

## 118 *The logic of original sin*

It was almost a year ago that I raised the issue of original sin [71]. I agree that it's not a simple issue, but here's my thinking.

As it was handed to me, unless an individual repents and turns to Christ, accepting him as their personal saviour, then their fate is sealed: they will not be in the kingdom when Jesus returns.

Right, so let's apply some logic to this. **How** do you repent and turn to Christ? You need to understand about original sin, that you are inherently evil; then you need to understand how Jesus' death was efficacious for your salvation; then you need to understand what it means to repent; and finally you must pray to ask God to forgive you and you will receive the Holy Spirit.

OK, so the logic of that, it seems to me, is that as soon as we can, we **must** instill into our children their inherent sinfulness, otherwise they might end up in hell because we didn't tell them – and you know what Jesus said about anyone who causes one of these little ones to stumble!

And what about the baby that's very sick and likely to die? Can we, should we, do anything to help that individual not end up in hell?

Not easy, is it? But the mistake I think we're making, when we talk like this, is to see life individualistically instead of in terms of community, and to see it in terms of in/out, true/false mechanisms, rather than relationships.

I don't know when, historically, we moved to this sort of thinking, but my Bible readings and studies suggest to me that in the early church they held onto the Jewish ideas of covenant, of belonging, of community. I don't believe that the early church taught their children that they were miserable sinners.

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Matthew 18 1. At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 He called a little child and had him stand among them. 3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, ***unless YOU change and become like little children, YOU will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*** 4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. 6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.