

Original Sin

Pelagianism (“Bob the builder” theology)

The heresy of Pelagius was not a denial of sin, but a denial of the *bondage* of sin.

“It was because God wished to bestow on the rational creature the gift of doing good of his own free will and the capacity to exercise free choice, by implanting in man the possibility of choosing either alternative, that he made it his peculiar right to be what he wanted to be, so that with his capacity for good and evil he could do either quite naturally and then bend his will in the other direction too” [Pelagius, *Letter to Demetrius*]

“Whatever comes our way, whatever battle we have raging inside us, we always have a choice. My friend Harry taught me that. He chose to be the best of himself. It’s the choices that make us who we are, and we can choose to do what’s right.” [Peter Parker, *Spiderman III*]

If we get our doctrine of sin wrong, what will happen to our doctrine of the atonement? **THEOLOGY IS INTERCONNECTED**

We are not born neutral but were already sinful from birth...

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5; cf. 58:3)



“For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Romans 8:7-8)

... because we sinned in Adam...

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men **because all sinned**” (Romans 5:12)

What Adam did is crucial to the argument. It matters that there was a historical Adam! But how are we connected to him?

- Traducianism (e.g. Augustine) – each human soul is derived from our father’s soul, all the way back to Adam. So our soul was there in the Garden of Eden when he sinned. See the “locust” verse, Hebrews 7:10!
- Federalism (e.g. Jonathan Edwards) – we were in covenantal relationship with Adam, just as Christians are now in covenantal relationship with Christ. See Romans 5:12-21.

Theology	How we relate to Adam	What this would imply about our relationship to Christ
 Pelagianism	Adam sinned and died. This doesn’t affect us <i>directly</i> , but we die because we copy Adam’s unrighteous acts.	Jesus was righteous and lived. This doesn’t affect us <i>directly</i> , but we live because we copy Jesus’ righteous acts.
Inherited Sin	Adam sinned and died. He imparted a corrupt nature to his descendants. It is this sinful nature that leads us inevitably to sin and so die.	
Original Sin	Adam sinned and died as our representative. This means that <i>his</i> sin is counted as ours. We are punished because of the sin <i>he</i> committed. 	

THEOLOGY IS INTERCONNECTED

Note Paul’s repeated emphasis on “the one” (v15, v16, v17, v18, v19)
 Note the fact that Adam’s descendants were condemned during the period when there was no law to condemn them individually (vv13-14).

... but we can be justified because of Christ’s “recapitulation”

“He has therefore, in His work of recapitulation, summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who had at the beginning led us away captives in Adam ... the enemy would not have been fairly vanquished, unless it had been a man [born] of woman who conquered him.... And therefore does the Lord profess Himself to be the Son of man, comprising in Himself that original man out of whom the woman was fashioned, in order that, as our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.21.1 who got it from texts like Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:47-49; Luke 3:23 – 4:13)

How does this relate to the Virgin Birth? **THEOLOGY IS INTERCONNECTED**