

Born Good, Bad, or Neutral?

- Church-goers have many different ideas
- All of them quote Scripture
- Most cannot imagine that their point of view is not shared by everyone
- Each point of view leads to a series of doctrines that direct one's basic view of Jesus, the good news, free will, and the nature of God.

Therefore, be sensitive.

Born Good, Bad, or Neutral?

- Born bad?
 - Somehow Jesus escaped this.
 - Catholic explanation: Mary's parents conceived her in the normal way. At the moment of conception, God relieved her of inherited sin.
 - Calvinist explanation: Depravity is transmitted by the male parent.
 - Therefore, Jesus is not like us.

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- Rules of engagement:
 - A position cannot be defended with certain passages because everyone has "supporting" Scripture.
 - An explanation must harmonize all passages, not just some.
 - Context is essential.
 - Translations have biases; use several.
 - NIV takes the liberty of explaining figures of speech rather than translating

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- Was Jesus on earth like us?
 - Hebrews 4:15 Jesus "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."
 - Temptation implies the ability to choose it.
 - Matthew 4:1 – 11, Mark 1:13, Luke 4:1 – 13 Was Jesus tempted?
 - Philippians 2:5 – 8 "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men."

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- John's reaction to those who claimed that Jesus was different from us:
 - 2 John 7 "Many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." (*c.f.*, 1 John 4:2 – 3)

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- Jesus was different from us in many ways. Which ways are deemed significant?
 - Culture: language, economics, politics, customs, location.
 - Birth: Matthew 1:18 – 25 Miraculous conception. No application made.
 - Sin:
 - Hebrews 4:15 Jesus was without sin, yet He still can sympathize.
 - Romans 8:3 Like us except for sin
 - Hebrews 2:11 – 18 Not ashamed

Born Good, Bad, or Neutral?

- Passages that indicate that we are born neither sinful nor inclined to it:
 - Ecclesiastes 7:29 Truly, this only have I found: that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.
 - Ezekiel 18:20 The soul that sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son.

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- Passages that indicate that we are born neither sinful nor inclined to it:
 - Romans 7:9 I was alive once without the Law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.
 - John 9:41 If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, "We see." Therefore your sin remains.

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- Passages that are cited to indicate that all are born sinful and inclined to it:
 - Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things and incurable; who can know it?"
 - This is after a contrast between the cursed (5 – 6) and the blessed (7 – 8).
 - Incurable: Job 34:6, Jeremiah 15:18, 17:16, 30:12, 30:15, 2 Samuel 12:15
 - The point is that feelings fool us.

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- Passages that are cited to indicate that all are born sinful and inclined to it:
 - Ecclesiastes 9:3 The hearts of the sons of men are full of evil.
 - This does not address how their hearts became this way.
 - In the same area, Solomon describes good results (9:7 – 8) and contrasts good and evil (9:18)

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- Passages that are cited to indicate that all are born sinful and inclined to it:
 - Psalm 51:5 "In sin my mother conceived me."
 - Literally, this says that David's mother was a sinner.
 - Modern translators, certain that David would not write such a thing about his mother, insert what he "must have meant," that he was born guilty of sin.

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- Passages that are cited to indicate that all are born sinful and inclined to it:
 - Psalm 58:3 "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies."
 - This is hyperbole; babies cannot speak.
 - Verses 10 – 11 describe the righteous, so not everyone is this way.
 - Psalm 22:10 describes David as having faith at birth.

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- Passages that are cited to indicate that all are born sinful and inclined to it:
 - Exodus 20:5 Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children.
 - As in Ezekiel 18, guilt is not passed across generations. This speaks to repercussions, not guilt.
 - Genesis 8:21 The imaginations of a man's heart is evil from his youth
 - A youth is a young man, not a baby.

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- Ephesians 2:3
 - Today's Living Bible ... We started out bad, being born with evil natures, and were under God's anger just like everyone else.
 - New King James [We] were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.
 - "Nature" means what it says (11 places)
 - Can this be harmonized with the passages that say that we are born "upright"?

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- Romans 3:10 – 12 A collection of quotes:
 - Psalm 14:1 This describes all "fools," not all people. See verse 5 for the opposite.
 - Psalm 5:9 This is a contrast between the faithful and the faithless.
 - Psalm 140:3 Both good and bad people are described
 - Psalm 10:7 Both good and bad people are described.
 - Proverbs 1:16 A warning to avoid this

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- Romans 3:10 – 12 A collection of quotes:
 - Psalm 36:1 This is a contrast between the wicked and those who trust God (v7)
 - Paul's point was that there is plenty of evil to go around, not that we were born that way.
 - In each passage, people from before the time of Jesus are described as faithful and righteous.

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- Ephesians 2:12
 - Certainly the Gentiles had no hope. But the passage makes no reference to being born sinful.
- Ecclesiastes 1:14
 - Solomon's point is that the goals of society are all pointless, not that all is pointless.
 - Wisdom, pleasure, and wealth are all found to be poor goals.
 - Seeking God is the only goal not vain.

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- Job 5:7
 - Living Bible "Mankind heads for sin and misery as predictably as flames shoot upwards from a fire."
 - King James Version "Man is born into trouble as the sparks fly upward."
 - This was the wisdom of Eliphaz, whom God labeled as wrong.