

# **The Doctrine of Original Sin in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church: A Study Based on Haimanot Abew 52:16-18**

**Fikremariam Bazezew**

This study examines the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church's distinct interpretation of original sin, particularly focusing on Haimanot Abew Chapter 52:16-18. Unlike Western Christian views that treat original sin as an inherited guilt from Adam, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church emphasizes personal moral responsibility and the cultivation of virtue. According to Haimanot Abew, sin is not an inherent flaw passed down through generations but rather a result of the mind's neglect of virtue. In this framework, baptism is understood not as a means of removing original sin, but as a sacrament of spiritual rebirth, divine adoption, and initiation into communion with the Holy Trinity. The Church's perspective on infant baptism reflects this theological stance: infants are baptized not to cleanse inherited guilt but to welcome them into the Church and prepare them for future spiritual growth.

This paper also draws on biblical texts such as Ezekiel 18:20, Romans 5:12-14, and Sirach 15:16, which highlight the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church's emphasis on free will, moral agency, and divine justice. The Church's Christology and soteriology affirm that Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection restore humanity's original potential for communion with God, focusing on transformation through grace rather than inherited corruption. Additionally, the study incorporates patristic sources, including St. John Chrysostom and Ethiopian theologians like Abä Giyorgis, to contextualize the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church's understanding of original and actual sin. By exploring the historical development of these doctrines, the study underscores the Church's unique theological contribution to Christian thought on sin, salvation, and sacramental theology.

**Keywords:** Original Sin, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Haimanot Abew, Hamartiology, Fall of Man, Sin and Redemption, Church Fathers, Christology.

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## **Учение о первородном грехе в эфиопской православной церкви Тевахедо: исследование, основанное на Хайманот Абев 52:16-18**

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В этом исследовании рассматривается особая интерпретация первородного греха эфиопской православной церковью Тевахедо, в частности, с акцентом на Хайманот Абев, глава 52:16-18. В отличие от западных христианских воззрений, которые рассматривают первородный грех как унаследованную от Адама вину, эфиопская православная церковь Тевахедо подчеркивает личную моральную ответственность и культивирование добродетели. Согласно Хайманоту Абев, грех – это не врожденный порок, передаваемый из поколения в поколение, а скорее результат пренебрежения разумом к добродетели. В этих рамках крещение понимается не как средство устранения первородного греха, а как таинство духовного возрождения, божественного усыновления и посвящения в общение со Святой Троицей. Взгляд Церкви на крещение младенцев отражает эту теологическую позицию: младенцев крестят не для того, чтобы очистить от унаследованной вины, а для того, чтобы принять их в Церковь и подготовить к будущему духовному росту.

Эта статья также опирается на библейские тексты, такие как Иезекииль 18:20, Римлянам 5:12-14 и Сирах 15:16, которые подчеркивают акцент эфиопской православной церкви Тевахедо на свободе воли, нравственном свободомыслии и божественной справедливости. Христология и сотиология Церкви утверждают, что воплощение, смерть и воскресение Христа восстанавливают изначальный потенциал человечества к общению с Богом, делая упор на преображение благодатью, а не на унаследованную испорченность. Кроме того, в исследовании использованы святоотеческие источники, в том числе св. Иоанна Златоуста и эфиопских богословов, таких как Аба Гиоргис, чтобы контекстуализировать понимание Эфиопской православной церковью Тевахедо первородного и

действительного греха. Исследуя историческое развитие этих доктрин, исследование подчеркивает уникальный богословский вклад Церкви в христианскую мысль о грехе, спасении и сакраментальном богословии.

**Ключевые слова:** первородный грех, Эфиопская православная церковь Тевахедо, Хайманот Абев, Хамартиология, грехопадение человека, грех и искупление, Отцы Церкви, Христология.

## Introduction

The doctrine of original sin has been a cornerstone of Christian theology, shaping understandings of human nature, salvation, baptism, and divine justice throughout the centuries. In most Western Christian traditions particularly in Roman Catholic and Protestant thought original sin is viewed as a condition inherited from the first humans, Adam and Eve, following their disobedience in the Garden of Eden<sup>1</sup>. According to this view, every person is born bearing the guilt of Adam's sin and, therefore, requires baptism as a sacrament for the remission of this inherited guilt. This framework significantly influences the practice of infant baptism and the theological constructs surrounding grace, salvation, and human will.

However, such a view is not universally held across all Christian traditions. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), one of the earliest and most unique expressions of Christianity with apostolic roots tracing back to a distinctive theological stance on the doctrine of original sin. Rooted in early patristic teachings, Biblical exegesis, and centuries of independent theological development, the EOTC presents an interpretation of original sin that emphasizes personal moral responsibility, the cultivation of virtue, and the transformative power of Christ's incarnation rather than the inheritance of guilt. This divergence offers a rich and nuanced lens through which to view Christian anthropology and soteriology.

One of the most compelling sources reflecting this theological vision is *Haimanot Abew*, a foundational theological text in Ethiopian tradition. Specifically, Chapter 52:16-18 provides a critical interpretation that challenges the notion of sin as a condition rooted in human nature. Instead, it posits that sin arises from the neglect of virtue and the misuse of human freedom. This view resonates with the teachings of the prophet Ezekiel, who in Ezekiel 18:20 proclaims that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" a profound declaration of personal accountability that stands in contrast to the idea of inherited guilt. This Old Testament witness, combined with the New Testament emphasis on moral agency and free will, forms the biblical foundation of the EOTC's approach to sin and righteousness.

The EOTC's theology of baptism also reflects this distinctive framework. Rather than functioning primarily as a sacrament for the removal of original sin, baptism is regarded as a rite of spiritual rebirth, divine adoption, and entrance into the mystical Body of Christ the Church. It is a means through which the baptized are filled with the Holy Spirit and united with the Holy Trinity. Baptism in this context is not so much a remedy for inherited guilt but an initiation into a new mode of existence, one marked by grace, righteousness, and the potential for divine communion. This understanding aligns closely with the Ethiopian Church's Christological and soteriological teachings, which place

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<sup>1</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church. (1994). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd ed.). Libreria Editrice Vaticana. [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_INDEX.HTM](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM).

strong emphasis on Christ's redemptive incarnation and the restoration of humanity through participation in the divine life.

Moreover, the EOTC does not view infants as bearers of guilt from Adam's fall. Rather, infants are seen as pure and innocent, born into a fallen world but not accountable for the sins of their ancestors. The baptism of infants is therefore not an act of cleansing original guilt but a sacramental entry into the life of the Church and a preparation for spiritual formation. The remission of sins through baptism becomes especially relevant for those who have reached an age of moral responsibility and, in particular, for Gentile converts whose previous lives were not shaped by covenantal life with God. This ecclesiological and pastoral approach stands in marked contrast to the Western emphasis on infant baptism as necessary for the salvation of the soul due to inherited sin.

The divergence between the EOTC's teaching and Western theological frameworks can be partially traced to differing historical developments. While Western Christianity was deeply shaped by the writings of Augustine of Hippo whose articulation of original sin had a profound impact on both Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions the EOTC was largely insulated from these theological currents. Instead, its doctrinal development was influenced by early Alexandrian theology, the writings of the Eastern Church Fathers, and indigenous Ethiopian theologians and monastic leaders. This historical context allowed the EOTC to develop a unique theological language and set of priorities, including a greater emphasis on spiritual discipline (*ṣawma*), ascetic practice, and the imitation of Christ.

Patristic sources such as St. John Chrysostom also provide valuable insights into the EOTC's interpretation of sin. In *The Homily of St. John Chrysostom*, in Geez Chapter 17:50, a clear distinction is made between "original sin" and "actual sin," with an emphasis placed on the role of individual transgression. Likewise, the writings of Abä Giyorgis of Gassecha reinforce this view, clarifying that Adam's punishment was the result of a conscious act of disobedience, not a transmission of guilt that inevitably afflicts his descendants. He maintains that even though Adam lost the clarity of spiritual vision, the human intellect and will remain intact, allowing individuals to choose between good and evil. This position is further supported by scriptural affirmations of free will such as Sirach 15:16: "He has set before you fire and water: stretch forth your hand unto whichever you will."

Biblical exegesis plays a central role in reinforcing the Ethiopian Orthodox perspective. Ezekiel 18, as noted earlier, rejects the notion of intergenerational punishment and asserts that each person will be judged according to their own righteousness or wickedness. This is consistent with Paul's nuanced treatment of sin in Romans 5:12–14, where he explains that sin entered the world through one man, but death spread to all because all sinned not merely because of Adam's transgression. Paul does not suggest that guilt is transmitted biologically or metaphysically; rather, he presents a theological vision that emphasizes human participation in sin and redemption. Similarly, the story of Enoch in Genesis 5:24 who "walked with God" and was taken by Him demonstrates that a life of righteousness is possible even within a fallen world.

These scriptural and theological principles converge in the EOTC's broader ethical framework, which stresses personal responsibility and the cultivation of holiness. Sin, according to this tradition, is not an inescapable stain on the human condition but a deviation from virtue and divine likeness. The goal of the Christian life is therefore not

merely the remission of inherited guilt but the actual transformation of the self through repentance, grace, and active cooperation with the Holy Spirit. This transformation is made possible by the redemptive work of Christ, whose incarnation reorients humanity toward its original purpose: communion with God.

By rejecting the doctrine of original sin as inherited guilt and instead emphasizing free will and virtue, the EOTC provides a compelling theological vision that honors the integrity of human moral agency. This view fosters a spirituality centered not on guilt but on the hopeful journey of sanctification. It encourages believers to live lives of repentance, prayer, and sacramental participation, not out of fear of ancestral condemnation, but out of love for God and a desire to fulfill their calling as images of the divine.

The aim of this study is to explore in depth the EOTC's unique approach to original sin, baptism, and salvation. Drawing on biblical exegesis, patristic sources, and Ethiopian theological writings, the discussion will highlight how this tradition diverges from and enriches global Christian discourse. In doing so, it offers an alternative framework for understanding human nature, the problem of sin, and the hope of redemption a framework that is grounded in ancient Christian wisdom yet remains profoundly relevant to contemporary theological inquiry.

This paper proceeds in several stages. First, it will examine the biblical foundations of the EOTC's teaching on sin and moral responsibility, with special attention to passages such as Ezekiel 18:20, Romans 5:12-14, and Genesis 5:24. Second, it will explore the theological reflections of Ethiopian and early Church Fathers on the nature of sin, free will, and divine justice. Third, the sacrament of baptism will be discussed not as a means of erasing inherited guilt but as a rite of divine adoption and entrance into the Church. Finally, the paper will assess the historical and doctrinal developments that have shaped the EOTC's position and consider the broader implications for Christian theology and ecumenical dialogue.

In a global Christian landscape often marked by theological divergence, the EOTC stands as a witness to the enduring diversity and richness of the Christian Tradition. Its perspective on original sin challenges commonly held assumptions and invites renewed reflection on what it means to be human, to sin, and ultimately to be saved. Through a careful and respectful exploration of this tradition, we gain not only theological insight but also a deeper appreciation for the manifold ways in which the Church throughout history and across cultures has sought to articulate the mystery of salvation.

## **Review of Literature**

The doctrine of original sin is among the most debated theological constructs within Christianity. Rooted in the fall of humanity as recounted in Genesis 3, interpretations of original sin vary significantly between Western and Eastern Christian traditions. The EOTC, with its ancient apostolic rooted and unique theological identity, offers a perspective that departs significantly from the Augustinian-Western interpretation. This review examines relevant literature from Western theology, Eastern Orthodoxy, biblical exegesis, and Ethiopian theological sources to contextualize and contrast the EOTC's approach.

### **Western Perspectives on Original Sin**

Western Christianity, particularly following the theological contributions of Augustine of Hippo, has generally understood original sin as both the inherited guilt and corruption of human nature due to Adam's transgression. Augustine's doctrine, developed most clearly in *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins* and *Confessions*, holds that human beings are born guilty and in need of redemption, even before committing any personal sin (Augustine, trans. 1998). This understanding deeply influenced Roman Catholic dogma and later Protestant theology.

The Council of Carthage (418) and the Council of Trent (1546) codified Augustine's views, making inherited guilt central to Christian soteriology in the West. Protestant Reformers such as Luther and Calvin upheld this doctrine, emphasizing the total depravity of humanity and the necessity of grace alone for salvation (McGrath, 2013). Scholars such as Niebuhr (1941) defended Augustine's insights into the inherent tension within human freedom and moral failure, arguing that original sin is a realistic reflection of the human condition.

However, critiques of Augustine's interpretation both ancient and modern have emerged. Pelagius, a contemporary of Augustine, denied inherited sin, asserting that humans are born morally neutral and capable of choosing good without divine assistance (Ferguson, 2013). Though condemned as heretical, Pelagius's views underscore an alternative anthropology that resonates with some Eastern traditions, including the EOTC.

### **Eastern Orthodox and Patristic Interpretations**

Eastern Orthodoxy maintains that while humanity inherits the consequences of Adam's sin namely, death and a proclivity toward sin it does not inherit guilt. This distinction is crucial in Orthodox theology. Church Fathers such as St. John Chrysostom and St. Gregory of Nyssa emphasize that each person bears responsibility for their own sins, and not for Adam's guilt [Meyendorff 1983].

St. Athanasius of Alexandria, in *On the Incarnation*, teaches that the consequence of sin is corruption and mortality, not inherited blame. He argues that the incarnation of Christ restores human nature by overcoming death, thereby nullifying the power of sin [Athanasius 1996]. The Orthodox view focuses more on healing and restoration rather than juridical condemnation.

Vladimir Lossky (1974) contrasts the Western doctrine of original sin with the Orthodox approach, highlighting that the former is legalistic while the latter is therapeutic. For Lossky, sin is a condition to be healed through theosis (deification), not merely a guilt to be pardoned. This framework aligns more closely with the Ethiopian Orthodox emphasis on sin as spiritual sickness rather than transgression requiring legal retribution.

### **Biblical Foundations and Interpretive Divergences**

The key scriptural texts underpinning the doctrine of original sin include Genesis 3, Romans 5:12-21, and Psalm 51:5. In Western theology, Romans 5:12 has often been translated from the Latin *in quo omnes peccaverunt* ("in whom all sinned"), supporting the idea that all humanity sinned in Adam but not saying inherited his guilt. According to this, Eastern and Ethiopian traditions typically interpret this verse as "because all have sinned," emphasizing personal responsibility [Wright 2013].

Furthermore, texts such as Ezekiel 18:20 ("The soul that sins shall die") and Sirach 15:11-20 underscore divine justice and the capacity for moral choice. These passages are

frequently cited in Ethiopian theological discourse to refute the notion that guilt can be transmitted from one person to another.

Contemporary scholars like Dunn (1998) and Wright (2013) advocate for reading Romans 5 within its Jewish apocalyptic context. Dunn argues that Paul's emphasis was on the universality of sin and death, not the imputation of guilt. Wright contends that sin and death are cosmic powers that affect all humans, but individuals are still responsible for their personal sins.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative theological research method, rooted in historical, doctrinal, and interpretive analysis of both primary and secondary sources. The purpose of the methodology is to uncover, analyze, and synthesize the EOTC's perspective on original sin by engaging with scripture, patristic writings, liturgical texts, theological commentaries, and contemporary academic scholarship. The approach is systematic, descriptive, and analytical, aiming to construct an authentic doctrinal representation from within the EOTC's own theological framework.

### **Research Design**

The research is structured as a descriptive doctrinal analysis. It does not seek to test a hypothesis, but rather to interpret and communicate the EOTC's theological understanding of original sin. This includes exploring how the doctrine is reflected in liturgical texts, catechetical writings, scriptural interpretations, and patristic teachings unique to the Church. Comparative analysis is also used to contrast the EOTC's interpretation with Western (Catholic and Protestant) and Eastern (Byzantine Orthodox) doctrines, in order to clarify the Church's distinctive theological voice.

### **Data Sources**

This study draws from both primary and secondary sources.

#### **Primary Sources**

Biblical passages used in the EOTC's doctrinal formation (Genesis 1-3, Romans 5, Psalm 51, Ezekiel 18, etc.).

Ethiopic Ge'ez books, especially *Haimanot Abew*, which provides a theological framework for understanding sin, grace, and human nature.

The writings of Ethiopian Church Fathers, such as Abba Giyorgis of Gassecha, and others, preserved in manuscripts and theological treatises.

#### **Secondary Sources**

Academic commentaries, historical theological studies, and contemporary research that engage with or interpret EOTC theology.

Scholarly works on original sin by authors such as Augustine, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, and modern theologians (e.g., Vladimir Lossky).

Comparative theological works that place Ethiopian Orthodox doctrine in dialogue with Western and Eastern Christian traditions.



## Discussion

The doctrine of original sin has been a critical point of theological reflection across Christian traditions, influencing views on human nature, salvation, and baptism. In the context of the EOTC, however, the understanding of original sin diverges significantly from Western theological constructs, particularly those shaped by Augustine of Hippo. This divergence is not merely linguistic or liturgical, but fundamentally doctrinal, as the EOTC articulates a theology rooted in patristic sources, indigenous interpretations, and a distinct understanding of divine justice, human freedom, and moral responsibility.

### **Reassessing the Nature of Original Sin: Not Inherited Guilt, but the Loss of Virtue**

One of the most critical themes in the EOTC's understanding of original sin is the rejection of inherited guilt. While Western theology, especially after Augustine, emphasized the transmission of guilt from Adam to all humanity, the Ethiopian Orthodox perspective aligns more with the Eastern Orthodox idea of "ancestral sin," though with even more emphasis on personal responsibility. Haimanot Abew (Chapter 52:16-18) directly challenges the view of sin as a matter of human nature. Instead, it defines sin as the neglect of virtue, emphasizing moral and spiritual negligence over ontological corruption.

This interpretation harmonizes with Ezekiel 18:20, which insists that "the soul that sins, it shall die" and that "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." The verse forms a theological backbone for the EOTC's emphasis on individual moral accountability, contrasting sharply with the idea of inherited moral culpability. Sin, in this tradition, is not an intrinsic property of humanity but a deviation from righteousness that requires conscious moral failure. The Church does not deny the consequences of Adam's fall namely death and corruption but it reframes the focus from inherited guilt to inherited mortality and the human tendency toward sin.

### **Theological Anthropology and Free Will**

A vital element of EOTC theology is its high regard for human free will. Passages such as Sirach 15:16 ("He has set before you life and death... choose life") reinforce the belief that human beings are moral agents capable of choosing good over evil. The story of Enoch (Genesis 5:24), who "walked with God," further supports the idea that righteousness remains attainable, even in a fallen world.

The EOTC's anthropology is thus neither pessimistic nor fatalistic. It affirms that human beings, though affected by sin, are created in the image of God and possess the capacity to choose virtue with the assistance of divine grace. This nuanced view allows the Church to maintain the seriousness of sin without succumbing to determinism or total depravity, as some Protestant doctrines tend to imply.

### **Baptism as Rebirth, Not Merely Remission**

The Church's understanding of baptism provides another crucial lens into its doctrine of original sin. Unlike Western traditions that emphasize baptism as a remedy for original guilt, the EOTC views it primarily as a sacrament of spiritual rebirth, divine adoption, and entrance into the community of believers. It is less about the cleansing of inherited sin and more about being born anew in Holy Trinity and receiving the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:5).

This understanding is particularly evident in the Church's practice of infant baptism, which is not grounded in fear of inherited condemnation but in the desire to initiate the child into the life of grace. Infants are seen as spiritually innocent; baptism for them is not a rescue from guilt but a bestowal of blessing. For adults, especially converts from Gentile backgrounds, the sacrament assumes a greater function in the remission of actual sins and in the same time be the son of Holy Trinity.

### **We can see also some patristic writings about the important of baptism**

Irenaeus explains that humanity inherited death from Adam, not as guilt but as a consequence – just as we inherit life through Christ. The essence is a loss of the divine gift of life, which leads to the spread of death across humanity by descent, not by personal fault [*Irenaeus* 1885].

Ἐνοσῆλευσε δὲ τὴν φύσιν ἡ ἁμαρτία, καὶ διεφθάρη δι' αὐτὴν ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος· καὶ οὕτως εἰς ἡμᾶς διήλθεν ὁ θάνατος ὥσπερ παράσιτος (PG 73, 161A).

“Sin made our nature sick, and the first man was corrupted by it; and thus death, like a parasite, passed into us” (PG 73, 161A).

This powerful imagery of death as a “parasite” reflects Cyril's conviction that we inherit a corrupted condition, not guilt, from Adam. It is consistent with the Orthodox understanding of ancestral sin rather than original guilt [*Cyril of Alexandria* 1857–1866a].

In this book, Meyendorff discusses how infant baptism in the early Church was viewed more as an incorporation into life (Zōē) in Christ – not primarily as the forgiveness of personal sins, since infants have none. Adult baptism, on the other hand, had the dimension of remission of sins due to a person's past moral choices [*Meyendorff* 1983].

**Gregory of Nazianzus – Oration on Holy Baptism.** Gregory discusses the value of baptizing infants for sanctification and spiritual life, even though they have not committed personal sins [*Gregory of Nazianzus* 1858].

**John Chrysostom – Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles.** Chrysostom affirms that infants receive baptism not for the remission of sins, but for righteousness and inheritance in the Kingdom [*John Chrysostom* 1862].

**Cyril of Jerusalem – Catechetical Lectures.** Cyril emphasizes baptism as rebirth, spiritual illumination, and incorporation into Christ, with different expressions for infants and adults [*Cyril of Jerusalem* 1857].

**Basil the Great – On the Holy Spirit.** Basil describes baptism as adoption, regeneration, and participation in divine grace universal gifts not limited to the remission of sins [*Basil the Great* 1857].

### **Patristic Support and Ethiopian Tradition**

The writings of the Ethiopian Fathers, including Abba Giyorgis of Gassecha, lend substantial support to this framework. Abba Giyorgis emphasizes that while Adam's transgression brought mortality and separation from divine light, it did not erase the human capacity for understanding or moral reasoning. As he states, “when Adam broke God's command, the light of discernment departed from him, but not the breath of life in the soul.” This suggests that sin is not a total corruption of nature but a distortion of



spiritual orientation, which can be corrected through repentance, grace, and sacramental life.

Additionally, St. John Chrysostom's homily in Geez (Chapter 17:50), cited in Ethiopian tradition, distinguishes between original sin (as consequence) and actual sin. He affirms that death came through Adam, but condemnation comes through actual sin, reinforcing the EOTC's position that judgment is based on personal guilt rather than inherited fault.

### **The Role of Jesus Christ in Restoring Humanity in the original state**

The EOTC's soteriology, closely tied to its Christology, further clarifies the role of Christ in addressing sin. The Church teaches that Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection were **restorative acts** meant to heal and renew human being to its original state. Salvation is a gift of God in response to the human faith and action. Salvation involves a re-attaining of the lost state of communion with God. Therefore, in EOTE teaching the theology of salvation deals with the ultimate mission of the incarnated God which involves the redemption of mankind from the bondage of sin and the curse of the law through the blood of Christ.

This spiritual approach expounds the patristic meaning of some theological terminologies such as redemption, regeneration, reunification, inheriting the Kingdom of God, and eternal judgment, for these words are interconnected or interdependent one another.

### **Ethical Implications: Cultivation of Virtue**

One of the most profound implications of the EOTC's understanding of original sin is its ethical orientation. If sin is the neglect of virtue rather than a state of being, then the moral life is about cultivating virtues such as humility, love, repentance, and obedience. The emphasis is on spiritual formation and personal holiness, not on escaping condemnation.

This theological orientation also shapes the Church's pastoral and liturgical life. The spiritual disciplines of fasting, confession, almsgiving, and liturgical participation are not mere ritual obligations but tools for moral renewal and virtue formation. This echoes the Pauline message that although sin entered through one man (Romans 5:12), each person is accountable "because all sinned."

## **Conclusion**

The doctrine of original sin is one of the most complex and contested topics in Christian theology, shaping fundamental views of human nature, salvation, and divine justice. Within this theological landscape, the EOTC presents a distinct and theologically nuanced interpretation that diverges from Western models while offering profound insight into the human condition and God's redemptive plan.

At the heart of the EOTC's teaching is the assertion that sin is not an inherited guilt but the neglect of virtue and the loss of original righteousness. Rooted in both Scripture and patristic tradition, particularly Ethiopian sources like the Anaphora of Haimanot Abew, the Church emphasizes that Adam's fall resulted not in the corruption of human nature, but in the loss of the spiritual light and a weakening of the will toward virtue. Sin is seen not as a transmitted stain but as a personal failure that each individual must confront and overcome through divine grace and moral responsibility.

This perspective is grounded in a strong theological anthropology that upholds the value of free will, personal accountability, and the capacity for righteousness. Through the lens of EOTC teaching, human beings are not born condemned but are born into a world affected by death and moral vulnerability. Yet they retain the divine image and the ability to choose between good and evil. The Church's emphasis on Scriptures such as Ezekiel 18:20 and Sirach 15:16 further underscores this commitment to personal responsibility and divine justice.

The sacrament of baptism, particularly in its role as spiritual rebirth rather than merely a cleansing from inherited guilt, illustrates the Church's holistic and transformative approach to salvation. Baptism is a means of entering into the life of Christ and the community of believers, rather than an emergency measure to erase a legalistic burden passed down from Adam.

In light of the teachings of Ethiopian Fathers such as Abba Giyorgis of Gassecha and the liturgical reflections embedded in the Anaphoras, the EOTC's view of original sin is deeply interwoven with its understanding of Christ's redemptive work. The incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ are seen not just as acts of substitution but as the healing and restoration of fallen humanity. The Church's theology centers on transformation and participation in the divine life, rather than juridical absolution alone.

Finally, the ethical implications of this doctrine are profound. Since sin is understood as a personal and moral failure rather than a biological inheritance, the focus of Christian life becomes the active pursuit of virtue. The faithful are called to repentance, humility, spiritual discipline, and union with God through the sacramental and ascetic life of the Church.

In conclusion, the EOTC offers a vibrant and spiritually enriching interpretation of original sin that highlights the interplay of divine grace, human freedom, and moral responsibility. Its theological framework preserves both the gravity of the Fall and the hope of restoration, emphasizing that while all have sinned, each person is capable through God's grace of walking the path of righteousness. In doing so, the EOTC not only contributes to the broader Christian understanding of sin but also provides a deeply pastoral and spiritually formative vision for the life of believers today.

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