore, to teach infant salvation, in their system, is to deny a key pillar of their system - "sola fide."

<sup>126</sup> Original Sin, part iv. ch. iii.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> A Defense of New England Theology, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 43

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mankind descending from him by ordinary generation sinned in him, and fell with him in the first transgression.”<sup>129</sup>

Albert Barnes said, “It is difficult to affix any clear and definite meaning to the expression, ‘We sinned in him, and fell with him.’ It is manifest, so far as it is capable of interpretation, that it is intended to convey the idea, not that the sin of Adam is imputed to us, or set over to our account; but that there was a personal identity constituted between Adam and his posterity, so that it was really our act, and ours only, after all, that was chargeable to us. This was the idea of Edwards. The notion of imputing sin is an invention of modern times.”<sup>130</sup>

This theology of Calvinism, of existing and acting in your ancestors, goes back to Augustine. The problem was that Augustine did not read Greek<sup>131</sup> but read a Latin version of the New Testament translated by Jerome, who mistranslated Romans 5:12. The KJV properly translates this verse as, “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” (Rom. 5:12). Many other English translations also properly translate this as “because all have sinned.” However, Augustine read Jerome’s Latin mistranslation which, instead of saying “*for that* all have sinned,” said, “*in whom* all sinned.” However, in the Greek “epi ho” never means “in whom.” This philosophical error was not corrected in the church for 1200 years, as the Latin Vulgate reigned supreme in Europe. It wasn’t until Erasmus that “epi ho” was properly translated to be “on who all have sinned” which is the proper idiomatic meaning. “Epi” means “on”<sup>132</sup> or “upon”<sup>133</sup> and “ho” means “who,”<sup>134</sup> so “epi ho” properly means “on who.” So Paul was saying in Romans 5:12 that death came into the world through Adam and it passed upon all men who have sinned. Augustine’s supposed scriptural support for mankind existing and

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<sup>129</sup> Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q/A 16

<sup>130</sup> A Defense of New England Theology, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 40

<sup>131</sup> As stated earlier in this book, Augustine did not know Greek as his theological opponent Pelagius did.

<sup>132</sup> Thayer’s definition of “epi” as found in Romans. 5:12.

<sup>133</sup> Strong’s definition of “epi” as found in Romans 5:12.

<sup>134</sup> Thayer’s definition of “ho” as found in Romans 5:12.



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sinning in Adam was therefore greatly mistaken. How sad that such a major doctrine in his theological system, which has caused so much division in the church, was based upon a mistranslation.

Paul clearly did not teach in Romans 5 that the sin of Adam was the sin of us all, or that we all sinned with Adam, as he stated that “by one man sin entered into the world” (Rom. 5:12). That is a numeric one, which would make no sense at all if all of mankind existed and acted in that sin. Paul referred to the original sin of Adam as “one man’s offense” (Rom. 5:17), “the offense of one” (Rom. 5:18), and “one man’s disobedience” (Rom. 5:19), not the offense of everyone or all mankind.

*If we sinned  
when Adam  
sinned, then  
we obeyed  
when Noah  
obeyed.*

This particular moral philosophy of Seminal Identity or of existing and sinning in Adam would make us guilty, not just of Adam’s sin, but guilty of all the sins of all our ancestors since we descend from all of their loins or existed seminally in them all. It would also mean that we participated in the righteousness of Noah and are under God’s favor on account of that, since we all descend from Noah and were supposedly in his loins when he obeyed God. If we sinned when Adam sinned, then we obeyed when Noah obeyed. If we share in the damnation of Adam because we existed in his loins, logically we would share in the salvation of Noah because we existed in his loins as well.

Henry C. Sheldon said, “On the realistic hypothesis an individual of the present was indeed really in Adam; but just as really he was in his immediate progenitor, as also in the whole direct line of his ancestors. How come it then that he shared only in the guilt of an act committed by the remotest ancestor? If real existence in Adam explains his responsible share in the first trespass, then real existence in all the intermediate ancestors necessitates a responsible share in their trespasses... if Adam repented and was forgiven – as very likely was the case – the race preexisting in him is not to be viewed as having shared in these experiences, so as no longer to bear the guilt of the first trespass.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> System of Christian Doctrine, Jennings & Graham, Cincinnati, 1912, pp. 311-321

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Moses Stuart said, “If Adam and his posterity are indeed all one, then all their sins are just as much his, as his is theirs, and his penitence is as much theirs, as his offences.”<sup>136</sup>

To further support the idea that we literally existed in Adam and therefore participated in the actions of all of our ancestors, Traducianists<sup>137</sup> have also use this passage: “For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man *was*, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he *receiveth them*, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.” (Heb. 7:1-10).

Augustinians and Calvinists, who believe in Traducianism or the hereditariness of the soul, use this passage to say that since the Levites “come out of the loins of Abraham,” that they therefore literally existed in him, and therefore actually “payed tithes in Abraham.” They apply this logic to Adam and say that since we came out of the loins of Adam, we therefore sinned in him. That is, that our souls existed in Adam and therefore when he acted we acted too. Adam’s sin is, therefore, our own personal sin.

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<sup>136</sup> Commentary on Romans, W.F. Draper, Andover, 1868, pp. 195-197

<sup>137</sup> Those who believe in the doctrine of traducianism, the theological belief that souls are hereditary instead of created at conception.

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The Westminster Catechism said, “We sinned in him, and fell with him.”<sup>138</sup> Thomas Boston said, “Adam’s sin is imputed to us because it is ours. For God doth not reckon a thing to be ours, which is not so; for God’s justice doth not punish men for a sin which is in no way theirs.”<sup>139</sup> The New England Primer said, “In Adam’s fall, we sinned all.”<sup>140</sup> William Newell said that we “all acted when Adam acted.”<sup>141</sup>

However, Paul was not teaching in Hebrews that your soul literally existed in the loins of all your ancestors and is therefore guilty of their sins. This would be a blatant contradiction in Scripture, as the Lord has said, “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: 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.” (Eze. 18:4, 20).

*If the Levites  
literally paid  
tithes in  
Abraham,  
Jacob and Esau  
also literally  
obeyed God in  
Abraham.*

Paul certainly could not have written about Jacob and Esau, “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil” (Rom. 9:11), if in fact they both did evil in Adam and worked righteousness in Noah. Paul would have contradicted himself in Romans if he meant in Hebrews that we existed and acted in our ancestors.

Jacob and Esau were the grandchildren of Abraham. How could Paul say that they had not “done any good or evil” if they existed and acted in Abraham? If the Levites literally paid tithes in Abraham, Jacob and Esau also literally obeyed God in Abraham. And if Paul literally meant that the Levites paid tithes in Abraham, then it would stand to reason that the Levites also obeyed God in Abraham. Paul wrote in the same book, “By faith Abraham... obeyed” (Heb. 11:8). If Paul meant that the Levites literally existed and acted in Abraham, and therefore mankind literally existed and

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<sup>138</sup> The Westminster Catechism

<sup>139</sup> Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 16

<sup>140</sup> The New England Primer, 1777 Edition.

<sup>141</sup> William Newell’s Commentary on Romans 5.

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acted in Adam and shared in his condemnation, then Paul also would be saying that the Levites, all of the tribes of Israel, Ishmael and his descendants, and Esau and the Edomites existed in Abraham and shared in his justification.

Alfred T. Overstreet said, “Yet according to the theory under question, all of Abraham’s descendants should have been justified by his faith, for they were all yet in his loins when he believed God and was justified.”<sup>142</sup>

Paul said Abraham was justified by faith (Rom. 4:3). That would mean that the offspring of Abraham were not born condemned for sinning in Adam but were born justified by having obedient faith in Abraham. The Israelites and his other descendants would not need to be born again because they were the “children of Abraham,” and this would be a total contradiction of Scripture (Matt. 3:9; Jn. 3:3). If there is no personal separation of identity and character between ancestors and descendants, but all existed and acted together at one time, these are some very serious problems and contradictions. Traducianism is an unreasonable and unscriptural theology that brings confusion and contradiction to biblical doctrine.

Paul’s reference to Levites who “come out of the loins of Abraham” is not teaching the preexistence of our souls in the loins of our ancestors, nor is he contradicting the doctrine that souls are created and new at conception. Rather, the reference to “loins” refers to the semen of Abraham. Loins in the Greek is defined as, “the place where the Hebrews thought the generative power (semen) resided.”<sup>143</sup> The Levites came out of the loins of Abraham, not because their souls existed in Abraham’s loins, but because the semen from which they were conceived came out of his loins. Certainly, Paul was not teaching that we are guilty of the sins of our ancestors, or participated in their righteous acts, simply because we come from their seminal fluid as their sperm!

The objective of Paul was not to teach that we existed and acted in our ancestors, but was rather to illustrate the greatness of the King of Salem, Melchisedec. If the Levites are descendants of Abraham, and tithes are paid to the Levites, yet Abraham paid tithes

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<sup>142</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, p.74-75

<sup>143</sup> Thayer’s definition of “osphus” as used in Heb. 7:5.

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to Malchisedec, then Malchisedec must be great indeed. The priesthood of Malchisedec must be greater than the Levitical priesthood. That and nothing more was Paul's intention and point. Paul was using hyperbole to illustrate his point, which is evidenced by the fact that before he said "Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham," he first said, "And as I may so say." This phrase, "as I may so say" is an important disclaimer to qualify his next statement as a figure of speech.

Regarding this phrase, "as I may so say," Moses Stuart said, "It is a 'softening down' of an expression which a writer supposes his readers may deem too strong, or which may have the appearance of excess or severity. It amounts to an indirect apology for employing an unusual or unexpected assertion or phrase."<sup>144</sup>

Adam Clarke said, "And as I may so say - And so to speak a word. This form of speech, which is very frequent among the purest Greek writers, is generally used to soften some harsh expression, or to limit the meaning when the proposition might otherwise appear to be too general. It answers fully to our so to speak - as one would say - I had almost said - in a certain sense. Many examples of its use by Aristotle, Philo, Lucian, Josephus, Demosthenes, Aeschines, and Plutarch, may be seen in Raphelius and Kypke."<sup>145</sup>

Albert Barnes said, "And as I may so say - So to speak - For numerous examples in the classic writers of this expression, see Wetstein in loc. It is used precisely as it is with us when we say 'so to speak,' or 'if I may be allowed the expression.' It is employed when what is said is not strictly and literally true, but when it amounts to the same thing, or when about the same idea is conveyed. . . Here Paul could not mean that Levi had actually paid tithes in Abraham - for he had not then an existence; or that Abraham was his representative - for there had been no appointment of Abraham to act in that capacity by Levi; or that the act of Abraham was imputed or reckoned to Levi, for that was not true, and would not have been pertinent to the case if it were so. But it means, that in the circumstances of the case, the same thing occurred in regard to the superiority of Melchizedek, and the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood, as if Levi had been present with Abraham, and had himself actually paid tithes on that occasion.

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<sup>144</sup> Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 1834 Edition, P. 396

<sup>145</sup> Adam Clarke's commentary on Hebrews 7:9.

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This was so because Abraham was the distinguished ancestor of Levi, and when an ancestor has done an act implying inferiority of rank to another, we feel as if the whole family or all the descendants, by that act recognized the inferiority, unless something occurs to change the relative rank of the persons. Here nothing indicating any such change had occurred. Melchizedek had no descendants of which mention is made, and the act of Abraham, as the head of the Hebrew race, stood therefore as if it were the act of all who descended from him.”<sup>146</sup>

*There is no genuine support from the Scriptures that we sinned in Adam and are therefore born already sinful, guilty, and damned.*

We can see then that there is no exegetical scriptural support for the idea of literally existing and acting in your ancestors. Consequently, there is no genuine support from the Scriptures that we sinned in Adam and are therefore born already sinful, guilty, and damned.

Asa Mahan said, “The first that I notice is the position, that creatures are now held responsible, even as ‘deserving God’s wrath and curse, not only in this life, but in that which is to come,’ not merely for their own voluntary acts of disobedience, nor for their involuntary exercises, but for the act of a progenitor, performed when they had no existence. If God holds creatures responsible for such an act, we may safely affirm that it is absolutely impossible for them to conceive of the justice of such a principle; and that God has so constituted them, as to render it impossible for them to form such a conception. Can a being who is not a moral agent sin? Is not existence necessary to moral agency? How then can creatures ‘sin in and through another’ six thousand years before their own existence commenced? We cannot conceive of creatures as guilty for the involuntary and necessary exercises of their own minds. How can we conceive of them as guilty for the act of another being,—an act of which they had, and could have, no knowledge, choice, or agency whatever? How can intelligent beings hold such a dogma, and hold it as a revelation from Him who has declared with an oath, that the ‘son shall not bear the

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<sup>146</sup> Albert Barnes’s commentary on Hebrews 7:9.

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iniquity of the father,' but that 'every man shall die for his own sins?'<sup>147</sup>

Since there is no genuine scriptural support for the theory of existing and sinning in your ancestors, many modern Calvinists have rejected the theory of Seminal Identity but have replaced it with the doctrine of Federal Headship, which is the idea that Adam acted as our representative and therefore his sin and guilt are imputed to us. However, this too would be contrary to the explicit justice of God as stated in the Bible (Deut. 24:16, 2 Kng. 14:6, 2 Chron. 25:4, Eze. 18:2-4, Eze. 18:19-20, Jer. 17:10; 31:29-30; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:5-6; 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 11:15; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:11-12; Rev. 22:12). And Paul certainly was not teaching in Romans five that Adam was our representative and acted for us, so that Adam's sin is imputed to all mankind, as the Apostle wrote in that chapter, "sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 5:13).

Henry C. Sheldon said, "The theory of immediate imputation supposes Adam to have stood by divine appointment as the federal head of the race, their representative, so that his act was to be viewed not merely as his own but as the act of the race. The representative sinned; and therefore the race in its entirety was counted guilty. What is this but the apotheosis of legal artifice? The same God whose penetrating glance burns away every artifice, with which a man may enwrap himself, and reaches at once to the naked reality, is represented as swathing His judgment with a gigantic artifice, in that He holds countless millions guilty of a trespass which He knows was committed before their personal existence, and which they could no more prevent than they could hinder the fiat of creation. If this is justice, then justice is a word of unknown meaning."<sup>148</sup>

The whole notion of being guilty and liable to punishment for a sin that occurred without your knowledge and without your consent, by a representative who represented you without your knowledge and without your consent, is both nonsense and injustice. This moral philosophy stands in sharp contrast with the reason and natural sense of justice which God has given us. It is absolutely impossible to be guilty of sin without first committing sin, and sin

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<sup>147</sup> Doctrine of the Will, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 97.

<sup>148</sup> System of Christian Doctrine, Jennings & Graham, Cincinnati, 1912, pp. 311-321

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requires moral knowledge and personal choice. Therefore it is absolutely impossible to sin before you are born. It is impossible under the justice of God's moral government to be born condemned because condemnation requires personal sin and personal sin requires moral knowledge and personal choice.

When the Bible says "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23; 5:12), this statement is not without qualification. This description is obviously limited to those who are capable of sinning or who are moral agents. It is self-evident that those who are not capable of sinning cannot be included in "all have sinned." Those who don't yet

*Under the moral government of God, moral accountability is according to the moral knowledge that a moral being possesses.*

exist, those who don't know right from wrong yet, and those who haven't yet made any moral choices, are outside of the qualifying boundaries of the description of the "all" that have "sinned."

The "all" that have "sinned" are those who have reached the age of accountability. The Bible explicitly says that infants in the womb haven't yet sinned (Rom. 9:11). But the Bible says man's heart is evil from their youth (Gen. 8:21; Jer. 22:21; 32:30). It doesn't say that men are evil before they are born or before the age of accountability. The Hebrew word "youth" means "young people," "childhood," "juvenility,"<sup>149</sup> and "early life."<sup>150</sup> So when it says men are evil from their youth, it does not mean evil from their birth but evil from a young age, particularly the age of accountability, which is a state when moral principle is developed in the mind.

Under the moral government of God, moral accountability is according to the moral knowledge that a moral being possesses. Jesus taught this just principle of God's divine administration when He said, "Very I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment, than for that city" (Matt. 10:15). Sodom and Gomorrah never heard the gospel, so they

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<sup>149</sup> Strong's definition of "nâ'ûr nâ'ûr n<sup>e</sup>ûrâh."

<sup>150</sup> Brown Driver Briggs definition of "nâ'ûr nâ'ûr n<sup>e</sup>ûrâh."



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will receive less punishment than those cities which have heard the gospel and have rejected it. Since Sodom and Gomorrah never heard the gospel, they are not going to be accountable to the truth of the gospel. However, those who have heard the gospel are obligated to obey it. Each person's obligation and accountability is proportionate to each person's knowledge. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Lk. 12:48). Much is required from those who have much, and little is required from those who have little. Just as moral obligation and accountability is proportionate to moral ability, moral obligation and accountability is proportionate to moral knowledge. However small or great your moral knowledge is, that is precisely how small or great your moral obligation is, no more and no less.

Consider these logical and scriptural syllogisms:

*Major premise:* The reason that men are "without excuse" for their actions is because they have moral knowledge (Rom. 1:20).

*Minor premise:* Infants are ignorant or without moral knowledge (Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:15-16).

*Conclusion:* Therefore, infants are not "without excuse" but actually have an excuse for their actions.

*Major premise:* The wrath of God is against men because they "hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18).

*Minor premise:* Infants are ignorant of the truth and are without moral knowledge (Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:15-16).

*Conclusion:* Therefore, the wrath of God is not against infants.

*Major premise:* Those who are under "condemnation" are those to whom the "light is come" and have "loved darkness rather than light" (Jn. 3:19).

*Minor premise:* Infants cannot choose falsehood over truth because they are ignorant of the truth and are without moral knowledge (Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:15-16).

*Conclusion:* Therefore, infants are not under condemnation.

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

John Wesley said, "Nothing is sin, strictly speaking, but a voluntary transgression of a known law of God."<sup>151</sup> A. W. Tozer said, "Sin is the voluntary commission of an act known to be contrary to the will of God. Where there is no moral knowledge or where there is no voluntary choice, the act is not sinful; it cannot be, for sin is the transgression of the law and transgression must be voluntary."<sup>152</sup>

Without moral knowledge and moral choices there can be no moral character. It is inconceivable that moral character should exist before there is moral knowledge or moral choice. That is why children remain morally innocent until the age of accountability when they know right from wrong (Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:15-16), and they choose to do wrong (Jas. 4:17). The age of accountability is also known as the age of reason. It is when their mind is developed, or specifically when their conscience is developed, so that they know right from wrong. When each person reaches this age, or state, differs from person to person. But those who don't know right from wrong cannot be sinful (Jn. 9:41). Infants do not yet know right from wrong (Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:15-16). And therefore, infants cannot be sinful according to the Bible.

*The flesh or nature you are born with cannot be sin itself, as sin is voluntary and your nature and flesh at birth is involuntary.*

It has been said that infants are born sinful because they are born of flesh. This idea is nonsense. Men cannot choose what they are made of; and therefore, they cannot be sinful because of what they are made of. Even Augustine at one point recognized, "There can be no sin that is not voluntary, the learned and the ignorant admit this evident truth."<sup>153</sup> The nature you are born with is all together involuntary; and therefore, the nature that you are born with is completely without any moral character or moral qualities whatsoever. The flesh or nature you are born with cannot be sin itself, as sin is voluntary and your nature and flesh at birth is involuntary.

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<sup>151</sup> The works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M., Published by B. Waugh and T. Mason, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1835 Edition, p. 56

<sup>152</sup> The Quotable Tozer

<sup>153</sup> De vera relig., xiv, 27

## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

And you cannot be sinful or be a sinner merely because of the nature or flesh that you involuntary inherit at your creation. You cannot hold a man responsible for a nature or flesh which he hasn't chosen to have, nor can his involuntary nature or flesh be part of his moral character at all. Moral character must always be self-caused or self-chosen if it is going to truly have any moral quality. A man must be the cause of that for which He is held responsible for.

While sin or moral character is voluntary and caused by our own will, it is also true that infants, though innocent, do suffer physical death as a natural consequence of Adam's sin (1 Cor. 15:21-22). Infants die, not as criminals being punished for Adam's sin, but as his offspring who are victims of his sin and suffer consequences for it. The death of infants does not prove, as Calvinists suppose, that infants have sinned and are guilty. Animals also die and they have not sinned. The reason that our bodies are subjected to death, even the bodies of innocent infants, is because we do not have access to the tree of life which was in the Garden of Eden.

God put certain consequences upon mankind as a result of Adam's sin to put a limitation and check to the spreading and occurrence of sin. Now man needs to work by the sweat of his brow, thus giving man less idle time to sin (Gen. 3:19), and God has intentionally deprived our flesh from the fruit that sustains perfect health, lest sin live forever (Gen. 3:22).

Our bodies were designed to sustain their health and life through the consumption of food. However, there is a missing ingredient that we cannot find which would have sustained our bodies in perfect health and continual life. That ingredient was found in the fruit of the tree of life. Man was created mortal and needed to eat from the tree of life to sustain his life. This is why the tree was in the garden to begin with. If man was created immortal, without need of the tree of life, there was no reason for the tree of life to be in the garden in the first place. But man was told that he could eat from all the fruits in the garden, including that of the tree of life, except for the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16-17). Man's immortality in the garden depended upon his continual obedience to

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## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

God. He could continue to stay in the garden and continue to eat from the tree of life if he continued to obey God.

Adam's removal from the tree of life has consequently affected us all. If the head of a home loses his job and the means of sustaining his family, his whole family suffers as a natural consequence. It is not that the employer was punishing his entire family, but that his family naturally suffers in consequence of what happened. Adam, as the head of our race, has brought the consequence of physical death to all of us by losing his position in the Garden of Eden where the tree of life was. It is not that God is punishing all of us for Adam's sin, but that we naturally suffer as a consequence of what has happened.

*Adam, as the head of our race, has brought the consequence of physical death to all of us by losing his position in the Garden of Eden where the tree of life was.*

Irenaeus said, "By means of our first parents, we were all brought into bondage by being made subject to death."<sup>154</sup>

Chrysostom said, "On his fall, they who did not eat of the tree, are from him all become mortal."<sup>155</sup>

Gordon C. Olson said, "The 'tree of life' in the midst of the most pleasant garden where man was invited to dwell must be suggestive of something. I suggest that it may have been the means of keeping man's physical body and soul in vigor and to prevent decay and death. This is suggested also in Gen. 3:24, where man is prevented from taking of the tree of life after the fall. In vs 22, the reason is stated, 'lest he...eat and live forever.' Not, presumably, that if he had eaten one time from it, he would have lived forever, but lest he keep on eating from it and thus keep on living forever."<sup>156</sup>

Dr. Wiggers said, "Here it is to be remarked that, with the fathers, as Erasmus has suggested, the expression to die or to die in

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<sup>154</sup> A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 271, Published by Hendrickson Publishers

<sup>155</sup> The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man by Herman Witsius, 1803 Edition, p. 152

<sup>156</sup> The Foreknowledge of God, published by Biblical Truth Resources, pg 25

## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

Adam, is synonymous with being driven out of Paradise, because they who were driven out of Paradise, were no more allowed to eat of the fruit of the tree of life. At least this is the common meaning. For us to have died in Adam, is nothing else than what Methodius, in a fragment in Epiphanius (Haer. 64), thus expresses, ‘We were driven out of Paradise in the first father.’<sup>157</sup>

With this understanding, we can see how the deaths of infants do not mean that they are sinful or guilty instead of innocent, since animals die and they haven’t sinned, and Jesus Christ died and he was innocent. Infants can be subjected to physical death, since their bodies are deprived of the fruit of the tree of life, even though they are morally innocent. The wages of sin is eternal death, not physical death, which is why it is contrasted with eternal life (Rom. 6:23).

If an infant dies, he will not go to hell but to paradise. That is because an infant has no sin to go to hell for. Only hell deserving sinners go to hell, and as infants haven’t sinned yet they are not sinners, and since they are not yet sinners they are not hell deserving. King David was comforted because of his belief that he will go to paradise see his child one day (2 Sam. 12:22). Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven belonged to little children (Matt. 19:14; Mk. 10:14; Lk. 18:16). Until children develop and make the conscious choice to violate God’s law by doing what they know to be wrong, they are morally innocent and do not deserve damnation. Infants are not sinners merely because they are made of flesh or because of the nature they are born with, and no child deserves hell merely because God forms them in the womb, creating and composing them of physical substance.

Sin is a state of the will, not a state of our flesh, body, substance, constitution, composition, or nature. Charles Finney said, “The fact is, sin never can consist in having a nature, nor in what nature is, but only and alone in the bad use which we make of our nature. This is all. Our Maker will never find fault with us for what

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<sup>157</sup> Historical Presentation of Augustinianism and Pelagianism, pg 399-400

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He has Himself done or made; certainly not. He will not condemn us, if we will only make a right use of our powers – of our intellect, our sensibilities, and our will. He never holds us responsible for our original nature... since there is no law against nature, nature cannot be a transgression... man's nature is not a proper subject for legislation, precept, and penalty, inasmuch as it lies entirely without the pale of voluntary action, or of any action of man at all."<sup>158</sup>

Finney's logic is sound. Sin is the choice to violate God's law. God's law tells us what type of choices to have, not what type of substance to be made of. Therefore, choices can be sinful but our substance cannot be. Since sin is a choice and not a substance, then men can only be sinful by choice and cannot be sinful by substance.

The law doesn't tell us what type of nature to have, but what type of choices to make. If the law was meant to reveal our wickedness (Rom. 7:7, 13), and our wickedness consists in our nature, why doesn't the law say anything about our nature? The law only talks about our choices. If the law was meant to reveal our sin, and the law only talks about our choices, then our sin must consist exclusively in our choices. If our sin consists of our nature, but the law talks only about choices and nothing about our nature, then the law would not really reveal our wickedness. The law only reveals our wickedness if sin is our own personal choice, since God's law only talks about choices. Clearly, the wickedness of man consists in the state of his will, not in the state of his nature, composition, substance, flesh, body, or constitution.

Rather than sin being the involuntary state of your nature, it is instead the voluntary usage of the faculties of your nature. It is not that man's nature is sinful, but that man can choose to use the nature God gave him sinfully. Thus, man's sinfulness is his own fault, not the fault of his Creator. The faculties of man's nature which God granted us can be used for either holiness or sin.

Pelagius said, "One should note that the works, not the substance, of the flesh are condemned."<sup>159</sup>

It is very important to this discussion to understand that the Gnostic's taught that the flesh was sinful in and of itself. That is why they denied that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (1 Jn. 4:3, 2 Jn. 1:7).

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<sup>158</sup> Sermons on Gospel Themes, p. 78-79, Published by Truth in Heart

<sup>159</sup> Pelagius's commentary on Romans 8:13

## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

Gnostics believed that sin is the substance of the body and the Scriptures called them “antichrist.” Gnosticism attributes moral qualities to states of matter and believes that our flesh is inherently and intrinsically evil.

It is one thing to say that our flesh can be used for sin and quite another thing altogether to say that our flesh is sin. The Bible says our flesh is an instrument or a tool which we could use for sin or use for righteousness, but not that our flesh is itself a sin. The moral quality of our members is not intrinsic but depends entirely upon how we choose to use them. Whether our flesh is an instrument used for righteousness or whether our flesh is an instrument used for wickedness is a matter of our own free choice.

Paul said, “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom. 6:13). Paul also said, “for as ye have yielded your members servants of uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom. 6:19).

*Paul was saying that sin is not the substance of our body, but we can choose to use our flesh for sin or use our flesh for the service of God.*

If your flesh was a sin, Paul was saying that you should not yield your sin as an instrument for sin, but that you should yield your sin as an instrument for righteousness! But that doesn’t make any sense! Rather, Paul was saying that sin is not the substance of our body, but we can choose to use our flesh for sin or use our flesh for the service of God.

To be a servant of sin or to be a servant of righteousness is not a matter of nature, but a matter of choice. Our flesh is not created as a servant of sin or a servant of righteousness, but after we are created, we choose to “yield” our flesh to the service of righteousness or sin. The Bible says, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom. 6:12). The words “let” and “obey” indicates the consent and obedience of the will.

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Commenting on these passages, Pelagius said, "...sin reigns in the body, namely, by obedience and consent... Every single member is made a weapon of wickedness to defeat righteousness, if it turns its function to bad use. At the same time it should be noted that it is through freedom of choice that a person offers his members for whatever side he wishes.... We present our members to serve sin: it is not the case, as the Manichaeans say, that it was the nature of the body to have sin mixed in."<sup>160</sup>

A. W. Tozer said, "It is important that we realize the human body is simply an instrument, because there are those who have taught that Christ could not be God in the flesh because the body is evil and God would not thus come in contact with evil. The false premise there is the belief that the human body is evil. There is no evil within inert matter. There is nothing evil in matter itself. Evil lies in the spirit. Evils of the heart, of the mind, of the soul, of the spirit – these have to do with man's sin, and the only reason the human body does evil is because the human spirit uses it to do evil.... No, sin does not lie in the human body. There is nothing in the human body that is bad. Sin lies in the will of man and when the man wills to sin, he uses his body as a harmless, helpless instrument to do his evil purpose."<sup>161</sup>

Alfred T. Overstreet said, "Our flesh and our bodies are not sinful in themselves, but they can be the occasion to temptation, and we can give in to temptation and present our bodies as instruments to sin, but it is we ourselves, living in our bodies, who are sinful or righteous, according to the use we make of our bodies."<sup>162</sup>

To counteract the Gnostic idea that matter was intrinsically evil, or that the flesh was in and of itself sinful, Paul said that we can choose to sanctify our flesh, to set apart our bodies for the service of God, so that our body can be holy. Paul said, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one

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<sup>160</sup> Pelagius' Commentary on Romans 6:12-13, 19.

<sup>161</sup> Who Put Jesus on the Cross, Published by Christian Publications Inc, p. 110-111

<sup>162</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, p. 70



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of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor” (1 Thes. 4:3-4). “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thes. 5:23). “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Tim. 2:8).

Paul commanded men to “glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:20). Paul said that whether we are absent or present in the body we are to be acceptable unto God (2 Cor. 5:9). He also said, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. 3:16-17). “Christ shall be magnified in my body” (Php. 1:20). “Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20). The Psalmist said, “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God” (Ps. 84:2).

It should be evident from all of these passages that the Scriptures do not support that Gnostic doctrine that the flesh is sinful or that the body is evil, but that it is an instrument which can be used either way, and in the case of the Christian, the flesh is actually holy or sanctified.

*We certainly don't have to use our body to sin or choose to gratify our flesh through sin. We can sanctify our flesh in this world.*

On this point it is important to distinguish between sanctification and glorification. The difference between having a glorified flesh and having a sanctified flesh is this: a sanctified flesh has to do with how we morally use our bodies, while a glorified flesh has to do with the physical quality of our bodies themselves. We certainly cannot have a glorified body in this life, but we can have a sanctified body in this life. That means that we cannot have a physically perfect body in this world (Php. 3:11-12), but we certainly don't have to use our body to sin or choose to gratify our flesh through sin. We can sanctify our flesh in this world. We can set apart our body from sin to the service of God. Christians still live “in the flesh” (2 Cor. 10:3), but they do not live “according” to the flesh (2 Cor. 10:2), or live “after the flesh” (Rom. 8:1; 8:5). We still have a body but we are not selfishly living to gratify our flesh. Those

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who belong to Christ choose to walk after the spirit and no longer live to gratify the lusts of their flesh (Gal 5:16, 5:24).

We do not need to wait until glorification in order to experience sanctification. Since we are not born sinful or with a sinful body, but men are sinful by their own free choice, we do not need to wait until we die or until we cease to have these physical bodies in order to cease to be sinful, as Gnosticism taught. We can freely choose not to be sinful in this life. We can choose to live sin free right here and now.

This is why the Bible commands us, in this life, to cease to be evil and to be sinful no more. Two mistaken concepts theologians often hold to are, “You cannot become holy on earth,” and, “You cannot become sinful in heaven.” These ideas are in error because we know that there were angels who became sinful while in heaven, and we know that Jesus Christ, who is our example to follow, lived holy on earth.

*Jesus lived holy  
before He had a  
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had a glorified  
body.*

The angels in heaven right now could sin, they could become demons like the others, but they don't want to. When we make it to heaven as the saints of God, we too could sin but we won't want to. Free will is not taken away in heaven, but we will be “as the angels of God in heaven” (Matt. 22:30). We will use our free will to be obedient to God for all of eternity, while

retaining the liberty to become evil if we wanted to.

Jesus lived holy before He had a glorified body and Adam became sinful while he still had a glorified body. Those without glorified bodies are free to choose to be sanctified, and those with glorified bodies are free to choose to be sinful. Having a glorified body does not force one to be holy, nor does having a body not yet glorified force one to be sinful. Being sinful or being holy is not determined by the nature of your body, but by the determination of your free will.

## GNOSTICISM IS ALIVE AND WELL TODAY

The idea of moral character existing before moral choices exist, or of moral character deriving its existence from something other than moral choices such as our body or our nature, is a Gnostic

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moral philosophy. How can our moral character truly be called “moral” if it has nothing to do with our choices, and consequently nothing to do with God’s law, but rather has to do with our nature, substance, constitution, or composition? If we fail to distinguish between sin and temptation, between the physical and the moral, between nature and character, between natural attributes and moral attributes, we will fall into the error of Gnosticism.

While I was preaching on the North Carolina State University campus, I asked a Calvinist this question, “Is the body a sin?” He said, “Yes our bodies are made of sin.” I asked, “You can put sin under a microscope and look at it?” He said, “Sure.”

While I was preaching on the Alabama A&M campus, a man said to me, “You can’t stop sinning. Even waking up is a sin because you wake up in sinful flesh.”

While I was open air preaching at the University of Texas in Austin, I said, “Go and sin no more.” To this a Calvinist responded, “Just the fact that we are composed of flesh makes us sinners...”

While I was open air preaching to students at Tyler Junior College in Texas, I said, "Sin is a voluntary choice to violate God's law." A Calvinist in the crowd responded by saying, "Your body is sin. You are a sinner because you have a body. And so long as you are in your body, you are a sinner!"

Just recently a Calvinist sent me a personal message that said, “Your body is sinful and will be until death.” These types of statements from Calvinists are Gnostic at their very essence.

After traveling the length and breadth of this nation and talking to thousands of people, I have concluded that Gnosticism is alive and well today. I have been shocked at how many Gnostic Calvinists I have encountered. The very idea that your body is sinful, and that because of this you cannot be morally perfect until you get a glorified body, is nothing short of pure Gnosticism. Yet many today claim that you cannot be free from sin until you die!

The truth is that your body does not make you unholy; and therefore, you don’t need a new body in order to be made holy. Your body is not sinful, so you don’t need a new body to be free from sin. The command to “be ye therefore perfect” (Matt. 5:48) certainly takes for granted that moral perfection is a choice of the will and not an involuntary state of the body which we have absolutely no control over. A command implies that the object which is being commanded

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can be acquired by the choice of the will and that the thing which is being forbidden can be avoided by the choice of the will. Therefore, moral perfection is a choice of the will, not a state or substance of your body.

Since your body is not sinful, and since your body doesn't make you sin, you don't need a new body to be free from sin. Adam sinned with a perfect or glorified body, and Jesus Christ was sinless while he was in a depraved or fallen body. He was sinless while having a body that was not yet glorified but was subjected to death. Therefore, a depraved body does not necessarily make you sinful. Neither does a glorified body necessarily make you holy. Being sinful or being holy does not depend upon the physical state or quality of your body, but upon the moral state or quality of your will.

*Since your body is not sinful, and since your body doesn't make you sin, you don't need a new body to be free from sin.*

Since Gnosticism fails to distinguish between the physical and the moral, they consequently fail to properly distinguish between physical depravity and moral depravity and between physical perfection and moral perfection. Gnostic moral philosophy says that sin is a substance of matter and is not limited to free will choices. To view sin as a state of the body, or a state of human nature, rather than a state of the will, is to have a Gnostic view of sin and human nature. The whole idea that man has a sinful nature, or that man's nature is sinful in and of itself, or that man is sinful through hereditary inheritance rather than through voluntary choice, is nothing more than the remains of Gnostic and Manichaeian philosophy surviving through Augustinian, Lutheran, and Calvinistic theology.

John Calvin said, "Augustine laboured to show, that we are not corrupted by acquired wickedness, but bringing an innate corruption from the very womb..."<sup>163</sup>

In other words, wickedness was not the fault of the individual, since they did not cause it by their own free will, but was

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<sup>163</sup> Institutes of the Christian Religion, Volume One, Published by Calvin Translation Society, 1845 Edition, p. 288

## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

the fault of their constitution or design, acquiring it during the formation of their composition while in the womb.

Dean Harvey said, "The concept of inherited sin is a philosophical construct applied to theology. It is not found in the Bible."<sup>164</sup>

In regards to the doctrine of constitutional sinfulness, Charles Finney said, "This doctrine is a stumbling-block both to the church and the world, infinitely dishonorable to God, and an abomination alike to God and the human intellect, and should be banished from every pulpit, and from every formula of doctrine, and from the world. It is a relic of heathen philosophy, and was foisted in among the doctrines of Christianity by Augustine, as everyone may know who will take the trouble to examine for himself."<sup>165</sup>

Harry Conn said, "Augustine, after studying the philosophy of Manes, the Persian philosopher, brought into the church from Manichaeism the doctrine of original sin."<sup>166</sup>

Augustine's theological term, "the transmission of sin," itself presupposes the Gnostic view that sin is some sort of substance that can be hereditary rather than a personal choice originated by the will. In a Gnostic world-view, sin is blamed on man's nature rather than on man's free will but in the Christian world-view this is not true. These Gnostic notions were completely foreign to the Early Church and even refuted by them. It was not until Augustine converted from the Manichaean Gnostic sect that he brought these views with him into the church. Many all throughout church history have refuted these erroneous Gnostic views of human flesh or human nature, as we shall now see.

## GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF SIN

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<sup>164</sup> The Doctrine of Original Sin by Dean Harvey; Published by Evangelical Education Ministries

<sup>165</sup> Lectures on Systematic Theology, 1851 Edition, Published by BRCCD, p. 340

<sup>166</sup> Sin & Holiness by Gordon C. Olson, Forward by Harry Conn, Published by Men for Missions

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Man is both a physical and a spiritual being. Our constitution is both physical and spiritual. It is not true however, as the Gnostics supposed, that the physical is evil but the spiritual is good, since God is the Creator of both physical and spiritual reality. In fact, God forms us both physically and spiritually in the womb. He is the maker of our spiritual and physical constitution. The Bible says, "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all" (Ecc. 11:5).

Our physical and spiritual state at birth is the direct result of the working of God, who is the author of man's nature or constitution. Unless we are willing to believe that God is the author of sin, we cannot accept the theory or view that sin is the result of our physical or spiritual nature. To blame your sinfulness upon your free will or to confess being a sinner by choice is to humbly and fully take responsibility for your sin. But to blame your sinfulness on your birth or on your nature is to blame your Creator who formed you in the womb.

Charles Finney said, "To represent the constitution as sinful, is to present God, who is the author of the constitution, as the author of sin."<sup>167</sup>

A writer in the Early Church, either Pelagius or one of his followers, said, "...it is impious to say that sin is inherent in nature, because in this way the author of nature is being judged at fault."<sup>168</sup> And he said, "...all sin is to be attributed to the free choice of the will, not to the defects of nature..."<sup>169</sup>

Winkie Pratney said, "To equate humanity with sinfulness is to make God the Author of His own worst enemy; to make God responsible for the thing that has brought Him unhappiness."<sup>170</sup>

Julian of Eclanum said, "...the good God is the maker of those that are born, by whom all things were made, and that the

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<sup>167</sup> Finney's Systematic Theology, Bethany House, p. 261

<sup>168</sup> The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, p. 168, Published by The Boydell Press

<sup>169</sup> The Letters of Pelagius and his Followers by B. R. Rees, pg 168-169, Published by The Boydell Press

<sup>170</sup> Youth Aflame, Published by Bethany House, p. 78

## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

children of men are His work.”<sup>171</sup> He also said, “God is the Maker of all those that are born, and that the sons of men are God’s work; and that all sin descends not from nature, but from the will.”<sup>172</sup>

Alfred T. Overstreet said, “To talk of men being born with a sinful nature is to ascribe sin to God because God is the Author of our nature.”<sup>173</sup>

Asa Mahan said, “If the above dogma is true, it is demonstrably evident, that this corrupt nature comes into existence without the knowledge, choice, or agency of the creature, who for its existence is pronounced deserving of, and ‘bound over to the wrath of God.’ Equally evident is it that this corrupt nature exists as the result of the direct agency of God. He proclaims himself the maker of ‘every soul of man.’ As its Maker, He must have imparted to that soul the constitution or nature which it actually possesses. It does not help the matter at all, to say, that this nature is derived from our progenitor: for the laws of generation, by which this corrupt nature is derived from that progenitor, are sustained and continued by God himself... If, then, the above dogma is true, man in the first place, is held as deserving of eternal punishment for that which exists wholly independent of his knowledge, choice or agency, in any sense, direct or indirect, He is also held responsible for the result, not of his own agency, but for that which results from the agency of God.”<sup>174</sup>

*Adam is not  
the God of  
nature. Adam  
does not form  
us in the  
womb... God  
is the author  
of our nature.*

God is not the author of sin. He does not want us to be sinners. Our Creator certainly would not create us with a sinful nature. To say that He does would be to blaspheme His character and confuse the Lord’s will with that of the devils.

Calvinists will typically object and say, “God did not give me my sinful nature. I inherited it from Adam!” But the Bible does

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<sup>171</sup> Letter To Rufus Of Thessalonica

<sup>172</sup> Letter To Rufus Of Thessalonica

<sup>173</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, p. 103

<sup>174</sup> Doctrine of the Will, Published by Truth in Heart, p. 115

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

not teach that Adam, Satan, or anyone else forms our nature in the womb. It is God who forms our nature in the womb. "Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves" (Ps. 100:3). Clearly, Adam is not the God of nature. Adam does not form us in the womb. Remember, as we've already seen, the scriptures are explicit and say that God is the author of our nature. He is the creator of our constitution. We are the work of His hands since He forms us in the womb. Just as the Bible says that God formed Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:7-8; 1 Tim. 2:13), the Bible uses the same word and language to say that God forms us in the womb (Gen. 4:1; 6:7 Ex. 4:11; Deut. 32:18; Isa. 27:11; 43:1; 43:7; 44:2; 44:24; 49:5; 64:8; Jer. 1:5; Ps. 26:10; 82:6; 95:6; 100:3; 119:73; 127:3; 139:13-14, 16; Prov. 20:12; 26:10; Ecc. 7:29; Job 10:8-11; 31:15; 35:10; Mal. 2:10; Acts 17:29; Rom. 9:20; Eph. 3:9; 4:6; Col. 1:16; Jn. 1:3).

The Bible says, "And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?" (Exo. 4:11). "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29). "Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about... thou hast made me as the clay... Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews" (Job 10:8-9, 11). "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them" (Prov. 20:12). "The great God formed all things" (Prov. 26:10). "Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things" (Isa. 44:24). "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (Jn. 1:3). "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36). "God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph 3:9). "For by him were all things created... all things were created by him... all things were created by him, and for him... by him all things consist" (Col. 1:16-17). The "all things" that have been made by Christ include all the human natures which are made and created in the womb.

Who then is it that "formed thee from the womb" according to the Bible? It is "the Lord, thy redeemer" who "maketh all things." But remember, Augustine held to a Gnostic moral philosophy and taught, according to Calvin, that wickedness was not "acquired" by



## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

personal choices, but was an “innate corruption from the very womb...”<sup>175</sup>

Is it true that sin is not our fault? Is sin really a birth defect? To blame sin upon our formation in the womb is to blame the Lord for our sin, since He formed us in the womb. To blame sin upon a corrupted constitution is to blame our Creator for sin. To blame sin upon a faulty design is to blame sin upon our Designer.

Martin Luther, who was a student of Augustine’s writings, believed that God is the author of our nature and that we are born with a sinful nature. Therefore he said that God “ceases not to form and multiply that nature, which... is defiled by sin...”<sup>176</sup> In other words, Luther was saying that God multiplies man’s sinful nature by forming us all with a sinful nature!

This would be Luther’s position put into a logical syllogism:

*Major premise:* Our nature is sinful.

*Minor premise:* God is the author of our nature.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, God forms us with a sinful nature.

The reason that he came to the wrong conclusion was because he started with the wrong premise. We should reason like this:

*Major premise:* God is the author of our nature.

*Minor premise:* God is not the author of sin.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, God does not create us with a sinful nature.

Origen said, “not a single one is formed wicked by the Creator of all things...”<sup>177</sup>

Eusebius said, “The fault is in him who chooses, not in God. For God is has not made nature or the substance of the soul bad; for

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<sup>175</sup> Institutes of the Christian Religion, Volume One, Published by Calvin Translation Society, 1845 Edition, p. 288

<sup>176</sup> The Bondage of the Will, Sovereign Grace Publishers, p. 97

<sup>177</sup> The Quarterly Christian Spectator, Volume Seven, Published by S. Cooke, 1825 Edition, p. 270

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he who is good can make nothing but what is good. Everything is good which is according to nature. Every rational soul has naturally a good free-will, formed for the choice of what is good. But when a man acts wrongly, nature is not to be blamed; for what is wrong, takes place not according to nature, but contrary to nature, it being the work of choice, and not of nature!”<sup>178</sup>

Methodius said that “the Divine Being is not by nature implicated in evils. Therefore our birth is not the cause of these things...”<sup>179</sup>

He went on to say that men are “possessing free will, and not by nature evil...”<sup>180</sup>

He also said, “there is nothing evil by nature, but it is by use that evil things become such. So I say, says he, that man was made with free-will, not as if there were already evil in existence, which he had the power of choosing if he wished, but on account of his capacity of obeying or disobeying God. For this was the meaning of the gift of free will... and this alone is evil, namely, disobedience...”<sup>181</sup>

And Methodius also said, “God did not make evil, nor is He at all in any way the author of evil; but whatever failed to keep the law, which He in all justice ordained, after being made by Him with the faculty of free-will, for the purpose of guarding and keeping it, is called evil. Now it is the gravest fault to disobey God, by overstepping the bounds of that righteousness which is consistent with free-will...”<sup>182</sup>

Scripturally sound doctrine says that we are not formed or fashioned in the womb wicked by God but we become wicked by choice after we are born. God certainly would not create us in the womb with a sinful nature since God hates sin and does not even tempt anyone to sin (Jas. 1:13). If God doesn't even tempt us to sin, He certainly wouldn't give us a nature that is sin or a nature which necessitates us to sin! James goes on to tell us that “Every good gift

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<sup>178</sup> The Christian Examiner, Volume One, Published by James Miller, 1824 Edition, p. 66

<sup>179</sup> The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume Six, Published by BRC CD, p. 696

<sup>180</sup> The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume Six, Published by BRC CD, p. 698

<sup>181</sup> The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume Six, Published by BRC CD, p. 747

<sup>182</sup> The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume Six, Published by BRC CD, p. 750

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and every perfect gift is from above” (Jas. 1:17), but if God gives us a sinful nature, that is not a good gift! We could say, “The worst of all gifts is from above!”

How could we say “I will...ascribe righteousness to my Maker” (Job 36:3), if He makes us with a sinful nature? We couldn’t “ascribe righteousness to my Maker” if we are involuntarily and unavoidably made sinful by no fault of our own, but were made sinful because of the formation of our God given nature.

We know that God does not form us in the womb with a sinful nature since the Bible says that we are wonderfully made. King David said, “I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are they works; and that my soul knoweth right well” (Ps. 139:14). We could not be wonderfully made if we were sinfully made. God’s works could not be marvelous if God created sinfulness.

Paul said, “For every creature of God is good” (1 Tim. 4:4). Clearly, God does not make men sinners but men make themselves transgressors. This is why the Bible says, “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made men upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Ecc. 7:29). If sinners were honest with themselves, they would say what the Bible says, “I make myself a transgressor” (Gal. 2:18). Sin is not the fault of our constitution, but it is our own fault, because it is caused by our deliberate misuse of our constitution.

*We cannot be responsible for the condition of our birth or be justly punished for being what God created us as.*

To say that we are born sinners is to say that God, who forms us in the womb, creates us as sinners. If God creates us as sinners, God forces us to be sinful. And if God forces us to be sinful, we cannot be responsible or accountable for being sinful. We cannot be responsible for the condition of our birth or be justly punished for being what God created us as.

If God created us sinners, we would not be the real sinners but God would be the real sinner. This is because our sinfulness would not be caused by ourselves but by Him. If God creates us sinners, sin is really His fault and consequently, He is not righteous or good. The reason that God is righteous is because He never causes the existence of sin, and the reason that He is good is because He cares

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

for the well-being of everyone. Therefore, since God is good and righteous, we can conclude that He does not form anyone in the womb as a sinner or make anyone necessarily sinful.

While I was open air preaching at the University of Minnesota in Duluth, one of the students asked me, “Why did God create sin?” I explained, “Sin was not part of God's creation. Sin is a choice that men and angels have made. God is not the author of sin. Sin is originated by other moral beings. Sin is the wrong use of free will. Sin is not some substance that God created. Sin is a free choice that moral beings have made. Sin is not God’s creation, it is our own. Each sinner creates or originates their sin. Each individual is the author of their own moral character.”

Man, not God, is at blame for sin. This is because sin is the result of free will, not the result of a sinful nature. Sin is the fruit of our will and not the necessity of our flesh or the state of our nature. Sin is man’s fault. Man is to be blamed for sin. That is because man is the cause of sin. Sin is man’s choice. Sin is the fault of our own will. Sin is not God’s fault. God is not to be blamed for sin. God is not the cause of sin. That is because sin is not the fault of the nature God has given us. Everything God makes is good (Gen. 1:31; 1 Tim. 4:4).

The problem with the world is not the nature God has given us. The problem is that God’s creation has corrupted itself (Gen. 6:12). The problem with the world is the choices that men have made. The problem is not with nature itself but with the will of man.

When expounding upon ethics and metaphysics in relation to sin, Cornelius Van Til said, “Sin is exclusively ethical hostility to God...”<sup>183</sup> But to talk of a sinful nature is a confusion of meaning and a contradiction in terms. That is because what is sinful belongs to ethics, but nature belongs to metaphysics. That which belongs to ethics and that which belongs to metaphysics are completely different in nature. Ethics deals with the moral quality of choices and behaviors, while metaphysics deals with the structure and

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<sup>183</sup> The Defense of the Faith, Published by Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, p. 167

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composition of things. To confuse ethics with metaphysicals, by assigning inherent or intrinsic moral qualities to metaphysical or material objects, is confusion of the worst kind.

Charles Finney said, "...it is impossible that sin should be a quality of the substance of body or soul. It is, and must be, a quality of choice or intention, and not of substance. To make sin an attribute or quality of substance is contrary to God's definition of sin. 'Sin,' says the apostle, 'is anomia,' a "transgression of, or a want of conformity to, the moral law." That is, it consists in a refusal to love God and our neighbour, or, which is the same thing, in loving ourselves supremely... Sin a substance! Is it a solid, a fluid, a material, or a spiritual substance?"<sup>184</sup>

John Chrysostom said "that sin is not a substance, but a wicked act. And because it is not natural, therefore the law was given against it, and because it proceeds from the liberty of our will."<sup>185</sup>

Pelagius said, "...we have to inquire what sin is, - some substance, or wholly a name without substance, whereby is expressed not a thing, not an existence, not some sort of a body, but the doing of a wrongful deed."<sup>186</sup>

Winkie Pratney said, "good and evil are not qualities of substance or essence, but character... sin itself is a moral (not physical) creation of rebellious moral beings..."<sup>187</sup>

As we have seen, sin is not a substance of the body but a choice of the will. Jesus implied this when he said "go sin no more" (Jn. 8:11). This command takes for granted that all sin is a choice, or that all sin is volitional and deliberate, something which we have control over. The Bible doesn't say about sinners, "Their substance is evil." Nor does it say, "Their substance should be reprov'd." But rather it says, "their deeds were evil" (Jn. 3:19), and that their "deeds should be reprov'd" (Jn. 3:20). To be born again is to put off the old man "with his deeds" (Col. 3:9), not to put off the old man "with his substance or composition." Men are sinful, not because of the work of

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<sup>184</sup> Lectures on Systematic Theology, 1851 Edition, Published by BRCCD, p. 338

<sup>185</sup> Homily on Eph. ii.3

<sup>186</sup> On Nature and Grace by Augustine

<sup>187</sup> The Nature and Character of God, Published by Bethany House Publishers, p. 82

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God, but because of their own work, not because of what God made them of, but because of what they have made themselves. Sin is not some involuntary substance that we are made of, or some involuntary substance that indwells us, but is our own choice or voluntary state of our heart. All sin consists in sinning.

Contrary to Augustinian theology, the Bible does not teach that we will always have “indwelling sin” which we cannot get rid of, or that we have this “indwelling sin” independent of our own will and choice. “Indwelling sin” in the Bible is something which we have the power to get rid of because it is inside of us by our consent or choice. The Scriptures teach that it is a choice to have sin inside of you or not. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Rom. 6:12). The phrase “let not” implies the consent of the individual. “If iniquity be in thine hand, put it away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles” (Job 11:14). The phrases “put it away” and “let not” implies the choice of the will. “Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh” (Ecc. 11:10). To “remove” or “put away” is a choice of our will. Jesus said, “Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside may be clean also.” We must choose to put away any sin that is within us.

*Since sin  
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is a choice.*

Since sin is a choice, to be free from sin is a choice. God commands sinners to turn themselves from “all” their transgressions and to cast away from themselves “all” their sins (Eze. 18:30-31). This takes for granted that “all” sin is their choice and that it is something which they have control over. We are told to cleanse ourselves from “all filthiness of the flesh” (2 Cor. 7:1), And we are told, “lay aside every weight and sin” (Heb. 12:1). This too implies that “all” and “every” sin is our choice which we have control over.

Clearly, no sin is involuntary or something which exists independent of the will. Sin does not consist in the involuntary states of our nature at birth, since we have no control over what type of nature we are born with. But all sin consists in the voluntary states of our will, something which we do have power to change and alter. Men are not sinful by created constitution but by their own chosen

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character. Men are not morally good or evil by their creation but by their own personal choice.

We are taught to train our children in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6). This presupposes that their behavior is not determined or necessitated by their nature but freely chosen by their will. It presupposes that they have the power of choice to determine how they are going to live and that through teaching their mind we can influence their will to make the right choices. The bad behavior of little children is often due to the ignorance of their mind, not a sinful nature, which is why we need to teach and train them. Often times they do not know to act better than they do or comprehend or contemplate the consequences of their actions.

We are also taught about the goodness of physically disciplining our children (Deut. 21:18; Prov. 22:15; 29:15). Just as penalty is the enforcement of precepts in moral government, so sanctions is the enforcement of precepts in family government. Just as God would encourage His universe to disrespect and disobey His law if He did not consistently uphold and maintain it, we too teach our children to disrespect and to disobey our commands if we do not discipline them, or if we are not consistent in our discipline. If we command them but do not discipline them in order to enforce the command, we are in fact encouraging their disobedience. We are teaching them that they do not need to respect or obey our law.

The first authority that children learn to respect and obey, or disrespect and disobey, is not man's civil government nor God's moral government, but their parent's family government. Parents have asked, "If my little child doesn't have a sinful nature, who taught my little child to be so rebellious?" The answer is that parents teach their children to be that way by not properly influencing their wills through the education of their mind and the consistent enforcement of family government. But we can teach them to respect and obey our commands through consistent discipline. Their behavior, good or bad, is not determined by their nature but by their will. Their choices are made after motives are contemplated in their minds. If they think in their minds that they can get what they want by screaming and having a fit, because we have taught them through their experience that they get what they want when they do those things, then they will continue to do those things as we have taught them to. But if they think that they will suffer a spanking if they

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

scream and have a fit, because we have taught them this through experience, then this consideration in their mind will help them to stop doing those things and to start making better choices.

Choices of the will are made in light of the perceived incentives and motives in the mind. If they think they will benefit in that behavior, they will continue in it. But if they think they will suffer through that behavior, they will choose to act differently. The fact that the Bible teaches us to physically discipline our children implies that bad behavior is the result of their own will, not necessitated by their nature. If their behavior was a necessity of their nature, instead of that which was chosen or determined by free will, teaching our children would be useless and disciplining them would

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free will.*

be cruel. You cannot spank their supposed sinful nature out of them if they had one, but you can influence the choices of their free will through instruction and discipline.

You cannot hold a child responsible for that which they could not have avoided, or threaten to punish them if they do that which their nature forces them to do. Disciplining children presupposes that their behavior and moral character is their own fault, which they could have avoided; that it was self-caused, self-determined, or self-originated, deriving from their own free will. The Bible teaches that obedience is “learned,” not inherited (Heb. 5:8), as all moral character is learned and acquired, not inherited, inherent, or innate.

The fact that God punishes sinners for their sin shows that sin is caused by the liberty of their will, not the necessity of their nature. If sin were necessitated by a sinful nature, then sin is not their fault and they cannot be justly punished for it. If sin is caused by the freedom of their will, then sin is their fault and they can be justly punished for it. No being can be justly punished for what was involuntary or unavoidable. You cannot punish or blame men for their sinfulness unless they are the cause of their sinfulness. If men were created sinful because of some sinful nature, they would deserve no punishment at all since it was not their fault or their doing. But if



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men chose to be sinful, then they do deserve punishment, because it is their own fault and choice.

Tertullian said, “No reward can be justly bestowed, no punishment can be justly inflicted, upon him who is good or bad by necessity, and not by his own choice.”<sup>188</sup>

Justin Martyr said, “We have learned from the prophets, and we hold it to be true, that punishment, chastisement, and rewards are rendered according to the merit of each man’s actions. Otherwise, if all things happen by fate, then nothing is our own power. For if it is predestined that one man be good and another man evil, then the first is not deserving of praise and the other to be blamed. Unless humans have the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions – whatever they may be ... for neither would a man be worthy of praise if he did not himself choose the good, but was merely created for that end. Likewise, if a man were created evil, he would not deserve punishment, since he was not evil of himself, being unable to do anything else than what he was made for.”<sup>189</sup>

Origen said, “The Scriptures...emphasize the freedom of the will. They condemn those who sin, and approve those who do right... We are responsible for being bad and worthy of being cast outside. For it is not the nature in us that is the cause of the evil; rather, it is the voluntary choice that works evil.”<sup>190</sup>

Irenaeus said, “Those who do not do it [good] will receive the just judgment of God, because they had not work good when they had it in their power to do so. But if some had been made by nature bad, and others good, these latter would not be deserving of praise for being good, for they were created that way. Nor would the former be reprehensible, for that is how they were made. However, all men are of the same nature. They are all able to hold fast and to go what is

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<sup>188</sup> Doctrine of the Will by Asa Mahan, p. 61, Published by Truth in Heart

<sup>189</sup> First Apology Chap. 43

<sup>190</sup> A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 289, Published by Hendrickson Publishers

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good. On the other hand, they have the power to cast good from them and not to do it.”<sup>191</sup>

Alfred T. Overstreet said, “But isn’t it a monstrous and a blasphemous dogma to say that God is angry with any of his creatures for possessing the nature which he created them? What? Can God be angry with his creatures for possessing the nature that he himself has given them? Never! God is not angry with men for possessing the nature he has given them, but only for the perversion of that nature. The Bible represents God as angry with men for their wicked deeds, and not for the nature with which they are born...”<sup>192</sup>

Men cannot be justly punished for being what they are by nature, for if their state is by nature then it is not by choice, and if their state is not by choice it is not their fault, and if their state is not their fault they cannot be responsible and punished for being in that state. Therefore, if men are sinners by nature they cannot be held responsible or be punishable, and consequently, they do not need a Savior at all. Unless, that is, a Savior came to save them from unjust and cruel punishment. But the Savior came to save us from the punishment that we truly deserve; and therefore, our sinful state must be our own fault or choice.

*If a man is born  
sinful because of  
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inherit, their  
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their fault and it  
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their sinfulness.*

The fact that Jesus Christ rebuked sin (Rev. 3:19), and that we are called to rebuke sin (Lev. 19:17; Lk. 17:3; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:13; 2:15), both presupposes that sin is a choice of a person’s will and not a state of their nature. It implies that their sinfulness is voluntary and is their own fault. It implies that their moral character is within the realm of their own control. If a man is born sinful because of the nature they inherit, their sinfulness is not their fault and it makes no sense to rebuke them for their sinfulness.

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<sup>191</sup> A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 287, Published by Hendrickson Publishers

<sup>192</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, Published by Evangel Books Publishing Company, p. 20

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But if a man is sinful or a sinner by choice, if a sinner is the cause and creator of sin, then rebuking him makes total sense.

The very words “sinner” and “transgressor” implies choice. A sinner is someone who has made the choice to sin. A transgressor is someone who has made the choice to transgress God’s law. Sin or sinfulness is not a hereditary nature but is a choice to violate God’s law (1 Jn. 3:4). Evil is something that the will of a moral being can refuse, and good is something that the will of a moral being can choose. As the Bible says, “refuse the evil, and choose the good” (Isa. 7:15-16). The will is always involved in a person’s moral state since good and evil are volitional.

The command, “Let your heart therefore be perfect” (1 Kin. 8:61), “be ye therefore perfect” (Matt. 5:48), and “be ye holy” (1 Pet. 1:15), all implies that holiness is volitional. And the command, “cease to do evil” (Isa. 1:16), and to “sin no more” (Jn. 8:11), also implies that all sin is volitional and avoidable. A command is a declaration as to what type of choice you should and shouldn’t make. If what is commanded is not a choice, the command is pointless. If we have no choice in the matter, there would be no purpose in commanding us.

*There is no scriptural support for the notion that Adam himself had a sinful nature, but only that he had a sinful character by his free choice.*

### MORAL CHARACTER IS NOT HEREDITARY

Augustinian theologians have taught that when Adam sinned, his human constitution itself became sinful and we have all inherited this sinful constitution from him through natural generation. Sin itself is therefore transmittable in Augustinian theology. The problem with this is that your constitution does not become “sinful” because you choose to sin. Neither does your constitution become “righteous” when you choose righteousness. Your constitution generally stays the same even when your choices change. It is your moral character, not your constitution, which changes as often as your choices change. There is no scriptural support for the notion that Adam himself had a sinful nature, but only that he had a sinful character by his free choice. The Bible says that “sin entered the world” by Adam’s

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

transgression (Rom. 5:12), not that sin entered human nature by Adam's transgression. The Bible never says that Adam's nature itself became sinful. Not a verse can be found in Genesis or any scripture that says Adam's nature became sinful.

There are no moral qualities in our constitution itself, since it is completely involuntary and beyond the scope of the legislation of God's law. There are only moral qualities in our choices, since they are determined by us and are under the legislation of God's law. To be wicked or righteousness is a matter of choice, not a matter of constitution or composition. No moral being is holy or sinful by mere passive existence. Rather, all moral beings are holy or sinful by active choice.

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*Rather, all moral  
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Sinfulness and holiness are moral attributes or moral qualities; and therefore, they must be voluntary. The idea of "inherited sinfulness" or "inherited righteousness" is an absurd contradiction. It is an oxymoron because if the quality is inherited, then it is involuntary. And if the quality is sinful or a moral attribute, then it must be voluntary. To inherit any moral quality, or to have an involuntary moral character, is a nonsensical contradiction.

Sinfulness and holiness are descriptions of a person's moral character; and therefore, they must be caused by their will.

Moral character is determined by the will's obedience or disobedience to the moral knowledge of the mind. When a man does what he knows is wrong, he is blameworthy. But if a man does all that he knows to do, he is blameless. His heart is not evil and his character has no blemish if he does what he knows is right in his conscience. Moral character, whether it is a good or evil character, is determined by the response of the will to the moral knowledge that the mind possesses. No moral being is holy or sinful, or can be holy or sinful, independent of their will and knowledge. This is true of man, angels, and even God Himself.

While the substance and structure of your constitution is beyond the scope or limitation of your will power, your character is not. We do not choose what constitution we are made with, but we do

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choose what moral choices we make. So while your constitution is hereditary, your character is not.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, said, "...my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior" (Lk. 1:47). Mary did not have some "immaculate conception" which somehow made her sinless her entire life or "free from any personal or hereditary sin,"<sup>193</sup> as Augustinians and Catholics have claimed. If Mary needed a Savior, she must have had sins she needed saving from. If Mary was sinless her entire life, she would need no Savior at all. If sin or guilt is transmitted from parent to child, then Jesus Christ would have been born sinful and guilty. Because Jesus was not born a sinner, or born sinful and guilty, then we can conclude that sin and guilt is not transmitted from parent to child.

There are other examples of how character is not hereditary. We are told that Job was a perfect man (Job 1:8), but his children probably were not (Job 1:5). Cain and Abel were both children of Adam, but one was righteous and one was unrighteous (Matt. 23:35; Heb. 11:4; 1 Jn. 3:12). We are told that Cain's "own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 Jn. 3:12). From these examples we can conclude that moral character is not the result of heredity but the result of personal choice. Sinful parents do not give birth to sinful children anymore than righteous parents give birth to righteous children. While children may imitate the moral character of their parents, and parents can teach their children moral character, children do not inherit the moral character of their parents. Parents may train their children in their way of life, but parents do not transmit to their children their way of life.

The story of Amon illustrates that a son can imitate the evil moral character of their parent. "Amon.... did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh did. And walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them" (2 Kin. 21:19-21). The story of Jehoshaphat illustrates how a son can imitate the good moral character of their parent, as he "walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the

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<sup>193</sup> Council of Trent Denzinger Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum, Freiburg, 1957, document 833; "she was free from any personal or hereditary sin", Pius XII, Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, 1943 in Dentzinger, D2291

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

Lord” (2 Chron. 20:31-32). Clearly, a person can imitate or follow their parent’s example, whether good or evil.

We see other examples of moral imitation as well. “Nadab.... did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father” (1 Kin. 15:25-26). “Ahaziah.... did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother” (1 Kin. 22:51-52). They walked in the way of their fathers, but their moral character was not determined by their ancestry. We are told that “Ahaz.... did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, like David his father” (2 Chron. 28:1). Children grow up and sometimes imitate their parents in their way of life and sometimes they do not.

That is a matter of free will.

*No doubt, the bad examples and influences of others is a great contributor to the spread of sin in our world.*

No doubt, the bad examples and influences of others is a great contributor to the spread of sin in our world. Parents, peers, media, leaders, etc. can all play a role in the formation of our moral character. The Scriptures declare that many Old Testament Kings “made Israel to sin” (1 Kng. 14:16; 15:26, 30, 34; 16:13, 26; 21:22; 22:52; 2 Kng. 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 21:11, 16; 23:15); that is, through their leading, influence, and example they made Israel to sin. Foreign women caused king Solomon to sin (Neh. 13:26); that is, through their leading, influence, and example, Solomon decided to sin. By setting up high places of Baal, men caused Judah to sin (Jer. 32:35); that is, they sinned because of this leading, influence, and example. “My people have been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have gone astray” (Jer. 50:6) by their leading, influence, and example. Again, Israel had leaders who would “lead [them]” and “caused [them] to err” (Isa. 3:12) by their leading, influence, and example. Through a person’s leading, influence, and example, a little child can be caused to sin (Matt. 18:6; Mk. 9:42; Lk. 17:2). The leading, influence, and example of a Christian can even cause a weaker brother to stumble (1 Cor. 8:9). And the bible says men could “fall” because of someone’s “example of disobedience” (Heb. 4:11).

I have seen numerous times, personally, when a little child does not hit other children, or steal from other children, or lie to their

## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

parents, until they started playing with other children who did. They observed and learned this bad behavior from the example of another. Such behavior was not innate in their nature itself.

Children who grow up in wicked homes are more likely to become wicked themselves, while children who grow up in righteous homes are more likely to become righteous. That is because of the moral influence that they experience in that environment. However, while it is more probable it is not definite. A good or evil moral character is always contingent, not necessary. The power of contrary choice, or free will, still exists in those atmospheres, but how free will is actually used is greatly influenced by those atmospheres.

Alfred T. Overstreet said, "Children do inherit physical traits from their parents but they do not and cannot inherit moral traits or sin from their parents. Children only appear to inherit the moral traits of their parents. The whole home environment, with the continual example of parents and other family members, has an enormous influence upon a child's behavior; and it would be astonishing if children did not seem to inherit the moral traits of their parents, whether good or bad... There is nothing physical about sin; sin is a voluntary and personal act, and is non-transferable."<sup>194</sup>

The fact that moral character is not transmitted from parent to child is shown by "Solomon" who "did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father" (1 Kin. 11:6). There were righteous kings who had sons who did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and there were evil kings who had sons who did what was right in the sight of the Lord. This shows that your moral character is not determined by the moral character of your parents, or by the nature that you inherit from them, but by your own personal use of your free will.

We are told that a "just" man can "beget a son that is a robber..." (Eze. 18:9-10) Then that same wicked son can "beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like..." (Eze. 18:14) These examples are clear and explicit. The righteous can have wicked offspring and the wicked can have righteous offspring. Each person determines for themselves what their moral character will be.

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<sup>194</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, p. 64-65

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

Jed Smock said, “A good or bad character is acquired, not innate.”<sup>195</sup>

Your moral character is either sinful or holy. Sinfulness and holiness are voluntary states of the will; and therefore, these states are not hereditary and cannot be. Your inherited nature cannot be sinful or holy because your nature is not your voluntary choice. Your inherited nature cannot have any moral character at all, and you cannot be responsible and accountable for it, because it is not determined by your will. The nature that you inherit is within God’s control, not your own. Your moral character however is entirely within your own control because it is determined by your will. The reason that each individual is responsible and accountable for their moral character is because each individual is the author of their moral character.

*Damnation is personally deserved because sin is personally originated.*

There is a biblical principle that everything begets after its kind. Often this principle is used by Augustinians and Calvinists to teach that moral character itself is hereditary. They argue that sinners give birth to sinners. The Bible says, “And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image” (Gen. 5:3). They argue that as Adam was a sinner, his son was born a sinner too. However, this principle refers to a person’s nature and constitution, not character. It relates to the physical, not the moral. A human gives birth to a human, and the child is in the parent’s likeness. However, the moral character of the child may be very different from the moral character of the parent. Evidently, the other verse which is commonly used, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one” (Job 14:4), is talking about physical depravity, not moral depravity. This too references constitution, not character. What is physical can be transmitted from parent to child at birth, but what is moral cannot be because it has no substance at all but relates exclusively and entirely to free choice.

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<sup>195</sup> Jed Smock’s article on moral character.



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### DAMNATION AND SALVATION ARE NOT HEREDITARY

Since moral character is not hereditary, sin is not hereditary. Since sin is not hereditary, damnation is not hereditary. Damnation is personally deserved because sin is personally originated. Since punishment or damnation is according to personal choices, and since infants haven't made any personal choices yet, infants cannot be punished or damned.

The idea of deserving punishment before you are born, or before you make choices, or before you have character, or before you are guilty, is nonsensical and inconceivable. The idea that you can personally deserve damnation before you have personally sinned is absurd and unjust.

Men do not deserve to burn in hell because their parents were sinners; men deserve to burn in hell because they have chosen to be sinners. A man is innocent of a crime if he didn't commit the crime. A man is guilty of a crime only if he committed the crime. A person can only be justly punished if they deserve to be punished, and a person can only deserve to be punished if they personally committed the crime.

“Doth God pervert judgment? Or doeth the Almighty pervert justice?” (Job 8:3) Does God condemn the innocent for the sins of the guilty? “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25) God answered in great detail to vindicate His character and to justify His judgment. He said, “What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.... Yet say ye, Why? Doeth not the son bear the iniquity of the fathers? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. 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” (Eze. 18:2-6, 19-20).

God has repeatedly said, “The fathers shall not be put to

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin” (Deut. 24:16; 2 Kng. 14:6; 2 Chron. 25:4). God has been so clear on this subject that it is amazing that anyone should ever be confused about it.

The explicit justice of God is that each individual is responsible and accountable for their own personal sins. This is contrasted with the injustice that John Calvin ascribed to God when he said, "Adam drew all his posterity with himself, by his fall, into eternal damnation..."<sup>196</sup> It is not our fault that we are sons of Adam because it was not our choice to descend from him. Therefore, we cannot be punished merely for being sons of Adam. As a just judge, God punishes men according to their personal deserts or demerits, according to the moral quality of their personal choices. Men are accountable for their choices and their choices only.

*Men are  
accountable  
for their  
choices and  
their choices  
only.*

God will judge “every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jer. 17:10).

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Matt. 16:27).

“...the righteous judgment of God: who will render every man according to his deeds” (Rom. 2:5-6).

“So then every one of us shall account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12).

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

“Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:15).

“...the Father, who without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man’s work” (1 Pet. 1:17).

“And I saw a great white throne... And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. And the books were opened: and another book was opened which is the book of life: an the dead were judged

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<sup>196</sup> Secret Providence by John Calvin, p. 267

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out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev. 20:11-12).

“And, behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Rev. 22:12).

Clearly, we are responsible and accountable for our sins and our sins only.

A. W. Tozer said, “...men are not lost because of what someone did thousands of years ago; they are lost because they sin individually and in person. We will never be judged for Adam’s sin, but for our own. For our own sins we are and must remain fully responsible.”<sup>197</sup>

Theodore W. Elliot said, “...each person is responsible for his own sin and not for the sin of anyone else...”<sup>198</sup>

Albert Barnes said, “...men are not to be represented as to blame, or as ill-deserving, for a sin committed long before they were born, and that they are not to be called on to repent of it.”<sup>199</sup>

Leonard Ravenhill said, “God will not penalize me for Adam’s sin. God will not penalize Adam for my sin; but He will penalize each of us for our own sin.”<sup>200</sup>

Lord Coke said, “...no one is punished for the sin of another...”<sup>201</sup>

L. D. McCabe said, “The Scriptures nowhere teach that we are guilty of the sin of Adam, or that we are punished therefore.”<sup>202</sup>

John Fletcher said, “All our damnation is of ourselves, through our avoidable unfaithfulness . . . everyone shall die for his own avoidable iniquity.”<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Paths To Power, Christian Publications, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

<sup>198</sup> Born Sinful? p. 16

<sup>199</sup> The Way of Salvation: A Sermon, Delivered at Morristown, New Jersey, Together with Mr. Barnes Defense of the Sermon, Read Before the Synod of Philadelphia, and his Defense before the second Presbytery of Philadelphia, 1836 Edition, p. 220

<sup>200</sup> Revival Study Bible, Published by Armour Publishing Pte Ltd, p. 1562

<sup>201</sup> Coke upon Littleton, Vol. III, p. 368

<sup>202</sup> Divine Nescience of Future Contingencies a Necessity, Chapter: Harmonizing of the Calvinian and Arminian Schools of Theology

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Barnabas said, “He who chooses” to break the commandments “will be destroyed with his works...”<sup>204</sup>

Hermas said, “All who therefore despise Him and do not follow His commands deliver themselves to death, and each will be guilty of his own blood.”<sup>205</sup>

Origen said, “...we have freedom of will and we ourselves are the cause of our own ruin.”<sup>206</sup>

Titian said, “We die by our own fault. Our free will has destroyed us.”<sup>207</sup>

Even Prosper, a disciple of Augustine, said that those who “perish” do so because of “their voluntary iniquity.”<sup>208</sup>

*Since men are  
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sins of their  
ancestors, a person  
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of Jesus Christ for  
their own sins and  
not for the sins of  
their ancestors.*

Irenaeus said, “Man, a reasonable being, and in that respect like God, is made free in his will; and being endued with power to conduct himself, he is the cause of his own becoming sometimes wheat and sometimes chaff; therefore will he be justly condemned.”<sup>209</sup>

Baruch said, “For though Adam first sinned and brought ultimately death upon all, yet of those who were born from him, each one of them has prepared for his own soul torment to come, and again each one of them has chosen for himself glories to come. For assuredly he who believeth will receive reward. But now, as for you, you wicked that now are, turn you to

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<sup>203</sup> Checks to Antinomianism by John Fletcher, Volume One, p. 130, 147, Published by Carlton & Porter

<sup>204</sup> Letter of Barnabas, chap 21

<sup>205</sup> Shepherds bk. 2, comm.. 7; bk 3, sim. 10, chap. 2

<sup>206</sup> First Things bk. 3, chap. 1

<sup>207</sup> A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 286, Published by Hendrickson Publishers

<sup>208</sup> An Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism by John Fletcher, Volume Two, p. 205, Published by Carlton & Porter

<sup>209</sup> An Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism by John Fletcher, Volume Two, p. 200-201, Published by Carlton & Porter

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destruction, because you shall speedily be visited, in that formerly you rejected the understanding of the Most High. For His works have not taught you, nor has the skill of His creation which is at all times persuaded you. Adam is therefore not the cause, save only of his own soul, but each of us has been the Adam of his own soul.”<sup>210</sup>

Since men are damned for their own sins and not for the sins of their ancestors, a person needs the atonement of Jesus Christ for their own sins and not for the sins of their ancestors. The Bible says, “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). “JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mat. 1:21).

A person only needs forgiveness for their own personal sins, which is why Jesus taught that God will “forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:15; Mk. 11:25; 11:26). No man is damned for the sin of another; and consequently, no man needs forgiveness through the atonement for the sin of another. No man needs forgiveness for a sin that they did not commit or cause. We do not need forgiveness for the singular “sin” of Adam. The Bible says that men need forgiveness for their own personal plural “sins” (Matt. 1:21; 26:28; Acts 2:38).

On the other hand, just as we do not inherit the damnation of our parents, neither do we inherit the salvation of our parents. Many of the Jews in Jesus’ day thought that they did not need to repent and believed that they were already right with God merely because they were “children of Abraham.” John the Baptist confronted this error when he said, “Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father” (Lk. 3:8). Their ancestry did not exempt them from their personal need of repentance. They personally needed to repent because they personally sinned. The Jewish people, though the chosen people for the promise

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<sup>210</sup> 2 Baruch 54:15-19

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

land, were not unconditionally chosen for salvation. Their salvation was conditional upon their own repentance.

The descendants of Abraham did not inherit his salvation. That is why Jesus Christ told Nicodemus, who was a Jewish man in his old age, that he would need to be born again to enter the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3-7). Jesus was not telling Nicodemus that he needed to be born again because damnation was hereditary, but because salvation was not hereditary. Men need to repent and be born again, not because they are born with a sinful nature that damns them, but because they have personally chosen to sin. We do not need to be born again because our first birth made us sinners, but because after we were born we chose to be sinners. Even Adam needed to be born again after he sinned. God never asks us to repent of the nature we inherit or to repent of the ancestors that we descend from. God asks us to repent of our own personal choices of sin in order to be personally saved. Clearly then, neither damnation nor salvation is hereditary but both require personal or individual choice.

Albert Barnes said, "The work of salvation, and the work of damnation, are the two most deliberate and solemn acts of choosing, that mortal man ever performs."<sup>211</sup> And he said, "Christianity does not charge on men crimes of which they are not guilty. It does not say, as I suppose, that the sinner is held to be personally answerable for the transgression of Adam, or of any other man; or that God has given a law which man has no power to obey."<sup>212</sup>

### JESUS CHRIST WAS A SON OF ADAM

It has been taught by various theologians that the first sin of Adam somehow made his nature or constitution sinful. The Bible, on the other hand, teaches that God cursed the ground, not Adam's nature (Gen. 3:17). And in all of the consequences God declared as a result of Adam's sin, a sinful nature for himself and all his posterity is

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<sup>211</sup> The Way of Salvation: A Sermon, Delivered at Morristown, New Jersey, Together with Mr. Barnes Defense of the Sermon, Read Before the Synod of Philadelphia, and his Defense before the second Presbytery of Philadelphia, 1836 Edition, p. 28

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, p. 254-255

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not even mentioned (Gen. 3:16-19).<sup>213</sup> Nevertheless, theologians have taught that Adam's very nature, not just his character, became sinful when he sinned. And as we inherit our nature or constitution from Adam, we therefore are born with a nature or constitution that is sinful. In this way, all of Adam's descendants inherit from him his sin, guilt, and damnation.

This is their view in logical syllogism:

*Major premise:* Adam's nature became a sinful nature after his first choice to sin.

*Minor premise:* Adam's descendants inherit their nature from him.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, Adam's descendants inherit from him a sinful nature.

*Major premise:* The sinfulness of men consists in the state or quality of their inherited nature.

*Minor premise:* The wrath of God is against men for their sinfulness and they deserve eternal damnation for it.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, men are under the wrath of God and deserve eternal damnation for their inherited nature.

Augustine said, "Every man brings into the world a nature already so corrupt, that he is not only more inclined to evil than to good, but he can do nothing but sin, and is, on this account, subject to the righteous sentence of condemnation."<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> It should be noted that it is evident that the author does not deny that Adam and Eve were real people, that they did commit the original sin, and that their original sin has negatively affected all of mankind. The issue in dispute is over what the consequences of original sin are, not the existence of the original sin itself nor that it has negatively affected all of their descendants.

<sup>214</sup> G. F. Wiggers, *An Historical Presentation of Augustinianism and Pelagianism from the Original Sources*, 1821, translated from German by R. Emerson, 1840, p. 332.

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John Gill said that because of Adam's sin, "eternal death" which is "the just wages of sin... comes upon all men, all the sons of Adam without exception."<sup>215</sup>

The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation sinned in him, and fell with him in the first transgression."<sup>216</sup>

The Catechism of Trent said, "Wherefore, the pastor should not omit to remind the faithful that the guilt and punishment of original sin were not confined to Adam, but justly descended from him, as from their source and cause, to all posterity."<sup>217</sup>

Thomas Aquinas said, "...a human being begets descendants as in the human being's nature.... And so a parent transmits to descendants the first sin that corrupted the nature..."<sup>218</sup>

Wayne Grudem said, "...we also inherited a sinful nature because of Adam's sin."<sup>219</sup>

Lewis Chafer said, "The Augustinian or realistic theory holds that the connection between Adam and his posterity was such, that by his individual transgression he vitiated human nature, and transmitted it in this corrupt and guilty state to his descendants by physical generation... Adam's individual transgression resulted in a sinful nature..."<sup>220</sup>

The volume "A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages" states, "Original sin, according to Anselm, is the sinfulness, or guiltiness, which each descendent of Adam incurs at his origin. For at his origin he inherits a sinful human nature. That is, when Adam sinned personally his personal sin corrupted his human nature, with

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<sup>215</sup> John Gill commentary on Romans 5:18

<sup>216</sup> Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q/A 16

<sup>217</sup> Catechism of the Council of Trent: published by command of Pope Pius the fifth, Translated by Jeremiah Donovan, Published by F. Lucas, p. 32

<sup>218</sup> Compendium of Theology by Thomas Aquinas, translated by Richard J. Regan, Published by Oxford University Press, p. 149

<sup>219</sup> Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith, Published by Zondervan, p. 214

<sup>220</sup> Systematic Theology, Published by Kregel Publications, p. 311



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the result that the nature inherited by his progeny was also a corrupt nature.”<sup>221</sup>

Louis Berkhof explains how certain theologians have taught, “Adam suffered the loss of original righteousness, and thereby incurred the divine displeasure. As a result all his descendants are deprived of original righteousness, and as such the objects of divine wrath...”<sup>222</sup>

S. Michael Houdmann said, “Because of Adam’s and Eve’s disobedience, sin has been an ‘inheritance’ for all their descendants.... When Adam fell into sin, the result was every one of his descendants also being ‘infected’ with sin.”<sup>223</sup>

John Rodman Williams said, “...we are all heirs of Adam, and thereby inherit his sinful nature. What Adam became through the Fall has been passed down to all his successors.”<sup>224</sup>

It should bear much weight in our minds that not a single verse in the entire Bible explicitly says, “All of mankind inherits a sinful nature from Adam.” That is philosophical theory, not scriptural fact. Many theologians take for granted the idea that Adam’s nature or constitution somehow became sinful when he chose to sin, when even this point is nowhere stated in all of Scripture nor can it be shown with reason how this is possible. Adam did not have the power by his mere will to change human nature for all mankind. Adam was not the God of nature. And neither could sin itself change human nature. But only God, who is the God of Nature, has the power to create and change human nature, and He certainly would not want to do so since He is good and He created human nature good.

Pelagius said, "We have first of all to discuss the position which is maintained, that our nature has been weakened and changed by sin. I think that before all other things we have to inquire what sin is, - some substance, or wholly a name without substance, whereby is expressed not a thing, not an existence, not some sort of a body, but

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<sup>221</sup> A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages, Edited by Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone, Published by Wiley-Blackwell, p. 143

<sup>222</sup> Systematic Theology, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, p. 238

<sup>223</sup> Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered, Published by WinePress Publishing, p. 378

<sup>224</sup> Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective, Published by Zondervan, p. 270

## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

the doing of a wrongful deed. I suppose that this is the case; and if so how could that which lacks all substance have possibly weakened or changed human nature?"<sup>225</sup>

Dennis Carroll said, "Man does not have the ability to change his nature... God would not destroy man's nature because He said he made it good. And the devil, he cannot change man's nature... So there is no possible way that he can lose part of his nature. God wouldn't do it. Man cannot do it. The devil cannot do it. So the way God created man is the same way man has continued to be."<sup>226</sup>

And it has been shown already that God did not create Adam's nature only and then step back to "let nature take its course." It has been abundantly shown that God personally and actively forms

*Jesus was a  
descendent  
of Adam and  
He was not  
born sinful,  
guilty, or  
damned.*

each individual in the womb. No doubt, God does not form our natures out of nothing or "ex nihilo." Even Adam was created out of the dirt (Gen. 2:7; 3:19), and Eve was made from his rib (Gen. 2:22). So God uses the DNA from our mother's eggs and our father's sperm, but He is still the one who forms us in the womb.

It is not in man's DNA or design to sin, but to the contrary. Since the sin of Adam, sin is still contrary to our essential design itself.

Adam's first and single act of disobedience did not somehow corrupt and pervert human DNA so that our DNA is now sinful. And a person is not a sinner because of what type of DNA they have but because of what type of choices they make.

The specific question we are now going to examine is whether or not "all" the "successors" of Adam or "all" of his "descendants" inherit his sinfulness and damnation, as Augustinian theologians have claimed.

First, let us look at one of Adam's very first descendants. Cain was an offspring of Adam, born outside of the Garden of Eden, after Adam's original sin. Did Cain inherit a sinful nature from his father? Was there sin in his DNA, or was his DNA sinful, or was it his DNA to sin? God said to Cain, "And the Lord said unto Cain,

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<sup>225</sup> On Nature and Grace by Augustine

<sup>226</sup> Video Interview for the film Beyond Augustine, produced by InLight Productions

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Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him” (Gen. 4:6-7). I said earlier in this book, and will say it again here, notice that sin is spoken of as something that was alien and foreign. God spoke to Cain about sin as something that was external to him, trying to get in, not something that was inbred or indwelling already. And God spoke to Cain as a free moral agent who had a free choice between good and evil, who was capable of ruling over sin. Clearly, Cain was a descendent of Adam that did not loss his free will as a result of Adam’s original sin, nor was the nature that he inherited from Adam sin or sinful itself.

Secondly, we know with absolute proof from the Scriptures that sin, guilt, and damnation are not heredity, transmitted, or inherited from Adam to all of his posterity because Jesus Christ was a descendant of Adam and He was not born sinful, guilty, or damned. If “all” of Adam’s descendants inherit a sinful nature, or inherit his guilt and damnation, then it stands to reason that Jesus Christ would have been included in the “all” because He too was a descendant of Adam as well. On this point, it must first be shown that Jesus Christ was indeed a descendant of Adam, which is a truth that many theologians overlook, ignore, or dismiss. Consider the following arguments.

First, Jesus Christ was an offspring or descendant of Abraham. The Bible says, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16). “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took of him the seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16). Since Jesus Christ was of the seed of Abraham and took upon Himself Abraham’s human nature, this helps us to understand why God said to Abraham, “in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 26:4).

Since Jesus Christ was a child of Abraham, the children of Abraham are called His “brethren.” The Bible says, “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren” (Acts 3:22). “Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren” (Heb. 2:14). If Jesus was not a descendant of Abraham, He could not be called the “brethren” of Abraham’s offspring.

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In this way Jesus Christ was genuinely an Israelite. He belonged to the tribe of Judah. The Bible says, “For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah” (Heb. 7:14). The word “sprang” in this passage means “descended from.”<sup>227</sup> “And one of the elders saith unto me, weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev. 5:5).

Clearly, Jesus was a descendent of Abraham since He was born of Abraham’s seed, He was a brother to Abraham’s children, and He was a member of the tribe of Judah.

Second, Jesus Christ was also the offspring or descendant of David. Through His mother, David is referred to as a “father” to Jesus, Jesus is called the “seed” of David, and Jesus is said to be “the fruit” of David’s “body.” “The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne” (Ps. 132:11). “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Lk. 1:31-33). “Hath not the Scripture saith, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, were David was? (Jn. 7:42) “Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne” (Acts 2:30). “David, the son of Jesse... Of this man’s seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus” (Acts 13:22-23). “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:3). “Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel” (2 Tim. 2:8). “Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book” (Rev. 5:5). Jesus testified of his own heredity when he said, “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the Churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star” (Rev. 22:16).

Just as the Bible talks about “the book of the generations of Adam” (Gen. 5:1), and the Hebrew word for generation refers to

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<sup>227</sup> Thayer’s definition of “*anatellō*.”

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“genealogical lists of one’s descendants,”<sup>228</sup> so the Scriptures also talks about “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Mat. 1:1). The Greek word “generation” in this passage about Jesus literally means “source,” “origin,” “lineage,” “progeny,” and “ancestry.”<sup>229</sup> Jesus had human ancestors and physically descended from them. The Scriptures also says, “Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ” (Mat. 1:16).

These many passages that teach that Jesus Christ was of the posterity of Abraham and David and the child of Mary have very great theological implications. What can we conclude from these passages but that if Jesus Christ was of the root, offspring, or seed of Mary, Abraham, and David, then He was also of the root, offspring, or seed of Adam, since Mary, Abraham, and David were descendants of Adam? This logical conclusion cannot be avoided granted the premise given to us in Scripture.

*Major premise:* Jesus Christ was a descendant of Mary, David, and Abraham.

*Minor premise:* Mary, David, and Abraham were descendants of Adam and Eve.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, Jesus Christ was a descendant of Adam and Eve.

If “Christ” was the “fruit of his loins” in regards to David, then Christ must of necessity been of the fruit of Adam’s loins, since David was of the fruit of Adam’s loins. If Jesus was “of the seed” of David and Abraham “according to the flesh”, and David and Abraham were the seed of Adam, then Jesus Christ was necessarily of “the seed” of Adam “according to the flesh.”

Pelagius said, “with regard to the flesh Christ was created from the line of David.”<sup>230</sup> He also said, “He therefore took flesh like the flesh of the rest of humanity, as far as the nature is concerned.”<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Brown-Driver-Briggs definition of “tôledâh.”

<sup>229</sup> Thayer’s definitions of “genesis.”

<sup>230</sup> Pelagius’s commentary on Romans 1:2.

<sup>231</sup> Pelagius’s commentary on Romans 8:3

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Dr. Zacharius Ursinus, who was a major figure and leader in the Protestant Reformation, even said, "The argument which is drawn from these declarations made in relation to the Messiah, is most convincing; for if the humanity which he assumed was from the seed of Abraham, and of David, then he had a real human nature... Christ took this upon himself, and not a nature created out of nothing, or bought down from heaven... The flesh of Christ is the flesh of Adam..."<sup>232</sup>

Where did Jesus Christ get his humanity from? Where did the human nature of Christ come from? How did Jesus Christ become part of the human race? It was all through his earthly mother Mary (Gal. 4:4), who was a descendant of David, Abraham, and ultimately Adam and Eve. While God no doubt formed Jesus in the womb, and in this sense His human nature was from God just as ours is, there is a sense in which Jesus certainly did not inherit His human nature from His heavenly Father's side of the family. While His divine nature is from His Father's side, His human nature is from His mother's side.<sup>233</sup> Christ received His human nature from His earthly human mother, receiving His human attributes from her side of the family. Therefore, Jesus actually inherited His human nature ultimately from Adam and Eve.

*While His  
divine nature is  
from His  
Father's side,  
His human  
nature is from  
His mother's  
side.*

While I was open air preaching on the University of Alabama in Birmingham, a student said to me, "We are all born sinners." I said, "No, we are born innocent babies and become sinners by choice. It is your own fault." He said, "Don't we descend from Adam?" I said, "Yes, just like Jesus Christ was a descendant of Adam." He said, "No, He was the son of God." I said, "He was also the son of man. Wasn't

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<sup>232</sup> The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism, translated by George Washington Williard, Published by Elm Street Printing Co, 1888 Edition, p. 209

<sup>233</sup> That is not to say that Christ was divine because He was born of a virgin, as Christ was born of a virgin because He was divine. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, a member of the Trinity, who has always had a divine nature.

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Jesus the descendant of David?" He said "Yes, through his mother." I said, "Then through his mother he was also the descendant of Adam. If Jesus was a descendant of David and Abraham, and David and Abraham were descendants of Adam, then Jesus Christ was a descendant of Adam." He was silent and completely unable to respond to this argument. He could not refute this logic.

God's own statements on this topic should forever settle this controversial issue. God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). The Hebrew word used for "her seed" means "offspring, descendant, posterity, children."<sup>234</sup>

This passage is understood to be prophetic of the incarnation of Jesus Christ and His victory over Satan. John Wesley noted, "A gracious promise is here made of Christ as the deliverer of fallen man from the power of Satan... Notice is here given them... concerning Christ... His incarnation, that he should be the seed of the woman."<sup>235</sup>

If Jesus Christ was of the seed of Eve, He was necessarily of the seed of Adam, because Eve could not have any offspring at all independent from Adam. Therefore, no passage could make it any clearer than this one that Jesus Christ was in fact a descendant of Adam and Eve through his human mother Mary.

The ancestors of an individual on their mother's side are no less their ancestors than the ancestors they have on their father's side. The ancestors of an individual on their father's side are no more their ancestors than the ancestors they have on their mother's side. The ancestors a person has through their mother and through their father are both equally their ancestors. Therefore, the Adamic lineage or heredity of Jesus Christ is by no means nullified, negated, or excluded by virtue of his virgin birth.

*Jesus was both human and divine. He was born of God and born of man. Jesus had both a divine and a human nature.*

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<sup>234</sup> Brown-Driver-Briggs definition of "zera."

<sup>235</sup> John Wesley's commentary on Gen. 3:15

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Even through God was the Heavenly Father of Christ, the ancestors through His mother were legitimate ancestors. Otherwise, His ancestry from Abraham and David could also not be spoken of in Scripture. Christ was a descendant of Abraham and David through His mother despite His virgin birth; and likewise, Christ was a descendent of Adam and Eve through His mother despite His virgin birth. If the virgin birth excludes Christ's lineage or ancestry from Adam, it would also negate his heredity from Abraham and David.

Since Christ is said in the Scriptures to be of "the seed of Abraham" and of "the offspring of David," all despite his virgin birth, there is no reason to think that Christ is not also the seed or offspring of Adam, despite the virgin birth. His miraculous birth did not

*In order to  
be a member  
of mankind  
you must  
be a child  
of Adam.*

somehow make his human ancestry illegitimate. Jesus was both human and divine. He was born of God and born of man. Jesus had both a divine and a human nature. His virgin birth made Him both the son of God and also the son of man.

The term "son of man" is actually a phrase used one hundred and eight times in the Old Testament. In Hebrew the phrase is son of "âdâm." It is interesting that the Hebrew word for man is Adam. Therefore, the phrase "son of man" actually means "son of Adam." That is because in order to be a member of mankind you must be a child of Adam. If a person is a son of man, or a member of mankind, then they necessarily are a child of Adam. If they are not a child of Adam, then they are not a member of mankind or a son of man.

The New Testament applied this Old Testament phrase, "son of man," to Jesus Christ eighty five times. This phrase is used in all four Gospels and in the Epistles in reference to Christ. Jesus often used this phrase in reference to Himself. What could the Bible mean by the use of this phrase in reference to Christ, but that Jesus was truly a part of mankind because He was truly a son of Adam through his mother? If Jesus was not a son of Adam, then He was not truly a part of mankind. If Jesus did not take upon Himself human nature, then He was not part of the human race. It was absolutely essential for Jesus Christ, in His incarnation, to become a descendant of Adam and



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to take upon Himself human nature, if He was going to actually be a part of mankind or become a member of the human race.

The descriptions of Jesus' lineage and genealogy laid in the Scriptures gives us specific insight into the earthly identity of Jesus Christ.

- Being a child of Mary put Jesus Christ into a particular family.
- Being a descendant of David put Jesus Christ into a lineage of kings.
- Being of Judah made Jesus Christ of a certain tribe of Israel.
- Being a descendant of Abraham made Jesus Christ a Jew and an Israelite.
- Being a child of Adam made Jesus Christ a human being that was part of the human race.

Jesus was a descendent of Adam and was therefore a legitimate member of mankind. The Bible says, "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). There is no scriptural support for the doctrine that Mary had an "immaculate conception" which exempted her from inheriting original sin and somehow made her sinless her entire life or "free from any personal or hereditary sin."<sup>236</sup> Instead, there is scripture to the contrary (Lk. 1:47). The doctrine of an immaculate conception is a philosophical construct based upon the assumption of original sin, which Catholic theologians invented to prevent their theology from teaching the transmission of sin to Jesus. Others have rightly recognized that Jesus inherited His human nature through His mother, and admit that Mary had a nature inherited from Adam, but they falsely assumed that such a human nature was sinful. Therefore, they concluded that Jesus Christ inherited a sinful nature through his mother.

Abraham Tucker said, "...the sinful nature of Jesus; for that he did partake of a sinful nature by his birth from the woman, I see no reason nor scruple to doubt... He was a descendant of Adam, and

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<sup>236</sup> Council of Trent Denzinger Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum , Freiburg, 1957, document 833; "she was free from any personal or hereditary sin", Pius XII, Encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, 1943 in Dentzinger, D2291

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when it is declared that in Adam all have sinned, no exception is made of him...<sup>237</sup>

Their reasoning on this point is as follows:

*Major premise:* The nature transmitted from Adam to his descendants is a sinful nature.

*Minor premise:* Jesus was a descendant of Adam and inherited human nature from His mother.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, Jesus inherited a sinful nature.

If you grant their premise it would be impossible to avoid their conclusion. But the fault in their logic is the presupposition that human nature, or the human constitution and composition, is itself sinful. They inevitably come to the wrong conclusion because they start with the wrong premise.

*Sin and guilt  
are originated  
by the  
individual, not  
inherited from  
their  
ancestors.*

They should have reasoned the following:

*Major premise:* Jesus was a descendant or posterity of Adam and inherited His human nature from him.

*Minor premise:* Jesus was not formed or born with a sinful nature.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, a sinful nature is not transmitted from Adam to all of his descendants or posterity.

If Jesus Christ was sinless, which He undoubtedly was, then it cannot be affirmed that a sinful nature is transmitted from Adam to all of His descendants. Neither can we say that Adam's guilt is imputed to all of his descendants as their representative. And we cannot believe that all of Adam's descendants sinned in him being in his loins. The fact that Jesus Christ was a descendant of Adam, and the fact that Jesus Christ was sinless and guiltless, proves beyond question the fact that men are not sinful or guilty merely for

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<sup>237</sup> The Light of Nature Pursued, Volume Four, Published by Hilliard and Brown, 1831 Edition, p. 109

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descending from Adam. Sin and guilt are originated by the individual, not inherited from their ancestors.

Alfred T. Overstreet said, “Jesus was a man. He was born of a woman. He was the seed of Abraham, the offspring of David, descended from Adam. Matt. 1:1, Rom. 1:3, Heb. 2:16, rev. 22:16. The humanity of Christ is fully and unequivocally taught in the Bible, and to teach the doctrine that men are born sinners is to teach the blasphemy that ‘the man Christ Jesus’ was born a sinner... It is a serious error to deny the deity of Christ. One cannot be a Christian and deny his deity. John taught that it is equally serious to deny the humanity of Christ.”<sup>238</sup>

The reason that the Gnostic’s denied that Jesus Christ had a real flesh is because they viewed the flesh as sinful. But when we understand that flesh is a tool that can be used sinfully or righteously, we would have no problem admitting the Scriptural truth that Jesus had a flesh through His earthly mother. When Augustine converted from Gnosticism, he brought modified Gnostic views into the Church. Now many seem to deny that Jesus Christ had a real human or Adamic nature because they view human nature as sinful. But when we understand that our nature is a tool that we can use for sin or for righteousness, we would have no problem admitting the Scriptural truth that Jesus had a human or Adamic nature through His earthly mother.

*When men do something so often and regularly, it becomes like second nature to them.*

### CHOICES CREATE HABITS

Some today may think that they have a sinful nature, or that sin is natural to them, because they have developed a habit of sinning through their own free will. As mentioned at the beginning of this book, choice creates character and character creates habits. Through the continual choice of disobedience men have made sin “natural” or “normal” for them, in the sense that it has become their habit. When

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<sup>238</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, p. 111-112

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men do something so often and regularly, it becomes like “second nature” to them, even though it is actually and originally unnatural.<sup>239</sup>

This habit of sin, or tendency towards unlawful gratification, is the result of their own will and not the product of the hands of God. Their habit comes, not from their God given constitution or nature, but from their own free will. This “second nature” is the fruit of their own doings and they are therefore entirely responsible and accountable for it.

A person cannot repent for the sins of their ancestors, or for a supposed inherited sin, as their consent and knowledge was not involved in that sin. They cannot say to themselves, “I never want to do that again” since they didn’t do it in the first place. However, a sinner can repent of the sinful nature that they themselves developed by their choices and habits. That type of sinful nature is something that they can and must repent of.

*The innocent self-centeredness of a child is natural and normal at first, and even necessary for their survival, but it becomes sinful once they know better.*

It should also be understood at this point that we have a natural influence towards virtue when our conscience is developed, but before it is developed, we have a fleshly constitutional influence towards self-gratification. That is why it is so important that, though infants have this natural fleshly desire for gratification, through parental instruction and discipline children can learn self-control and restraint at a very early age. At first, they learn this self-control and restraint purely out of self-interest, as the ideas necessary for benevolence may not be developed in their minds. Parents can help to develop those ideas in their mind as well. So there is this parental influence that young children can and should have in their lives, as even in early life their choices are made by free will in light of the motives their mind considers. Nevertheless, in the development of a child, their flesh with its passions and desires is developed long

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<sup>239</sup> Through much training and practice athletes can become so accustomed to their game that it becomes like nature to them. They begin to play from natural reaction and response. Others may even think that they are a “natural born athlete.”

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before their mind or conscience is developed to understand moral principle. By the time they reach the age of accountability, when they perceive the value and rights of others and know that they ought to love God supremely and their neighbor equally, children have already developed a habit of self-centeredness and a lifestyle of self-indulgence and self-gratification, living supremely for their own self-interest. That is why children choose to continue in this selfish state and regard their own selfishness supremely as they are used to doing even after they know better.

The innocent self-centeredness of a child is natural and normal at first and even necessary for their survival but it becomes sinful once they know better (Jn. 9:41; Jas 4:17). They cannot help but to be self-centered before their mind develops and they perceive the rights and value of others. They cannot be blamed for being that which they cannot help being, or for not being that which is impossible for them to be. Their self-centeredness becomes unnatural and wicked once the rights and value of other people is developed in their minds. Once a person knows that God is supremely valuable and so we ought to love Him supremely, and that our neighbor is equally valuable and so we ought to love them equally, it is sinful, wicked, and rebellious to be self-centered and to live supremely for the gratification of ourselves. Once we know that God should be supremely loved and our neighbor should be loved equally to ourselves, it is sinful if we love ourselves supremely or if we love ourselves above our neighbor.

### THE NATURAL MAN

Someone might ask, “If men do not have a sinful nature, why does the Bible talk about a sinner being a natural man?” When the Bible talks about “the natural man” (1 Cor. 2:14), the Greek word means a “sensual”<sup>240</sup> or carnal man. This Greek word translated as natural is different from another word that is translated as natural elsewhere in the Bible. When James wrote about “a man beholding his natural face in a glass” (Jas. 1:23), the Greek word used here is in reference “of that which follows origin” and “the wheel of human origin which as soon as men are born begins to run, i.e. its course of

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<sup>240</sup> Strong’s definition of “psuchikos.”

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life.”<sup>241</sup> This word translated as natural in James refers to a man’s “nativity” and “nature.”<sup>242</sup> But that is not the Greek word used to describe a sinner as a “natural man” in 1 Cor. 2:14, because their carnal and sensual lifestyle is not the result of their origin, birth, nativity, or nature, as your natural face is.

By definition, a sensual man is someone, “Devoted to the gratification of sense; given to the indulgence of the appetites; lewd; luxurious.”<sup>243</sup> A lewd man is someone, “Given to the unlawful indulgence of lust; addicted to fornication or adultery; dissolute; lustful; libidinous.”<sup>244</sup> The natural man is someone who chooses to be governed by their passions rather than being governed by their conscience. They are committed to the gratification of their flesh and are living for that end. In the Greek, the natural man refers to, “the principal of animal life, which men have in common with the brutes... the sensuous nature with its subjection to appetite and passion.”<sup>245</sup>

What is translated as “natural” in 1 Cor. 2:14 is translated as “sensual” elsewhere in the New Testament (Jas. 3:15; Jude 1:19). A better term than “natural man” in this passage would be “carnal man” or “sensual man.” This type of man is someone who lives exclusively or supremely for their flesh, instead of putting their flesh in its proper place and using it the way God intended and designed. The carnal man lives for his own fleshly pleasure and violates the moral principles of his own conscience, which was meant to be the supreme faculty of his nature. The carnal man lives for his lower nature, making his lower nature supreme. And he lives contrary to his higher nature. Living for your lower nature is itself a very unnatural, perverted, debased, and a disorderly function of your natural being. Man was never meant to live like a mere brute of the wild but that is what a man reduces himself to when he lives for the gratification of his flesh as his supreme intention or ultimate pursuit.

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<sup>241</sup> Strong’s definition of “genesis.”

<sup>242</sup> Thayer’s definition of “genesis.”

<sup>243</sup> Noah Webster’s Dictionary of American English

<sup>244</sup> Noah Webster’s Dictionary of American English

<sup>245</sup> Thayer’s definition of “psuchikos.”

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The word “flesh” in the Greek means, “the sensuous nature of man, ‘the animal nature’ and ‘the animal nature with cravings which incite to sin.’”<sup>246</sup> The Bible speaks of the “carnally minded” (Rom. 8:6) who are people “that are after the flesh” (Rom. 8:5). The Greek for carnally minded means “fleshly purposed.”<sup>247</sup> This carnal purpose of the mind “is not subject to the law of God” (Rom. 8:7). And the law of God is revealed to us through our nature (Rom. 2:14). Since being carnally minded is contrary to the law of God, and the law of God is naturally revealed to us through our conscience, being carnally minded is therefore contrary to our nature.

When the Bible says that sinners are “by nature children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3), it is not saying that men are under the wrath of God merely for being born or for possessing the constitution which God formed them with. What a monstrous notion to represent God as having wrath for men merely for being born, especially when He is the one who gave them life. And how awful it is to view men as being under God’s wrath for having the composition which He Himself gave them! This would make the wrath of God unreasonable and unjust.

There is certainly no injustice involved in men being under the wrath of God for the sinful habits that they have formed by free choice and for being responsible for the nature that they have themselves created. Sin becomes like nature to sinners because of their habitual choice to sin and they certainly are rightly responsible for having this nature as they are the cause of it. However, the idea of sinners being under the wrath of God because of the nature or constitution that they are born with would contradict the natural sense of justice which God Himself has given us.

Charles Finney, commented on Eph. 2:3, said, “That it cannot, consistently with natural justice, be understood to mean, that we are exposed to the wrath of God on account of our nature. It is a monstrous and blasphemous dogma, that a holy God is angry with any creature for possessing a nature with which he was sent into

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<sup>246</sup> Thayer’s definition of “sarx.”

<sup>247</sup> Thayer’s definition of “sarx” and “phronēma” combined together.

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being without his knowledge or consent. The Bible represents God as angry with men for their wicked deeds, and not for their nature.”<sup>248</sup>

Alfred T. Overstreet said, “The Bible represents man to be just exactly what he knows himself to be... it represents him as being a responsible, rational moral being, with moral faculties and powers which enable him to know and do right, but who has sinned against the light of his nature. It represents him as having resisted his God-given reason, trampled on conscience, and abused free moral agency. In short, it represents man as being under God’s just wrath, not for being born with a sinful nature, but for resisting, abusing, and perverting the faculties and powers with which God created him. It should be forever remembered that obedience to God’s law is in accord with the moral nature that God has given us, but that disobedience to God’s law resists and abuses the moral nature that God has given us.”<sup>249</sup>

If a man is “by nature” a child “of wrath” (Eph. 2:3), it is because he is choosing to use the faculties of his nature for sin, thus making himself a proper object of the wrath of God. The Greek word “by nature” in this passage can mean “constitution or usage.”<sup>250</sup> If this is what the Apostle meant by using that word, he means that men are children of wrath because of the usage they make of their constitution.

This particular passage is talking about those who have developed a habit to live for the gratification of their flesh through continual choice. The phrase “by nature” in the Greek could also mean, “a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature...”<sup>251</sup> Those who are “children of wrath” in verse three are described as “children of disobedience” in verse two. Disobedience is a choice or state of the will. Therefore, those who are “children of wrath” in context are children of wrath by choice. They are children

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<sup>248</sup> Lectures on Systematic Theology, 1851 Edition, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 282

<sup>249</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, P 57. Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, p 57.

<sup>250</sup> Strong’s definition of “phusis.”

<sup>251</sup> Thayer’s definition of “phusis.”



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of wrath through the choice of their will to be disobedient to the law of God and live for their flesh. They choose to be disobedient to God by choosing to live a carnal or sensual life. They are under God's wrath because they live for the pleasure of their flesh instead of obeying the demands of their conscience. The carnal life is a life of living to gratify your lower nature instead of putting it under the supremacy of your higher nature. To choose to establish your lower nature as supreme is sin and perversion and will subject you to the wrath of God.

The context of men being under God's wrath by nature describes a former manner of life, addressing a previous natural or carnal lifestyle. The context says, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world... among whom also all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:2-3). The terms "walked" and "conversation" indicates a manner of living or a lifestyle. It necessarily involves the choice of man. And the choices that were made were to live carnal and sensual.

*It is not that  
our flesh is  
itself sinful,  
but that the  
choice to live  
for our flesh is  
sinful.*

The context of this verse in consideration says that they "were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). This shows how this state was altogether voluntary and caused by their own choice, since sins and trespasses are voluntary choices. Instead of obeying their conscience, living for the glory of God and the well-being of man, and putting their flesh in its proper place (a spiritual life), they ignore their conscience and live for themselves by making their purpose of life the gratification of their flesh (a carnal life).

This is what is meant by a natural life as opposed to a spiritual life. Living a natural or carnal life is when a person is selfishly living for the gratification of their flesh. It is not that the flesh is itself sinful, but that the choice to live for our flesh is sinful. Our flesh was never intended to be our god (Php 3:19), so it is sinful to live supremely for our flesh. The natural man is sinful through his own volition. He is a sinner by choice. A sinner chooses to be governed by the desires of his flesh but a saint chooses to be governed by God through his conscience. The constitution of the

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natural man and the spiritual man is the same but how they use that constitution is difference. The choices or character of a sinner and a saint are different.

When a man is truly saved by the power of the gospel, the committal of their will goes from pleasing themselves to pleasing God. True conversion is a turning away from a selfish life to a benevolent life. That is why before conversion occurs there is conviction of sin. This is when the Spirit of God quickens a man's conscience to condemn his selfishness. The quickening of a man's conscience (conviction) influences his will to change his moral choices.

The "old man" and "new man" are not descriptions of our constitution but describe our character. The "old man" is a wicked person who chooses to live for himself while the "new man" is a holy person who chooses to live for God (Eph. 4:24). Paul said, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (Col. 3:9). Notice that it is the old man with his "deeds" that we must put off, not nature. It is our choices and actions that must change, not our constitution. Paul said, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22). Again, notice that it is the former conversation or way of life that we must put off, not the nature that God formed us with. We are told to "put on the new man" (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). The phrase "put off" and "put on" means that it is our own responsibility and choice.

To say, "We cannot stop sinning," or to say, "We cannot keep the law of God," is to say that we have to live after the flesh or to live a selfish life. It is to say that we cannot deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Christ! Yet this is the very beginning of true conversion (Matt. 16:24; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23). Until a man ceases his commitment to live supremely for his flesh, he is yet to be converted to Jesus Christ. You cannot be devoted to Christ while being devoted to sin at the same time.

When the Bible says that Christians are "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:4), again the word "nature" in the Greek means, "a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become

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nature.”<sup>252</sup> And also means “constitution or usage.”<sup>253</sup> In this case, it is not that we had a sinful substance or composition and now we have received a divine substance or composition, but that we begin to use the faculties of our constitution the same way that God uses the faculties of His constitution, that is, the usage of our constitution is now for righteousness like His is. And we now develop holy habits and live a holy life like God does, instead of living a natural or carnal life seeking to gratify our lusts, so that choosing holiness like God does has become our normal, habitual, and regular mode of acting.

### SUMMARY

A sinful nature is one of the most common excuses sinners give to justify their wickedness and to comfort themselves in continuing in their sins. God cannot justly blame and condemn a man for being born with the nature that He Himself formed and created. A person’s knowledge and consent are not involved regarding the constitution which they are created with, so they cannot be responsible and accountable for possessing it. If sin ultimately consisted in a person’s nature and is not a free choice of their will, then sin is a misfortune but not a crime. Sinners would be victims deserving pity rather than criminals deserving punishment. If sin is not a free choice but a necessity of nature, sin is excusable and cannot be justly punished. Consequently, sinners would not in need of a Savior in Jesus Christ. However, if sin is a free choice of the will and not the involuntary state of a person’s nature from birth, sin is inexcusable and justifiably punishable. Consequently, sinners are in dire need of merciful pardon through Jesus Christ.

Our constitution is not sinful in and of itself. God is the author of our nature, not Adam or Satan, and God does not give us a sinful nature. Our constitution could be used as a tool for righteousness or for unrighteousness. Whether our flesh is an instrument of righteousness or unrighteousness depends upon our own free choice to yield it to the service of the one or the other. It is not man’s God given nature to sin, nor is man’s God given nature a sin itself.

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<sup>252</sup> Thayer’s definition of “phusis.”

<sup>253</sup> Strong’s definition of “phusis.”

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Our flesh doesn't make us sin. Neither is our flesh itself sinful. Therefore, we do not need a new flesh to be free from sin. We can be sanctified in this life even if we do not have glorified bodies. Jesus Christ was sinless and had the same type of flesh that we have. He too inherited His human nature from Adam through His earthly mother.

God did not design our nature to be used for sin. God designed us for holiness. Therefore, sin is unnatural. If a person uses their nature for wickedness, they are misusing and abusing their God-given nature. Sin is contrary to the proper function of our spirit, soul, and body, and is contrary to the intention of God in creating these elements of our nature.

Mankind has a constitutional influence towards virtue when our conscience is developed. We have a natural knowledge and right and wrong, a natural sense of justice, a natural compassion, a natural sense of guilt when we do wrong, a natural approval of good and reprobation of evil, etc. We naturally know good and evil because God has written his laws upon our conscience. Consequently, we naturally feel good when we do what is right and we naturally feel bad when we do what is wrong. Our conscience is bothered and disturbed by sin but it is satisfied and pleased by virtue. This is the way God has designed our constitution or nature to be.

Feeling guilty, convicted, or condemning yourself, is naturally an undesirable state of mind. It is a state of misery. Feeling good about yourself, or approving of your conduct, is naturally a desirable state of mind. It is a state of happiness. Therefore, even though all men have chosen to sin contrary to their nature, we are naturally influenced toward virtue. We have a natural predisposition towards goodness which sinners transgress against. This is as far as our conscience and subsequent feelings or sensibilities are concerned. Our sensibilities respond to the knowledge of our mind in regards to the moral quality of the choices of our will, which is why we start to feel bad when we recognize that we are choosing what is wrong or feel good when we acknowledge that we are choosing right.

Our conscience and intelligent are considered our "higher nature" and our passions and appetite belong to our "lower nature." It is sin to establish our lower nature as supreme instead of keeping it in its proper place. Our passions and appetites ought to be under subjection to the dictations of our conscience and intellect. Man's

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lower nature was always meant to be under the control of his higher nature. The passions, appetites, and desires of our nature were never meant to be gratified irrespective of conscience or contrary to reason. It is unnatural, disorderly, and perverted for the passions and appetites of our nature to have supremacy over our conscience and intelligence, which are also elements of our nature.

When a man lives supremely for his lower nature, pursuing the gratification of his desires as his ultimate intention, he reduces himself to the level of brutes and animals and thus is perverting his human nature. He is not using his nature the way God intended for mankind.

Regarding our flesh, which is part of our nature, its desires simply wants gratification. We do not have a constitutional tendency towards “sin” per say because of our flesh. Rather, we have a constitutional influence towards gratification. Our flesh doesn’t care if we gratify it lawfully or unlawfully, through sin or through lawful means. It just wants gratification through any means. And this would have been the case whether Adam had sinned or not, as it was true in his own case.

Our flesh feels good if we gratify it lawfully or unlawfully, but if we gratify it unlawfully we start to feel the pains of conscience. Our flesh inclines us towards gratification, but our conscience or intelligence inclines us towards virtue. Our conscience tells us to gratify our flesh only through lawful means, to put our flesh in its proper place, and to do the revealed will of God in all our moral activities. But neither our conscience nor our flesh necessitates our choices but our will is free to choose between virtue and vice. The will is free and is not under any necessity to the dictates and demands of our nature, whether our nature be good or sinful. We are free to choose between living for God supremely and our neighbor equally, in accordance with our conscience, or to live for ourselves supremely by selfishly pursuing the gratification of our flesh.

God designed us and formed our constitution or nature in the womb. Our Creator gave us natural desires which are good in themselves. We make the choice to gratify these desires through natural and lawful means or through unnatural and unlawful means. If we choose by our own free will to gratify our God-given desires unnaturally and unlawfully, this constitutes sin.

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It was the God-given desires which Adam, Eve, and Jesus had, which the devil used as the occasion to tempt them. Sin itself does not consist in these involuntary and natural desires, but in the actual committal of the will to gratify these desires unnaturally and unlawfully. Sin and temptation must not be confused. Temptation is not sin, since Jesus was tempted and He was sinless. And temptation does not require or prove the existence of a sinful nature as Adam, Eve, and Jesus Christ was tempted without one.

The natural desires of our body can also be corrupted and perverted, as is the case with drunkards, drug addicts, homosexuals, etc. However, if a person has developed perverted or unnatural desires through their own sinful choices but later choose not to submit and yield to these desires in their will, these physical desires are temptations and are not sin themselves. Sin is the choice of the will to yield and obey these unnatural desires. Sin is moral, not physical. Perverted and corrupt desires of the body, whether they were caused by your own free will choices or inherited from your parents, constitute physical depravity and must not be confused with moral depravity.

A sinful nature can be developed by a person's own free will choices. This uses the word "nature" in regards to a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit have become like nature, as opposed to referring to our natural constitution itself. Choices create character which results in habits. A habitual lifestyle of choosing sin makes choosing sin like second nature to you. Anything can become like nature to you if you habitually choose it, even things which at first are very unnatural to you.<sup>254</sup> A sinner can develop a sinful nature through his habitually sinful choices, but after conversion, holiness can become his habitual lifestyle so as to become a partaker of the divine nature.

Spiritual life, spiritual death, moral character, damnation, and salvation, are not transmitted from parent to child. Our spirits are not inherited or transmitted from our parents but are created by God in the womb. Men become spiritually dead or relationally separated from God when they first choose to sin. Moral character consists of

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<sup>254</sup> This principle of something becoming like nature to you applies not just to ethics but to language, art, sports, etc. Anything done habitually can become like second nature to you.

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voluntary attributes which are chosen by a person's will. Men are sinners by free choice, not by the necessity of their nature. Sin is original in that it is self-originated. Each individual freely chooses for themselves what their moral character will be. Damnation is personally deserved because of personal sin. No man is responsible or accountable for the sins of another. Each individual is responsible and accountable for their own sins. And salvation requires the personal choice to repent and believe. These things do not depend upon ancestry or heredity but depend upon the choices of an individual's free will.

A common argument for the original sin or sinful nature doctrine is, "You don't have to teach a child to lie. They do that naturally. If they weren't sinful by nature, but had a good nature, they would do what is good automatically and wouldn't sin. The reason children need to be taught and trained to do what is good is because they have a sinful nature."

Allow me to now answer this question in summary of what we have learned throughout this book.

First, Satan sinned and nobody taught him how. He thought it up with his own mind. Children have minds too. And no doubt, the devils tempt and teach children to sin just as the serpent did with Adam and Eve. But my child never lied to me until she played with another child who lied to his parents. Her natural response when I asked her a question was to tell the truth, until she learned from another child's by example about lying. And when she was confronted about it, she naturally felt bad. I didn't have to teach her to feel bad. She didn't choose to feel bad. It was natural.

Secondly, just because our nature teaches us to do right doesn't mean that we would automatically do it. People sin against their nature all the time. Homosexuals are examples of this. We naturally know right from wrong, we naturally approve of right and disapprove of wrong, and we naturally feel bad when we do wrong and feel good when we do right, nevertheless, we have all chosen to sin. We have a free will to do that which is contrary to our nature, so children do not necessarily do good just because their God given nature is good. Having a good nature does not mean that you wouldn't sin, as Adam, Eve, Lucifer, and all of the angels were created with good natures.

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Third, the reason children need to be trained and taught is not because of the sinfulness of their nature but because of the ignorance of their mind. All character, good or bad, needs to be taught. Our nature teaches us the law of God (Rom. 2:14-15). The need for teaching does not imply a sinful nature, as even adult regenerate believers need to be taught and trained and admonished toward good works (Heb. 10:24). The fact that the Bible commands us to teach and train our children presupposes that their character and behavior is a matter of free choice, not a necessity of their nature.



## SECTION II

### ORIGINAL SIN PROOF TEXTS EXPLAINED

The following is an explanation of the passages commonly used in support of the “born a sinner” or “born sinful” doctrine.

**I. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart” (Gen. 6:5-6).**

1. It is fallaciously assumed by Augustinians and Calvinists that if man’s heart was “only evil continually,” then this must be by the necessity of his nature and not by the freedom of his will. This, however, is an unfounded assumption. It is by choice that a man sets their heart on God or sin (1 Chron. 22:19; Ps. 78:8; Hos. 4:8), and if a man’s heart is only evil continually this does not imply that he could not have chosen otherwise.
2. It is also assumed by Augustinians and Calvinists that it is because of Adam’s original sin and the transmission of a sinful nature from Adam to all of his posterity that the whole world’s wickedness, described in this passage, came about. This too is an unfounded and false assumption.
  - A. The context of this passage is not the original sin of Adam, but the Nephilim. The immediate previous verses say, “That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose... There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to

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them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.” (Gen. 6:2, 4).

- B. The “sons of God” is a term used to describe the hosts or beings of heaven (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). While angels are spiritual beings, they can take physical form as seen all throughout the Bible. The Nephilim were giant beings that were a crossbred of angels and men. In essence, they were a type of half demon half men – a perversion of nature itself.
- C. The Bible records that the giants had six fingers and six toes (2 Sam. 21:20), which accords with the giant skeletal remains which have been unearthed in modern times.
- D. These giant skeletons also had oblong skulls, as did some of the Pharaoh’s of Egypt. Egyptian artwork and mummified remains show these oblong skulls. For example, Akhenaton, Nefertiti and Tutankhamun. Akhenaton claimed to be the son of God, Nefertiti was his queen, and Tutankhamun was their child. All three had elongated skulls, a common characteristic of Nephilim who were the offspring of fallen heavenly beings.
- E. These giant crossbreds became “mighty men which were of old, men of renown.” They were warriors (1 Sam. 17:4, 23), rulers, and kings (Deut. 3:11).
- F. This race of giants and their descendents became rulers and leaders in the world. They were advanced in their knowledge and strength so much so as to able to build massive pyramids to align with the solar system. Some of the pyramids were made from such large bricks that we do not have a crane today large enough to lift them. Various ancient cultures like the Sumerians and Syrians, who were advanced in their technology and knowledge of the solar system, claimed to have received their knowledge from gods who came down and visited them. Some of the knowledge that these ancient cultures had of

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the solar system were not even known to modern scientists until recent times. The Nephilim, greatly advanced in strength and knowledge, led the cultures of the world into great idolatry and wickedness, as was seen in the idolatry and wickedness of ancient Egypt.

- G. It was for this reason that the world became so corrupt and polluted that God sent the flood to destroy the world that had been corrupted by the Nephilim and to start over again through Noah and his family. The world had been corrupted by the spread of sin through influence, leading, and example, as we saw earlier in the book how certain kings “made Israel sin” by those same means. It was not that sin was spreading from parent to child through birth and men were sinning by the necessity of their nature. If this were the case, a flood of water would not fix this problem and the new world after the flood could not be expected to be any better than the first.
- H. After the Nephilim were destroyed in the flood, another race of giants was evidently started (Deut. 9:2). As the Bible says, “There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that...” (Gen. 6:4). These giants were called Emims (Deut. 2:10-11), Rephaim (Gen. 15:20), Zuzims (Gen. 14:5), Horims (Deut. 2:12, 22), and Anakims (Deut. 1:28; 9:2). Like the Nephilim before them, these perversions of nature also began corrupted the world in the same way. Many of those giants were slain by Abraham and ancient kings (Gen. 14:5-6, 13-16), Joshua and the Israel army (Num. 13:3; Jdg. 1:20; Jos. 11:21-22; 14:12), David (1 Sam. 17:23-51), and David’s men (2 Sam. 21:15-22; 1 Chron. 20:4-8).
- I. Roman historian Flavius Josephus said, “There were till then left the race of giants, who had bodies so large, and countenances so entirely different from other men, that they were surprising to the sight, and terrible to the

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hearing. The bones of these men are still shown to this very day.”<sup>255</sup>

### II. “... visiting the iniquities of the Fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me...” (Exo. 20:5)

1. This verse says nothing about Adam, birth, nature, or all of mankind. This verse certainly says nothing about all of mankind inheriting a sinful nature from Adam or being sinners at birth.

2. It is strange that this verse would ever be used to suppose the Augustinian doctrine of original sin. If this verse was saying that sin and guilt was hereditary, it would be saying that only the third and fourth generation inherits it. Augustine’s doctrine says that all the children of Adam of all generations inherit his sin and guilt. Therefore, if this verse was saying that sin and guilt was hereditary, it would actually be a refutation of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin.

3. To “the third and fourth generation” means that the actions of a parent have an influence or effect upon his children, but he does not influence or effect all of his generations. One of the greatest influences or teachers is example. An example influences those who observe it. One of the great influences upon a child is the example of a parent. When a child see’s their father sinning (first generation), or their grandfather sinning (second generation), or their great grandfather sinning (third generation), this has an influence upon their own moral character.

4. We see that a child can imitate the moral character of their parent by the story of Amon who “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh did...” (2 Kings 21:20) Other examples show us children imitating the moral character of their parents as well. “Nadab.... Did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father...” (1 Kings 15:25-26) “Ahaziah.... did evil in the sight of the Lord,

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<sup>255</sup> The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus: The Jewish Historian. The Antiquity of the Jews, Published by New Leaf Publishing Group, p. 119

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and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother...” (1 Kings 22:51-52) “Amon.... Did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh did. And walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them...” (2 Kings 21:19-21) “Jehoshaphat.... walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord” (2 Chron. 20:31-32).

5. The second of the Ten Commandments, which says iniquity is visited to the third and fourth generation, is the commandment that forbids idolatry. It forbids bowing down to idols. If a child observes their parent in the worship of an idol, their parent’s example could influence them to do likewise. If they bow down in imitation, they partake of their parent’s sin.

6. All throughout the Bible we see how one person’s example could lead others into sin (1 Kng. 14:16; 15:26, 30, 34; 16:13, 26; 21:22; 22:52; 2 Kng. 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 21:11, 16; 23:15, Neh. 13:26, Jer. 32:35, Isa. 3:12, Matt. 18:6; Mk. 9:42; Lk. 17:2, 1 Cor. 8:9, Heb. 4:11). “But whosoever shall offend [cause to sin] one of these little ones...” (Matt. 18:6). “But take heed lest by any means, this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak” (1 Cor. 8:9). “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Heb. 4:11).

7. The phrase “of them that hate me” is a very important qualification. Children do not share in their father’s sin and guilt by inheritance or imputation but by imitation. If the children do not grow up to hate the Lord and bow down to idols as their fathers did, then the iniquity of their fathers is not being visited upon them. If a child does not walk in the sins of their father, they do not share in the guilt of their fathers. God explicitly clarified this when He said, “What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul

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that sinneth, it shall die. But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right.... Neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel... he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God... Now lo, if he begets a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth and doeth not such like... he shall not die for the iniquity of of his father, he shall surely live... Yet say ye, Why? Doeth not the son bear the iniquity of the fathers? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. 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" (Eze. 18:2-6, 9, 19-20).

8. When the Pharisees were seeking to kill Jesus and they admitted that their fathers had killed the prophets, Jesus said to them, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers" (Matt. 23:32). They were sharing in the guilt of their fathers by sharing in the sin of their fathers. They were guilty of rejecting and murdering those whom God sent to them just as their fathers were. Children share in the guilt of their fathers by sharing in the sins of their fathers. But if a child does not share in their parent's sin, they will not share in their parent's guilt. No man can possibly be guilty of a sin that he didn't commit. Under the moral government of God, everyone is accountable for their own personal deeds (Jer. 17:10; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 11:15; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:11-12; Rev. 22:12).

9. Gordon C. Olson said, "When in Ex.20:5; 34:7; Nu. 14:18; De. 5:9; and Jer. 32:18, mention is made of "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," reference is made to the intimate relationship that God has constituted between parents and their children, the profound effects of the laws of heredity and environment which God has not voided. It cannot refer to the transfer of the guilt of sin, because it extends only to "the third and fourth generation," a normal period of influence. Then again, Jer. 32:19, one of the contexts, specifically states God's impartial basis of imputing guilt. But more emphatically, we are told that in God's judicial rulership of moral beings the guilt of one shall

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never be transferred or imputed to another: De. 24:16; II Chr. 25:4 (II Kgs. 14:6); Ps. 94:23; Jer. 31:30; Eze. 18:4, 20. In the face of this positive assertion of principle, a contradiction would exist in the Bible if any statement could be found declaring our guilt for Adam's sin."<sup>256</sup>

### **III. "Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said... What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" Job 15:1, 14.**

1. There is absolutely nothing in this verse about Adam or human nature. It speaks of mothers, birth, and moral character, but not Adam and nature. This passage cannot be rationally used as proof that a sinful nature is transmitted from Adam to all of his descendents.
2. It is very strange that this verse would be used to support the doctrine of original sin, or that a sinful nature is transmitted from parent to child. There is no reason to believe that Eliphaz the Temanite was inspired in what he said.
3. We have scripture of the Lord Himself saying that, not only was Eliphaz the Temanite uninspired, but he was wrong in what he said. Job 42:7 says, "After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: 'My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.'"
4. It is not proper exegesis to take any sentence out of the Bible and claim it as God's truth. Otherwise, you can take what the serpent said to Adam and Eve, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4), and advance it as true and inspired. If you take a verse out of context, you can use the Bible to teach, "there is no God" (Ps. 14:1). That would be no different than taking the words of Eliphaz the Temanite, assuming they are inspired merely for being in the scriptures, and using it as scriptural support for theological doctrine.

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<sup>256</sup> The Essentials of Salvation, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 257-258.

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5. If Eliphaz the Temanite was teaching the doctrine of original sin, or that a sinful nature was transmitted from parent to child, here we see the Lord declaring that what he said was not right.
6. If the words of Eliphaz the Temanite were in fact right, it would mean that no man born of a woman is righteous either at birth or after birth. The passage simply says that no man, who has been born of a woman, is righteous. We know that what Eliphaz said is false because we have many examples in the Scriptures of men who were born of women who were righteous in character (Lk. 1:6; 1 Jn. 3:12).

### **IV. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Ps. 51:5**

1. This Scripture is talking about David and his mother. It is not referencing all of humanity and it says nothing about Adam or Adam's original sin. It says nothing about human nature, let alone a sinful nature.

2. The sin mentioned is not the sin of Adam, but the sin of David's mother.

3. The structure of the sentence itself shows that the sin belonged to the mother, not to David. "In sin [verb] did my mother [subject] conceive me [object]." David's mother is the subject of the sentence so the sinning belonged to her.

a. Winkie Pratney said, "Now all David is saying in this, and you can look it up in Hebrew if you want to, is that my mother was a sinner during the time of my gestation and conception. That's all."<sup>257</sup>

b. Charles Finney said, "The Psalmist intended to affirm the sinful state of his mother, at the time of his conception, and during gestation."<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> 1971 Hilo School of Evangelism, Lecture on Original Sin

<sup>258</sup> Lectures on Systematic Theology, 1851 Edition, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 281



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4. There is a world of difference between being born in sin and having sin born in you, just as there is a world of difference between being born in America and having America born in you. David was formed in sin, but sin was not formed in him.

5. The event spoken of is the conception of David, not the birth of David. He is not saying that he was born a sinner. David is saying that his mother was in sin when she got pregnant. She was sinning when she conceived him. The conception is the beginning of the pregnancy. The birth is the end of the pregnancy. This passage is talking about the beginning of the pregnancy or the conception.

6. A strong case can be made that this is talking about the defilement of David's mother because she was previously the wife of, or the concubine of, a heathen king.

a. David had two half-sisters named Zeruiah and Abigail (1 Chron. 2:13-16).

b. The father of David's half sisters was not Jesse but Nahash (2 Sam. 17:25).

c. Nahash was an Ammonite king (1 Sam. 11:1; 1 Sam. 12:12).

d. David's father was Jesse, not Nahash, but David's half sisters were daughters of Nahash. This could explain why Nahash showed kindness toward David (2 Sam. 10:2).

e. David's mother was most likely the second wife of Jesse. The first wife of Jesse would have been considered superior to his second wife, as his second wife had been either the concubine or wife of a heathen king.

f. This would explain why David's half brothers viewed themselves as superior to David, and why David was considered prideful for thinking he was as good as them (1 Sam. 17:28-30).

g. This may explain why David was not called before Samuel the prophet amongst the other sons, as he was

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viewed as the embarrassment of the family and possibly was an illegitimate child (1 Sam. 16:11).

h. David's mother apparently had a good relationship with the Lord (Ps. 86:16; 116:16). But she would have been, in the eyes of Jewish law, considered defiled by her previous relationship with an Ammonite (Num. 25:1,2; Deut. 7:3,4; 1 Kings 11:2-4, Ezra 9:2; Neh. 13:23,25; 2 Cor. 6:14-17).

7. It may simply be that David's mother was not married to Jesse when she became pregnant, or that she was still the concubine of, or married to, Nahash the heathen king when she conceived.

8. The context of David's prayer of repentance in Psalms 51 is not consistent with David making an excuse for his adultery by saying, "I was born a sinner. It's not my fault. I was born this way." In true repentance, an individual takes full responsibility for their sin and offers no excuses for justification. David was not blaming his sin on his birth. David was simply stating that even the circumstances of his birth were surrounded by sexual sin.

9. When a sinner repents of his sins, it is not uncommon for them to reflect upon the stronghold that those sins have had throughout their family. A drunkard might reflect upon the drunkenness of his father when he repents of his own drunkenness. They might think to themselves, "I am a drunkard. My father was a drunkard. I come from a whole family of drunkards. Drunkenness has greatly affected my family." In this case, it appears that David reflects upon the sexual immorality of his mother while he is repenting of his own sexual immorality.

10. David said that it was the Lord who personally made him (Ps. 100:3; 119:73). And that he was "wonderfully" and "marvelously" made by God in the womb (Ps. 139:13-14). Therefore, he could not have been sinfully made by his mother in the womb. It is not wonderful to be born sinful or marvelous to be created evil. Lest we view David as contradicting himself, or charge the Bible with inconsistency, we cannot interpret Ps. 51:5 to say that David was formed with a sinful nature in the womb or

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that he was born a sinner. David did not contradict himself in the Psalms. David said that his mother conceived him through sin, but God created him wonderfully and marvelously. There is no inconsistency or contradiction in that.

### **V. "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." Ps. 58:3**

1. This verse says nothing about Adam, nature, inheritance, all mankind, or sinful nature. It does not say that all mankind inherit from Adam a sinful nature.

2. Psalms is a highly poetic book. Its verses can be taken figuratively or literally depending on the context in which they exist.

3. The context of this passage requires a figurative interpretation as the entire chapter is figurative. All of the surrounding verses are highly poetic.

a. This psalm talks of men being like serpents and deaf adders (vs. 4), of God breaking the teeth of the young lions (vs. 6), of men melting away like running water (vs.7), of God bending his bow to shoot arrows (vs. 7), of men passing away as a snail which melts (vs. 8), and of God destroying like a whirlwind (vs. 9).

b. It says that children speak lies from the womb. Infants do not know how to speak as soon as they are born. Therefore, this passage is poetic and not realistic. It is figurative, not literal. It is hyperbolic.

4. The meaning of this passage seems to be that individuals choose to sin at a very early age, from the dawn of their moral agency, and the first sin which children usually commit is that of lying.

5. Charles Finney said, "Upon this text I remark,-- That it has been quoted at one time to establish the doctrine of a sinful nature, and at another to prove that infants commit actual sin from the very day and hour of their birth. But certainly no such use can be legitimately made of this text. It does not affirm anything of a sinful nature, but this has been inferred from what it

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does affirm, that the wicked are estranged from their birth. But does this mean, that they are really and literally estranged from the day and hour of their birth, and that they really "go astray the very day they are born, speaking lies?" This every one knows to be contrary to fact. The text cannot then be pressed to the letter. What then does it mean? It must mean, like the text last examined, that the wicked are estranged and go astray from the commencement of their moral agency. If it means more than this, it would contradict other plain passages of scripture. It affirms, in strong, graphic, and poetic language, the fact, that the first moral conduct and character of children is sinful. This is all that in truth it can assert, and it doubtless dates the beginning of their moral depravity at a very early period, and expresses it in very strong language, as if it were literally from the hour of birth. But when it adds, that they go astray speaking lies, we know that this is not, and cannot be, literally taken, for, as every one knows, children do not speak at all from their birth. Should we understand the Psalmist as affirming, that children go astray as soon as they go at all, and speak lies as soon as they speak at all, this would not prove that their nature was in itself sinful, but might well consist with the theory that their physical depravity, together with their circumstances of temptation, led them into selfishness, from the very first moment of their moral existence."<sup>259</sup>

6. If this passage were literal and said that babies sinned as soon as they were born, it certainly does not say that they sin by nature and not by free will. How then can it be rationally used to support the idea that men are sinners by nature and not by free will?

7. If we are born with a nature that necessarily leads us into sin, or which is sin itself, then the devil is out of a job. The devil only needed to tempt Adam but there is no need for him to tempt us, since we inherit from Adam a sinful nature that makes us necessarily sinners. Why then does the devil roam about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8)?

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<sup>259</sup> Lectures on Systematic Theology, 1851 edition, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 282

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### **VI. “For as by one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall the many be made righteous.” Romans 5:19**

1. Our nature and birth are not mentioned throughout the entire chapter of Romans five. How then can this chapter be exegetically used to teach that we are born with a sinful nature? This it plainly does not teach.

2. If we are going to apply the first section of the passage unconditionally and universally, we must also apply the second section of the passage unconditionally and universally, since the language for both is the same. In a parallelism, Adam and Christ are compared and contrasted.

A. If the first section means mankind is universally and unconditionally condemned in Adam then the second section would mean that mankind is universally and unconditionally justified through Jesus.

B. This verse cannot mean that all men have the imputed sinfulness of Adam because then it would be saying that all men have the imputed righteousness of Christ.

C. This verse cannot mean that all mankind existed and sinned in Adam or else it would be saying that all mankind existed and obeyed in Christ.

D. Nor can this verse be saying that all men inherit a sinful nature from Adam because then it would be saying that all men inherit a righteous nature from Christ.

E. If “many were made sinners” means that we are born sinful without any choice of our own, then “many were made righteous” would mean that we were born righteous without any choice of our own. The language is identical for both and the same group of people is referenced.

3. Paul does not explain how Adam is the occasion of our sin, but simply states that he is. He doesn’t explain “why” or “how” but only “that.” He gives a fact, not an explanation. Many try to add their own explanation by interposing their personal theories of “federal headship,” “imputation,” “seminal identity,”

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or “sinful nature,” when Paul does not explicitly teach any of these theories.

A. Charles Finney said, “The Bible once, and only once, incidentally intimates that Adam's first sin has in some way been the occasion, not the necessary physical cause, of all the sins of men. Rom. v. 12-19. It neither says nor intimates anything in relation to the manner in which Adam's sin has occasioned this result. It only incidentally recognizes the fact, and then leaves it, just as if the *quo modo* was too obvious to need explanation. In other parts of the Bible we are informed how we are to account for the existence of sin among men. For example, James i. 15, "When lust ('desire', *epithumia*) has conceived, it bringeth forth sin." Here sin is represented, not as the desire itself, but as consisting in the consent of the will to gratify the desire. James says again, that a man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lusts, (*epithumia* "desires") and enticed. That is, his lusts, or the impulses of his sensibility, are his tempters. When he or his will is overcome of these, he sins.”<sup>260</sup>

B. Albert Barnes said, “By one man's disobedience. By means of the sin of Adam. This affirms simply the fact that such a result followed from the sin of Adam. The word by (*dia*) is used in the Scriptures as it is in all books and in all languages. It may denote the efficient cause; the instrumental cause; the principal cause; the meritorious cause; or the chief occasion by which a thing occurred. (See Schleusner.)<sup>261</sup> It does not express one mode, and one only, in which a thing is done; but that one thing is the result of another... There is not the slightest intimation that it was by imputation. The whole scope of the argument is, moreover, against this; for the object of the apostle is not to show that they were

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<sup>260</sup> Lectures on Systematic Theology, 1851 edition, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 291

<sup>261</sup> Novum lexicon Graeco-Latinum in Novum Testamentum, published in 1792. This work translated Greek words found in the New Testament into Latin.

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charged with the sin of another, but that they were in fact sinners themselves. If it means that they were condemned for his act, without any concurrence of their own will, then the correspondent part will be true, that all are constituted righteous in the same way; and thus the doctrine of universal salvation will be inevitable. But as none are constituted righteous who do not voluntarily avail themselves of the provisions of mercy, so it follows that those who are condemned, are not condemned for the sin of another without their own concurrence, nor unless they personally deserve it.

“Sinners. Transgressors; those who deserve to be punished. It does not mean those who are condemned for the sin of another; but those who are violators of the law of God. All who are condemned are sinners. They are not innocent persons condemned for the crime of another. Men may be involved in the consequences of the sins of others without being to blame. The consequences of the crimes of a murderer, a drunkard, a pirate, may pass over from them, and affect thousands, and overwhelm them in ruin. But this does not prove that they are blameworthy. In the divine administration none are regarded as guilty who are not guilty; none are condemned who do not deserve to be condemned. All who sink to hell are sinners.”<sup>262</sup>

C. Albert Barnes said, “I add, that one principal reason why so much difficulty has been felt here, has been an unwillingness to stop where the apostle does. Men have desired to advance farther, and penetrate the mysteries which the Spirit of inspiration has not disclosed. Where Paul states a simple fact, men often advance a theory. The fact may be clear and plain; their theory is obscure, involved, mysterious, or absurd. By degrees they learn to unite the fact and the theory:--they regard their explanation as the only possible one; and as the fact in question has the authority of divine revelation, so they insensibly come to regard their theory in the same light; and he that calls in question their speculation about the cause, or the mode, is set down as heretical, and as

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<sup>262</sup> Albert Barnes’s commentary on Romans 5:18

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denying the doctrine of the apostle. A melancholy instance of this we have in the account which the apostle gives (ch. v.) about the effect of the sin of Adam. The simple fact is stated that that sin was followed by the sin and ruin of all his posterity. Yet he offers no explanation of the fact. He leaves it as indubitable; and as not demanding an explanation in his argument--perhaps as not admitting it. This is the whole of his doctrine on that subject. Yet men have not been satisfied with that. They have sought for a theory to account for it. And many suppose they have found it in the doctrine that the sin of Adam is imputed, or set over by an arbitrary arrangement to beings otherwise innocent, and that they are held to be responsible for a deed committed by a man thousands of years before they were born. This is the theory; and men insensibly forget that it is mere theory, and they blend that and the fact which the apostle states together; and deem the denial of the one, heresy as much as the denial of the other, i.e. they make it as impious to call in question their philosophy, as to doubt the facts stated on the authority of the apostle Paul. If men desire to understand the epistles of Paul, and avoid difficulties, they should be willing to leave it where he does; and this single rule would have made useless whole years and whole tomes of controversy."<sup>263</sup>

D. Albert Barnes said, "Christianity affirms the fact, that in connection with the sin of Adam, or as a result, all moral agents in this world will sin—and sinning, will die. Rom. v. 12—19. It does not affirm, however, anything about the *mode* in which this would be done. There are many ways conceivable in which that sin might secure the result, as there are many ways in which similar *facts* may be explained. The drunkard commonly secures, as a result, the fact that his family will be beggared, illiterate, profane and intemperate. Both facts are evidently to be explained on the *same principle* as a part of moral government. The Bible does not, it is believed, affirm that there is any principle of moral government in the one case, that is not in the other. Neither

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<sup>263</sup> Albert Barnes's commentary on Romans 5:12-18



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the facts, nor any proper inferences from the facts, affirm that I am, in either case, *personally responsible* for what another man did before I had an existence."<sup>264</sup>

E. Moses Stuart said, "We were constituted sinners means, that Adam was, in some sense or other, the cause or occasion of his posterity becoming sinners. But whether this was through a degradation of their nature physically propagated down from father to son; or whether it was (as Chrysostom, Ecumenius, Pelagius, Erasmus, and others have with little probability maintained), only by virtue of the example which he set, or whether it was in some other way, is not determined by the language of the text. Such expressions as we have seen above, do not determine of themselves either the degree or the kind of causality... That men should be constituted or made sinners by the disobedience of Adam, most naturally means, I had almost said, must necessarily mean, that in some way his offence so affected them as that they become actual sinners in propria persona."<sup>265</sup> Now is anything more common than this mode of expression? 'A man of vicious character,' we say, 'corrupts his whole family. A profligate of winning exterior corrupts the whole neighborhood of youth around him. One skeptic makes many doubters in revelation. Voltaire made half a literary Europe skeptical.' Now in these and a thousand other like expressions, we do mean to assert an active influence, a real causality in some proper sense, of the evil done or spoken. Yet we never once think, for example, of Voltaire's skepticism being imputed to half of literary Europe; nor do we once imagine, that any of the classes above named as being corrupted are corrupted without any voluntary agency, of their own...

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<sup>264</sup> A Defense of New England Theology, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 40

<sup>265</sup> Latin for "in one's own person or character." It is a legal term used to express an individual acting as their own representative without an attorney acting for them.

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“But after all, the *modus operandi*<sup>266</sup> is not declared by the apostle. He does not say, whether the operation of Adam’s sin is on our physical or mental constitution; or whether it has influenced merely on the condition in which we are placed, as being expelled from paradise and surrounded by peculiar temptations; nor whether it is example merely of Adam which we copy...”<sup>267</sup>

F. Many Old Testament Kings “made Israel to sin” (1 Kng. 14:16; 15:26, 30, 34; 16:13, 26; 21:22; 22:52; 2 Kng. 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 21:11, 16; 23:15); that is, through their leading, influence, and example they made Israel to sin. It is not implied that Israel was made to sin without their free choice, but that their free choice was involved and was influenced to sin. Foreign women caused king Solomon to sin (Neh. 13:26); that is, through their leading, influence, and example, Solomon decided to sin. By setting up high places of Baal, men caused Judah to sin (Jer. 32:35); that is, they sinned because of this leading, influence, and example. “My people have been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have gone astray” (Jer. 50:6); that is, by the leading, influence, and example of the shepherds the sheep went astray. Again, Israel had leaders who would “lead” and “caused” them “to err” (Isa. 3:12). Through a person’s leading, influence, and example, a little child can be caused to sin (Matt. 18:6; Mk. 9:42; Lk. 17:2). The leading, influence, and example of a Christian can even cause a weaker brother to stumble (1 Cor. 8:9). And the Bible says men could “fall” because of someone’s “example of disobedience” (Heb. 4:11). These passages of Scripture show us that when it says in Romans 5, “by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,” this does not necessarily imply that they were made sinners without their own personal free choice to sin. Nor does “many were made righteous” mean that we were born

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<sup>266</sup> A Latin phrase approximately translated as “method of operation.”

<sup>267</sup> Commentary on Romans, W.F. Draper, Andover, 1868, pp. 459-461

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righteous or became righteous apart from our own choice to repent of our sins and have faith in Christ.

4. The Calvinistic interpretation of this passage, that all the children of Adam are automatically and unconditionally damned under the wrath of God for the sin of their father, which occurred without their knowledge and without their consent, because Adam was their representative (Federal Headship), is a view which is contrary to the natural sense of justice God has constituted us with and contrary to the explicit justice of God as taught in the scriptures (Deut. 24:16, 2 Kng. 14:6, 2 Chron. 25:4, Eze. 18:2-4, Eze. 18:19-20, Jer. 17:10; 31:29-30; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:5-6; 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 11:15; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:11-12; Rev. 22:12). To represent God as imputing guilt to the innocent is to represent God as arbitrary and unjust.

5. The Augustinian view that Adam's sin is imputed to us because it is rightfully ours, because our souls were in his loins when he sinned (Seminal Identity), would logically make us guilty, not only of Adam's sin, but of all the sins of all our ancestors. It would mean that we were participants in the repentance, conversion, and salvation of any of our ancestors, since we would have existed in their loins as well. We would be punishable, not only for existing in Adam's loins during his disobedience, but also praiseworthy for existing in Noah's loins during his obedience. This too would be contrary to the natural sense of justice that God has constituted us with and contrary to the explicit justice of God as revealed in the scriptures (Deut. 24:16, 2 Kng. 14:6, 2 Chron. 25:4, Eze. 18:2-4, Eze. 18:19-20, Jer. 17:10; 31:29-30; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:5-6; 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 11:15; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:11-12; Rev. 22:12).

6. The Augustinian view also says that Adam's sin corrupted human nature and made it sinful, specifically through lusts and sexual desires. And therefore all are born sinners because they are born through sex and with a sinful nature and are in need of infant baptism to wash away the guilt of original sin and regenerate their natures. But if two parents were baptized and had the guilt of original sin washed away and their natures regenerated, how could they transmit guilt and corruption to their

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subsequent offspring? They would have no guilt or corruption to pass on. If we can inherit a sinful nature from Adam because of Adam's single sin, it would stand to reason that we can inherit a righteous nature from our parent if our parent obeyed God once. The latter is only as absurd as the former. If regeneration were constitutional instead of moral, relating to our nature and not our will, then if two unregenerate parents transmit a sinful nature to their posterity, it stands to reason that two regenerate parents would transmit a regenerate nature to their posterity. And as Noah was a righteous man, he must have been regenerate. And since all mankind descend from him, all mankind would not inherit a sinful nature from Adam but would inherit a righteous nature from Noah. That is, if regeneration were constitutional or if moral character was hereditary.

7. Pelagius said, "If baptism washes away that ancient sin, those who have been born of two baptized parents should not have this sin, for they could not have passed on to their children what they themselves in no wise possessed."<sup>268</sup>

8. If either the doctrine of Federal Headship or the doctrine of Seminal Identity were true, God's declaration would be not only meaningless but false when He said, "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father" (Eze. 18:20). Any interpretation of any passage which makes the Bible contradict itself cannot possibly be a true interpretation because it violates the exegetical law of non-contradiction.

9. The context of Paul's statement shows us that he does not mean that we are damned for Adam's personal sin, and it shows us that he does not mean to deny that we are damned for our own personal sin.

A. Paul said, "...death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). The reason that Paul assigned for their death was because they personally sinned.

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<sup>268</sup> Pelagius's commentary on Romans 5:15

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B. This must be talking about spiritual death since infants at times physically die and they haven't yet had the chance or opportunity to sin.

C. Paul went on to say, "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Rom. 5:14). In the time between "Adam to Moses," there were no Ten Commandments, and therefore there could be no "transgression." Paul said "for where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15).

D. Nevertheless, those in that time were sinning against their own conscience and the light of nature, as Paul said, "For until the law sin was in the world" (Rom. 5:13). There was sin in the world even before the law came through Moses, but there was no transgression before the law because men sinned against their own conscience and did not transgress any commandments. "Transgression" implies a direct commandment, which did not exist between Adam and Moses.

E. Therefore, they did not sin "after the similitude of Adam's transgression," or in the same way and manner that Adam did, since Adam violated a direct commandment but they only the law of human nature.

F. Paul made a very clear distinction between their sin and Adam's sin. He said "all have sinned" even though it was not similar or like "Adam's transgression."

G. If Paul meant to argue that all men sinned in Adam and are consequently damned for the sin of Adam, he would not have said that the reason all die is because all have personally sinned, even though their personal sin is different and distinct from the sin of Adam. If we sinned in Adam, then his sin is not distinct or different from our own. If we sinned in Adam, then we did sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression. If Paul meant to say that we sinned in Adam, Paul would have been arguing for the opposite of

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what he intended to prove by making a distinction between our sin and Adam's sin.

H. Moses Stuart said, "That ἀμαρτία here means something different from original sin, or imputed sin, seems to be clear from the reference which the apostle tacitly makes to a law of nature that had been transgressed. A revealed law there was not for men in general, antecedently to the time of Moses; yet men were sinners. How? By sinning against the law 'written on their hearts' (ii. 15); and sinning in despite of the penalty of death, i. 32. But if such was their sin, it was actual sin, not merely imputed guilt... Augustine, Pres. Edwards, and many others, maintain a real physical unity of Adam with all his posterity; and hence they derive to all his posterity a participation in his sin. But if his sin be theirs in any proper sense, i.e., be really theirs by such a unity as is asserted; or even if it be theirs by mere imputation without this; then how it is that the sin of the ἄνομοι is (as Paul asserts) NOT like that of Adam? How can it be unlike it, when it is the very same; either the very same in reality (as Augustine and his followers hold), or the very same putatively, as others suppose?"<sup>269</sup>

I. John Calvin said, "Even over them, etc. Though this passage is commonly understood of infants, who being guilty of no actual sin, die through original sin, I yet prefer to regard it as referring to all those who sinned without the law; for this verse is to be connected with the preceding clause, which says, that those who were without the law did not impute sin to themselves. Hence they sinned not after the similitude of Adam's transgression; for they had not, like him, the will of God made known to them by a certain oracle: for the Lord had forbidden Adam to touch the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; but to them he had given no command besides the testimony of conscience."<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Moses Stuart's commentary on Romans 5:13

<sup>270</sup> John Calvin's commentary on Romans 5:14

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J. Pelagius said, “Death reigned not only over those who, like Adam, transgressed a commandment – such as the sons of Noah, who were ordered not to eat the life in the blood, and the sons of Abraham, for whom circumcision was enjoined but also over those who, lacking the commandment, showed contempt for the law of nature.”<sup>271</sup>

K. Alfred T. Overstreet said, “Paul spoke in Romans 5:14 of ‘them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.’ Paul referred here to those who had sinned before the giving of the law and so had not sinned against a positive precept as Adam had, but only against the law of conscience and reason. Paul said they were sinners, but the fact that he said they had ‘not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression’ shows that Paul did not consider the sin of Adam to be their sin.”<sup>272</sup>

10. When Paul said by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, he was saying that Adam is the occasion, not cause, of our choice to be sinners. Adam’s disobedience contributed to our choice to be sinners.

G. Paul does not specifically explain how Adam contributed to our choice to sin, but it could be that by Adam’s disobedience of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam provided all mankind with the opportunity of choosing to be sinners themselves, since moral knowledge of good and evil has been given to all mankind as a result of his disobedience.

H. A sinner is an individual who voluntarily chooses contrary to the moral knowledge that they have. To say “many were made sinners” means that many have chosen to sin, since a sinner is someone who first chooses to sin. It means men have chosen to do what they knew to be wrong. The description “sinner” relates to choice and character, not constitution or nature. It means that as a result of Adam’s

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<sup>271</sup> Pelagius’s commentary on Romans 5:14

<sup>272</sup> Are Men Born Sinners, The Myth of Original Sin, Evangel Books Publishing Company, Long Beach California, p. 76

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disobedience, we have become sinful in our choices, not in our nature itself.

I. The result of one man's disobedience of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil was that many were made sinners in that men have chosen to be sinners or have chosen to do what they knew was wrong. "And the Lord God said, behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" (Gen. 3:22). "Jesus said unto them, if ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:41). "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:17).

J. Adam provided the opportunity for our damnation by opening the eyes of mankind to good and evil, but our damnation requires our own choice to do what we know to be wrong.

11. When Paul said that through Christ many are made righteous, that does not mean that all men are unconditionally made right with God, but that Christ has given us the occasion of salvation and many are made righteous through that occasion.

A. By Christ's obedience of hanging on the tree, Christ has provided all mankind with the opportunity of choosing to be saved. This is because the remission of sin has been offered to all men upon condition of their repentance and faith, and because it is the knowledge of the gospel which draws us and influences us to repentance. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). "...the gospel of Christ... it is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). "...without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

B. Christ provided the opportunity and influence for our salvation, but our salvation still requires our own choice. Just as damnation has not unconditionally come upon all but depends upon our choice to sin, so also salvation has not unconditionally come upon all but depends upon our choice to be converted.



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C. The parallelism and contrast expressed by Paul, in this case, would be clear. Adam's disobedience consisted in eating from the tree. Christ's obedience consisted in hanging on the tree. Adam's disobedience resulted in the knowledge of good and evil, which gives us the opportunity to be sinners. Christ's obedience resulted in the knowledge of the gospel, which gives us the opportunity to be made righteous. Condemnation comes upon those who choose to disobey the knowledge of good and evil. Justification comes upon those who choose to obey the knowledge of the gospel.

12. This passage is not teaching that we contributed to Adam's sin or participated in it, but that Adam contributed to our sin. It is not that our actions resulted in Adam becoming a sinner but that Adam's actions resulted in us becoming sinners. That is, the result of his disobedience of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is that we too have now chosen to sin.

13. The word "made" used in these passages is not referring to a constitutional change of our nature, but referring to a conditional position which requires the consent of the will. Being a sinner is conditional upon choosing to sin. Likewise, being justified is conditional upon choosing to repent and believe. No man is damned without first his choice to sin and no man is justified without first his choice to repent. Man's damnation and man's justification both require man's free will choice.

14. To be made a sinner by Adam's transgression, one does not need to inherit sin itself, or a nature that will necessitate sinful choices, as the exposure to temptation as a result of Adam's sin can be the means of becoming a sinner as a result of Adam's disobedience.

A. Charles Finney said, "His sin in many ways exposes his posterity to aggravated temptation. Not only the physical constitution of all men, but all the influences under which they first form their moral character, are widely different

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from what they would have been, if sin had never been introduced.”<sup>273</sup>

15. The phrases, “made sinners” and “made righteous” does not itself imply when this occurs. It is not to be assumed that all men were made sinners when Adam sinned, as they did not yet then exist. Rather, the Bible says that men are sinners “from their youth” (Gen. 8:21; Jer. 22:21; 32:30), or starting at the age of accountability when they become moral agents and choose to sin. Likewise, it is not to be assumed that men were made righteous when Jesus Christ died, as most believers did not yet then exist. Rather, we become righteous at conversion when we choose to put our faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).

16. The idea that moral character can exist without the choice of the will is an absurdity and presupposes a Gnostic moral philosophy. Any interpretation that makes a man sinful or a sinner independent of his choice must be false and unscriptural, as the Bible has repeatedly condemned and contradicted Gnostic moral philosophy. Moral character and consequently moral depravity is always voluntary. To be made a “sinner” can mean nothing more than becoming a person who chooses to sin, to become a person who freely chooses to do what is known to be wrong. Otherwise the word “sinner” is void of all real meaning and would fail to actually describe a moral state or express any moral quality.

17. Gordon. C. Olson said, “We must remark upon the celebrated passage in Ro. 5:12-19, which is often referred to as establishing the dogma of the literal imputation of Adam's guilt to all his posterity. The discussion of this passage in this connection has gone on for a millennium and a half. Everyone who believes the Bible affirms the first part of verse 12 as historical: "By one man sin entered into the world." It appears that "death" is to be interpreted as primarily spiritual, in the sense of separation from God, with physical death as a secondary consequence because of being shut out from "the tree of life." It has been affirmed by

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<sup>273</sup> Lectures on Systematic Theology, 1851 Edition, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 294.

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many that Adam acted for the whole human race, either as an appointed federal head or as an organic head, and therefore the last part of verse 12 ought to be rendered, "in whom all have sinned." The organic concept considers the whole human race as pre-existing mysteriously in Adam. Upon this theory, Adam's guilt is our guilt and is the basis for universal condemnation. However, the text only affirms that "death passed upon all men in as much as all have sinned." There is no proof that Adam is involved in this last statement. It is most interesting to note that the same verb and tense appear in 3:23, where we read: "For all have sinned, and come short (or are coming short) of the glory of God." Also, in 3:12 we have the same tense: "All did turn aside from (the right way)." It appears that these verses declare the tragic fact that all mankind, without exception, have followed Adam's example in rebelling against God, with the sad consequence of spiritual death or eternal separation from God. This is what Isaiah had declared so long ago in the words: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way" (53:6).

“In understanding Ro. 5:12-19, we must distinguish between "occasion" and "cause." By occasion we mean an opportunity or "a condition of affairs that brings something about; ...especially, the immediate inciting circumstances as distinguished from the real or fundamental cause."<sup>274</sup> By cause we mean that event or force which actually produces the results or the effect without any further action. Cause is therefore the reason for the action, occasion the opportunity or circumstances. This passage speaks of two individuals who did something to or for the human race - Adam and the Lord Jesus. We have a direct parallelism drawn, extending to the same group of mankind, or, most evidently, to the whole of mankind. The article "the" inserted before "many" in verses 15 and 19, adds emphasis and affirms that the same group is referred to in both cases.<sup>275</sup> In

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<sup>274</sup> Merriam-Webster

<sup>275</sup> The Greek reads "οἱ πολλοί" or "the many" in regards to those affected by Adam and Christ. The "οἱ" is a definite article translated "the."

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verse 18 we have "all men" appearing in each parallelism. By what linguistic authority could we say that the terms, "the many" and "all men," when appearing on the Adamic side of the parallelism refer to the whole of mankind, while the same terms appearing on the Christ side refer only to those who are actually saved?

“Since, obviously, the terms, "the many" and "all men," appearing on each side of the parallelism, refer to the same mass of mankind, we are entitled to say that if Adam was the cause of the downfall and condemnation of all, then Christ is the cause of the salvation of "all men unto the justification of life." If free will and moral agency is eliminated on one side, it is also eliminated on the other. But if we view the two great leaders of the human race as providing occasions or circumstances for moral action, each to the whole mass of mankind without exception, then we may say that Adam's sin strongly influenced every member of the human race to follow in his footsteps and choose for himself the life of sinful indulgence, while the Lord Jesus by His life and sacrificial death likewise provided something for each member of the human race to act upon. Just as Adam permeated the atmosphere with wrongful indulgence to draw all men towards sin, so the Lord Jesus permeated the atmosphere with love and mercy to draw all men toward holiness. The passage, then, describes the occasion of sin and the occasion of salvation as being co-extensive, committing to each moral being the cause and the responsibility for his own response to these influences. In this view, the passage becomes a blessed revelation of the glories of our Lord and Saviour, unencumbered by perplexity...

“We are considerably relieved, therefore, to find the lack of Biblical evidence for the dogma, that the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to all his posterity, and to conclude that "the Judge of all the earth" will hold each moral being accountable only for his own sins. While the sin of Adam and its consequences provide a

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strong occasion, nevertheless each moral being is the cause or author of his own guilt.”<sup>276</sup>

### **VII. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22).**

1. Notice that the same “all” who die in Adam is the same “all” made alive in Christ. If the former was teaching that all mankind was made sinful and condemned in Adam, then the latter would be saying that all mankind is made righteous and justified in Christ. If the former is unconditional and universal, so would the latter be. The verse states that what was done by Adam was undone by Christ.
  - A. It is objected that this passage is conditional as it says “in Adam” and “in Christ.” They say that all mankind is in Adam by birth, therefore all mankind inherit damnation from him. However, only believers are in Christ by rebirth, therefore only believers inherit salvation from Him. However, this passage does not say “all those in Adam die” but “in Adam all die.” Likewise, it does not say, “all those in Christ shall be made alive,” but “in Christ all shall be made alive.” In other words, all die in or through Adam and all are made alive in or through Christ. The word “in” in this passage means, “through” “instrumentality” or “by.”<sup>277</sup> That means that Adam is the means or instrumentality through whom comes death to all, whereas Christ is the means or instrumentality through whom comes life to all.
  - B. Therefore, if this passage was referring to damnation and salvation, it would be saying that all mankind was

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<sup>276</sup> The Essentials of Salvation, published by Biblical Truth Resources, p. 258-260

<sup>277</sup> Strong’s definition of “en” translated as “in” in 1 Cor. 15:22-23. BDAG also defines it as referring to “the means or instrument.” That Adam and Christ are referenced as the instrumental means is also shown by the instrumental case of “τῷ” in the Greek sentence after the “ἐ’v” and before their names. In other words, through Adam as a means all die and through Christ as a means all shall be made alive.

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subjected to damnation through Adam but now all mankind is subjected to salvation through Christ. The death spoken of comes through Adam to all mankind and the life spoken of comes through Christ to all mankind.

2. This passage does not refer to damnation and salvation but refers to physical death and life, as the context is the resurrection of the body. “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom of God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” (1 Cor. 15:20-26). So the context is physical death and being made physically alive in the resurrection of the dead, making the reference to “all die” and “all shall be made alive” physical in nature.
  - A. As a result of Adam’s sin, mankind was removed from the tree of life which would have sustained the perfect health of the body (Gen. 3:22).
  - B. The health and life of the body is sustained by the consumption of food, but there is a missing ingredient in all available food to sustain perfect health and continual life.
  - C. Adam was created and placed in the garden with an abundance of food for his body to consume. The tree of life was in the garden and Adam was permitted to eat from it (Gen. 1:29; 2:16-17). It was only the tree of knowledge of good and evil that was forbidden, so Adam was permitted to eat from the tree of life. This indicates that Adam’s body was only immortal as long as he obeyed God and could eat from the tree of life. When cut off from the tree of life as a consequence of his disobedience, his life became necessarily mortal. If

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Adam was created immortal independent of the tree of life, there was no reason for the tree of life to be in the garden in the first place.

- D. Evidently, it is not to be assumed that Adam could eat only once from the tree of life and be immortal, but that if he continued to eat from the tree of life as he had been doing he would continued to live forever with perfect health.
- E. By being removed from the tree of life, Adam and all his descendents were consequently subjected to death. Even innocent babies, who have never sinned, are subjected to death on account of Adam's sin. Innocent infants die as victims of Adam's original sin, not because they are themselves sinners. An infant who hasn't yet committed any actual sin cannot be subjected to physical death for his own actual sin. It is for original sin that infants are subjected to death; that is, because of the original sin of Adam the bodies of infants are subjected to death and not because they are themselves sinners.
- F. Through Christ, "all shall be made alive" through the resurrection of the dead. The Bible says "that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15). And it is "through Jesus" that there is "the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2). Just as all men are unconditionally subjected to death through Adam no matter what they do,<sup>278</sup> so also all men are unconditionally subjected to resurrection from death through Christ no matter what they do.

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<sup>278</sup> Enoch and Elijah were spared from death (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11 Heb. 11:5); however this is only because of the Lord's intervention. Had the Lord not intervened, their bodies too would have been subjected to death and decay on account of Adam's sin just like the rest of us. "For as in Adam all die" is therefore the general rule with only a few exceptions. Through the principle remains true does apply to them, as Enoch and Elijah would have otherwise died because of Adam had there been no translation or chariot into Heaven.

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### VIII. "...by nature children of wrath" Ephesians 2:3

1. Notice that this passage does not even mention Adam or our birth. It does not say how these men came about this nature. This verse certainly cannot be used to teach that all men inherit from Adam a sinful nature and are therefore born sinners, as it plainly does not teach this.

2. The word nature can at times describe a man's God given constitution (Rom 1:26; 1:31; 2:14; 2:27; 2 Tim 3:3). It must be kept in mind that our constitution is just dirt and is created by God; and therefore, our constitution cannot be sinful in and of itself.

3. The phrase "by nature" does not always mean "by birth" but can at times mean "by custom or habit." Otherwise, Paul would have taught that the Gentiles were born sinners but the Jews were not born sinners. Paul said, "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles" (Gal. 2:15). The word nature can describe a man's self chosen character, custom, habit, or manner of life (Jer. 13:23; Acts 26:4; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 2:2-3; Gal 2:14-15; 2 Tim 3:10; 2 Pet 1:4). This is voluntary and has to do with the heart. Therefore, moral character or sinfulness can belong to this type of voluntary and chosen nature.

4. The context of this particular passage is talking about a former manner of life. Paul is addressing a previous lifestyle. He said, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world... among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. 2:2-3). The "natural man" is the same as the "carnally minded." It is someone who lives for the gratification of their flesh. To say that a person is by nature a child of wrath is the same as saying that they are under the wrath of God because they are living for the gratification of their flesh. Through free choice, men create a habit of self-indulgence.

5. To say that they are "children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2, 5:6), and to say they are "by nature children of



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wrath,” is essentially to say the same thing. Disobedience is a choice of the will. Those who choose to disobey God are misusing and abusing their natures. Those who choose to disobey God are rightfully under His wrath for the way that they are using their natures.

6. That which brings the “wrath” of God is voluntary moral character, not involuntary constitutions. God is not angry with men for possessing the nature which He Himself created them with. God is angry with sinners because of how they have chosen to use the nature that He has given them. God is angry with sinners because of their sinful choices and sinful habits.

7. A sinful nature is moral not physical. It is a person’s self chosen character and not his God given constitution. A man’s heart or will can be sinful, but a man’s constitution or body can only be an occasion of temptation. Though continual choices of self-gratification, man has developed a habit of sin.

- A. As was shown already in this book, the word nature in the Greek can refer to a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature. In other words, through habitual choice a certain way of life and acting can become second nature, even if those actions were originally unnatural to you. This is true of sin and many other actions. Sinners can, therefore, form a sinful nature for which they are entirely responsible and accountable.

### **IX. The Bible explicitly contradicts the doctrine that all men are incapable, sinful, guilty, spiritually dead, and damned because of the original sin of Adam.**

1. Children do not inherit the sin or guilt of their parents (Deut. 24:16, 2 Kng. 14:6, 2 Chron. 25:4, Jer. 31:29-30, Eze. 18:2-4, Eze. 18:19-20).

2. Each moral agent is accountable for their own deeds and for their deeds only (Deut. 24:16, 2 Kng. 14:6, 2 Chron. 25:4, Eze. 18:2-4, Eze. 18:19-20, Jer. 17:10; 31:29-30; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:5-6; 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 11:15; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:11-12; Rev. 22:12).

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3. Moral responsibility is limited and proportionate to moral ability (Deut. 6:5, Deut. 10:12, Deut. 30:6, Matt. 22:37, Mk. 12:30, Lk. 10:27, 1 Cor. 10:13).

4. Moral accountability is limited and proportionate to moral knowledge (Matt. 11:21-22, Lk. 12:47-48, Lk. 23:34, Jn. 9:41, Jn. 15:22, Rom. 4:15, Rom. 5:13, Jas. 4:17, Jn. 19:11, Matt. 23:14, Mk.12:40, Lk. 20:47, Jas. 3:1, Matt. 10:15, Matt. 11:24, Mk. 6:11, Lk. 10:12, Lk. 10:14, Heb. 10:26, 2 Pet. 2:21).

5. Infant children are born morally innocent (2 Kng. 21:16; 24:4; Jer. 13:26-27; Ps. 106:37-38; Matt. 18:3) They have not yet “done anything” morally “good or evil” (Rom. 9:11), until the age of accountability, which is the age of reason, when they know right from wrong (Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:15-16), and choose to do wrong (Jas. 4:17). Those who don’t know right from wrong cannot be sinful (Jn. 9:41), and infants do not yet know right from wrong (Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:15-16). Therefore, infants cannot be sinful.

6. All men have chosen to be sinners from their “youth,” which is when they reach the age of accountability (Gen. 8:21; Jer. 22:21; 32:30).

7. All men have become sinners by their own free choice (Gen. 6:12, Ex. 32:7, Deut. 9:12, Deut. 32:5, Jdg. 2:19, Hos. 9:9, Ps. 14:2-3, Isa. 53:6, Ecc. 7:29, Rom. 3:23, Rom. 5:12).

8. Each individual originates their sin out of their own heart (Ps. 7:14; 58:3; Matt. 12:35, Lk. 6:45, Acts 5:4).

9. God is the author of our nature. He forms all of us in the womb (Gen. 4:1; 6:7 Ex. 4:11; Deut. 32:18; Isa. 27:11; 43:1; 43:7; 44:2; 44:24; 49:5; 64:8; Jer. 1:5; Ps. 26:10; 82:6; 95:6; 100:3; 119:73; 127:3; 139:13-14, 16; Prov. 20:12; 26:10; Ecc. 7:29; Job 10:8-11; 31:15; 35:10; Mal. 2:10; Acts 17:29; Rom. 9:20; Eph. 3:9; 4:6; Col. 1:16; Jn. 1:3).

10. Our souls are not inherited from our parents but God creates each individual soul at conception (Num. 16:22; 27:16; Zac. 12:1; Ecc. 11:5; Eze. 18:4; 1 Cor. 6:20; Heb. 12:9).

11. Men are not born dead in sins but become morally

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depraved and relationally separated from God when they personally become sinful or personally choose to sin (Eze. 18:4, 20; Isa. 59:2, Lk. 15:24; Rom. 5:12; 5:14; 7:9; 7:11; 8:6; 2 Cor. 5:14; Col. 1:21; 2:13; Rev. 3:1).

12. God forms us in His image, so even after the fall of Adam man is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jas 3:9).

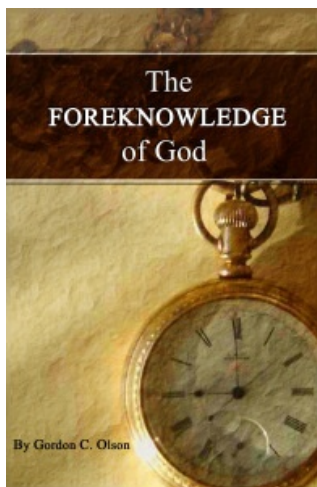
13. Even after the fall of Adam, mankind continued to have the power of free choice (Gen. 4:6-7; Deut. 30:11, 19; Josh. 24:15; Isa. 1:16-20; 55:6-7; Jer. 4:14; Hos. 10:12; Jer. 18:11; 21:8; 26:13; Eze. 18:30-32; 20:7-8; Acts 2:40; 17:30; Rom. 6:17; 2 Cor. 7:1; 2 Tim. 2:21; Jas. 4:7-10; 1 Pet. 1:22; Rev. 22:17). God calls all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30-31), and He rightly blames them if they do not repent (Matt. 11:20; 23:37; Mk. 6:6; Lk. 7:30; 13:34; 14:17-18; 19:14; 19:27; Jn. 5:40; Rev. 2:21).

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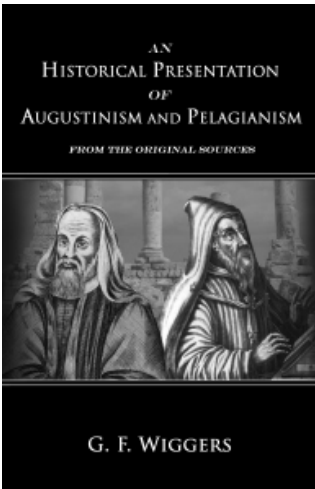
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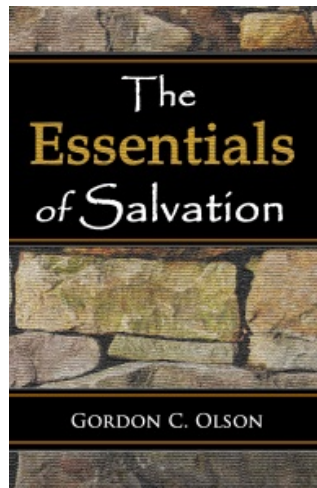
**The Foreknowledge of God** by **Gordon C. Olson** is a classic work on the open view of God which was first published in 1941. The reader will find the arguments presented in this book as challenging and thought provoking. Olson's love for God and for the Scriptures enriches his writings in such a way that the even deep theological issues which he addresses are a pleasure and a joy to read.

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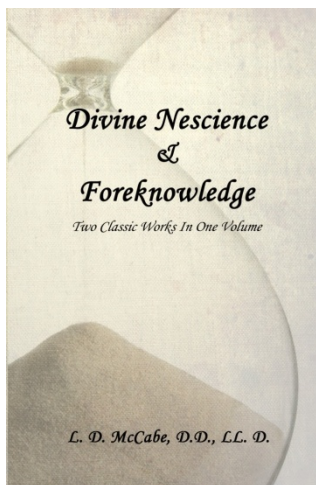


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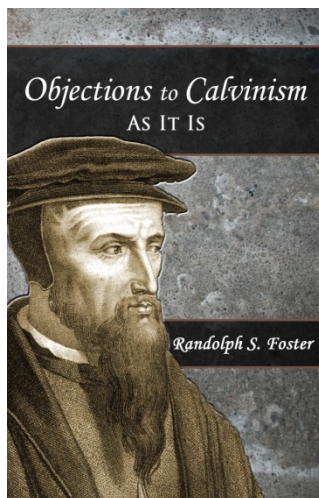
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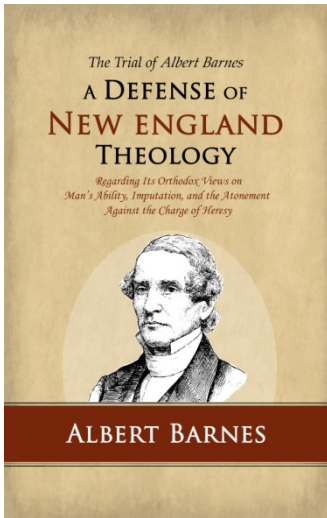
**Divine Nescience & Foreknowledge** contains two classic works in one volume. They are “Divine Nescience of Future Contingencies A Necessity” and “The Foreknowledge of God, and Cognate Themes in Theology and Philosophy” by **L. D. McCabe**. Because these books were out of print, these books have been very hard to find and very expensive to purchase, until now. These two profound books were written in the 1800’s and brilliantly expound upon the open view of God. They are two of the most important theological writings of the 19th Century

and arguably two of the best writings on the topic of open theism. This book is a must read for any Christian who wants to understand the scriptural and logical arguments for the open view of the future.

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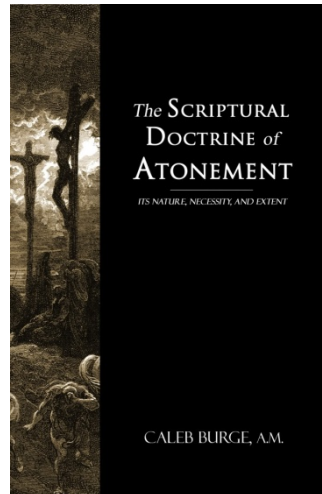
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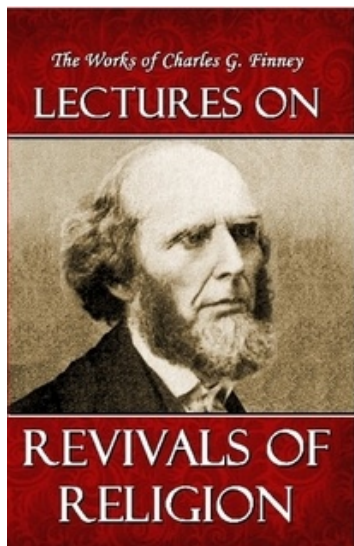
**A Defense of New England Theology** by Albert Barnes is a very rare book, originally published in 1829. It contains Barnes sermon, “The Way of Salvation” for which he was accused of heresy by Rev. Dr. George Junkin. The doctrines in question were human ability, imputation, and atonement. Barne’s response and defense to the charge of heresy is also contained in this volume, for which Barnes was acquitted by the Synod of Philadelphia. “New England Theology” was a theological movement with notable men like Moses Stuart, Albert Barnes, Charles Finney, Asa Mahan, and others. The

modern movement of “Moral Government Theology” has its roots in what was “New England Theology.”

**The Scriptural Doctrine of Atonement** by Caleb Burge has been said to be the best book on the Governmental Atonement theory. Burge expounds upon very profound concepts and presents them in a very intelligent and understandable way. This book was originally published in 1822. It contains pure theological gold on one of the most important doctrines of Christianity. It will be an absolute treasure in your library.

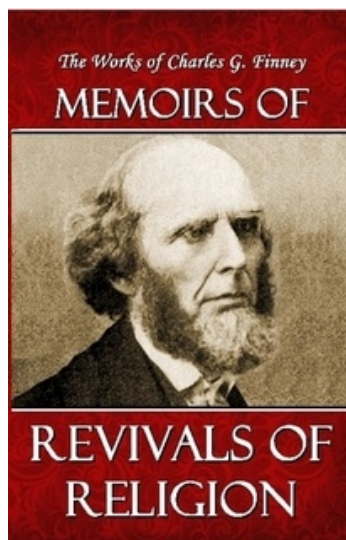


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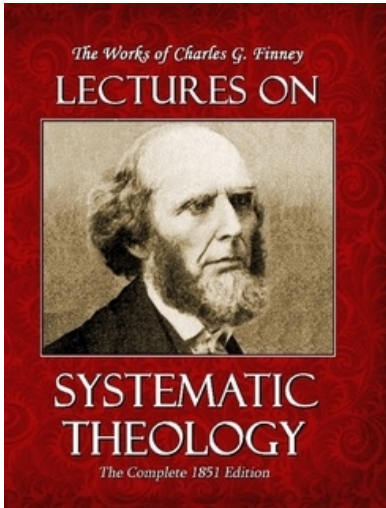
**Lectures on Revivals of Religion** by **Charles G. Finney** is a classic volume on revivals. Finney was America's greatest revivalist. Over half a million souls were soundly saved under his ministry. After Finney published his lectures on revival, revivals started breaking out all over the place. This book is a must read for any believer who wants to win souls to Christ!

**Memoirs of Revivals of Religion** contains the unedited autobiography of **Charles G. Finney**. The text comes from the 1878 edition. This volume describes the amazing details of the extraordinary revivals which God used his servant Finney in. A Christian will find it hard to be able to read this book without getting on his knees to pray for revival!



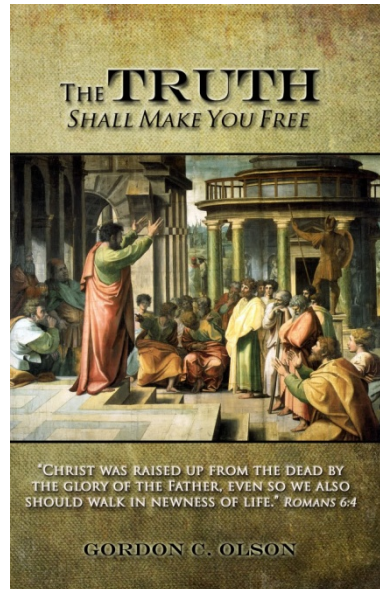


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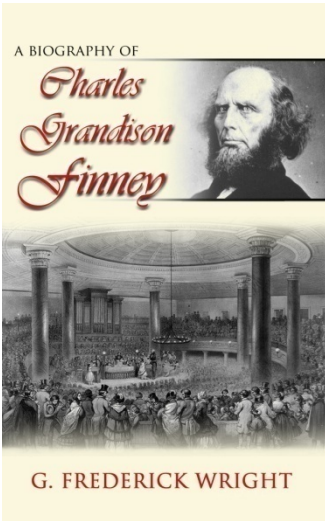


This is the complete 1851 edition of **Lectures on Systematic Theology** by **Charles G. Finney**. This is also a “Note Takers Edition” as the bottom of each page has a large empty area for the reader to write their own personal notes as they study this wonderful piece of Christian theology.

**The Truth Shall Make You Free** by **Gordon C. Olson** is an absolute essential for any Christian library. It has been said that Gordon C. Olson was the greatest theologian of the 20th Century, and “The Truth Shall Make You Free” was his masterpiece. This is a monumental work of theological literature. To reprint this very important volume is one of the reasons that we even started reprinting books at all. We would like to see this book in the hands of every believer. It is our opinion that “The Truth Shall Make You Free” is one of the greatest theological works of Christian history

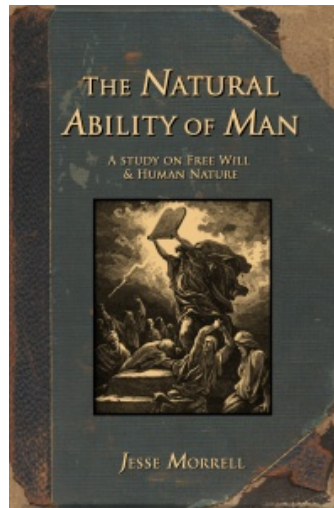


## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE

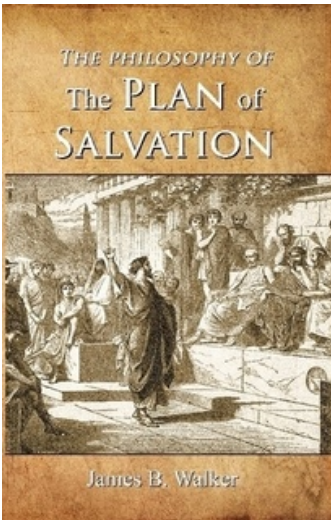


**Charles Grandison Finney** by **G. Frederick Wright** is one of the best biographies on this hero of the Christian faith. This book details the life, ministry, and theology of the greatest revivalists America has ever seen. While Finney's modern critics always try to downplay his success as an evangelist, this book was written by someone who was actually there in the 19th Century, who knew and worked with Finney for 30 years.

**The Natural Ability of Man: A Study On Free Will & Human Nature** by **Jesse Morrell** is an exhaustive theological volume that defends the Christian doctrine of man's free will against the false Gnostic/Calvinist doctrine of man's natural inability. This volume explains the truth of man's freedom in light of Church history and other doctrines like total depravity, regeneration, atonement, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, predestination, repentance, faith, the believers security, original sin, etc. One Bible teacher called this book "the most comprehensive exposition on man's natural ability in print."

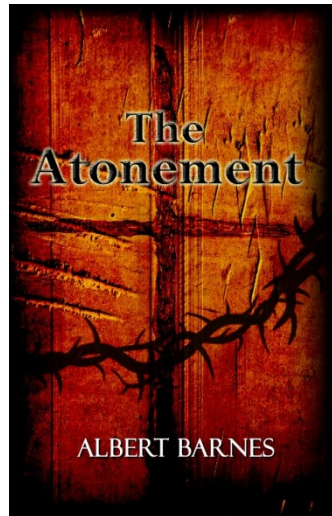


## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

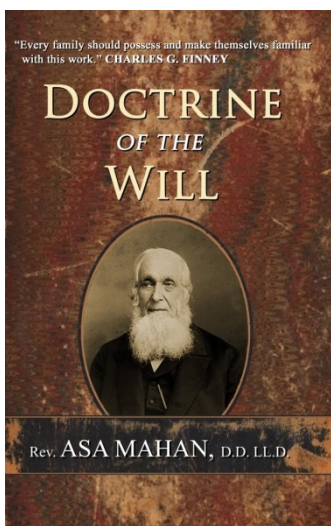


**The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation** by James B. Walker is a discussion on the fundamental facts about God's dealing with the human race throughout history, to convince the rational reader that the religion of the Bible is from God and is uniquely adapted to produce the greatest good for mankind. Some readers have called this book the best apologetic of the Christian faith that they have read.

**The Atonement** by Albert Barnes is a classic book on the governmental theory of the atonement from a very prominent pastor and world renowned Bible commentator from the 1800's. Barnes work on the Atonement was Leonard Ravenhill's number one recommended book out of forty listed. It is very insightful, thought provoking, and spiritually rich.

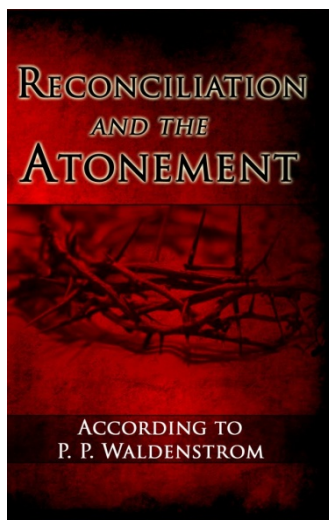


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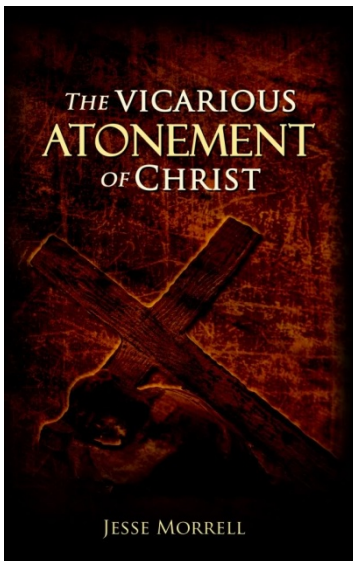
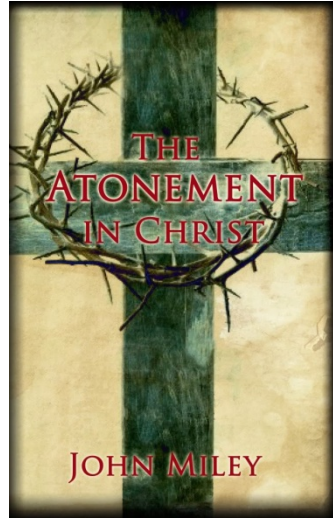
**The Doctrine of the Will** by Asa Mahan is possibly Mahan's best book. It is a satisfactory rebuttal to the doctrine of the Necessitarians, specifically the Edwardian kind, who taught that the will operated under the law of necessity rather than liberty. Revivalist and theologian Charles Finney said that this classic was "a highly important work" that "every family should possess and make themselves familiar with."

**Reconciliation and the Atonement according to P. P. Waldenstrom** is actually two writings compiled into one. The first writing is, "Be Ye Reconciled to God: A Look at the Atonement" by P. P. Waldenstrom and the second is, "The Christian Doctrine of the Atonement According to P. P. Waldenstrom" by Axel Andersson. This book answers the question, "Was the atonement designed to change God or to change man? Is God reconciled to man or is man reconciled to God?" This is a must read for every Christian believer!



## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

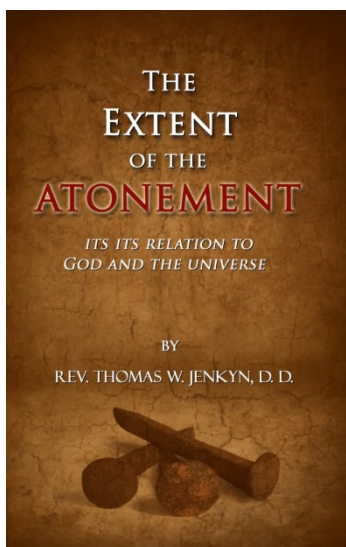
**The Atonement in Christ by John Miley** is one of the most exhaustive and important writings on the various atonement theories that have existed throughout Christian history. This classic writing advances the Governmental theory of the atonement as true and scriptural and critiques the opposing perspectives like that of the Penal Substitution theory of atonement.



**The Vicarious Atonement of Christ by Jesse Morrell** is a systematic presentation of the governmental atonement view. This book answers questions like, “What is the purpose of moral law?” “What is the purpose of penalty?” “What is the nature of forgiveness?” “What are the problems in the way of forgiveness?” “What is the atonement?” “What is imputed righteousness?” This book is full of logical and scriptural arguments as well as quotes from great Christian leaders throughout history.



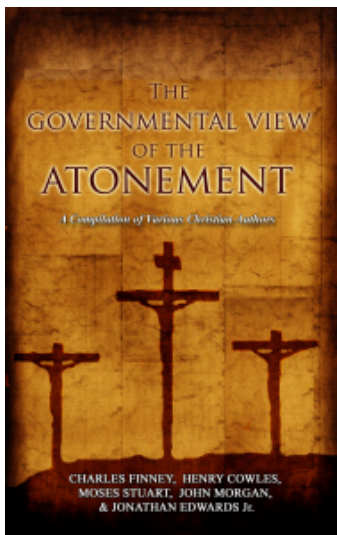
## DOES MAN INHERIT A SINFUL NATURE



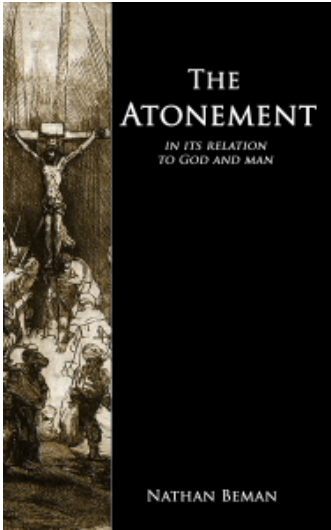
**The Extent of the Atonement: *In Its Relation to God and the Universe*** by Rev. Thomas W. Jenkyn is a classic work expounding upon the Governmental View of the atonement. It is a thorough explanation of the atonement in reference to its nature, the character of God, the purposes of God, the works of God, the moral government of God, the providence of God, divine truth, the rebellion of man, the salvation of mankind, the work of the Holy Spirit, the Christian church, etc. This book

presents the truth of the Scriptures in clarity and is an absolute joy to read.

**The Governmental View of the Atonement** is a compilation book with writings from some of the best theologians on this topic. The authors include Charles Finney, Henry Cowles, John Morgan, Moses Stuart, and Jonathon Edwards Jr. These authors present the truth of the atonement of Christ in a very clear Scriptural and reasonable light. Their writings show the necessity, nature, and extent of Christ's atoning sacrifice. The benevolence and brilliance of God in providing a way to sustain His moral government while pardoning transgressors will be clearly seen as you read this wonderful piece of literature.



## DISCOURSE ON THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION



**The Atonement as it Relates to God and Man** by **Nathan Beman** is a wonderful exposition on the Governmental View of the atonement of Christ. With precision and excellence the author explains why it was necessary for God's moral government that the atonement of Christ be made if God is going to pardon sinners, the nature of Christ's atoning death, and the extent of who this loving sacrifice has been made for. The reader of this book will be left with a crystal clear understanding of the doctrine of atonement.

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