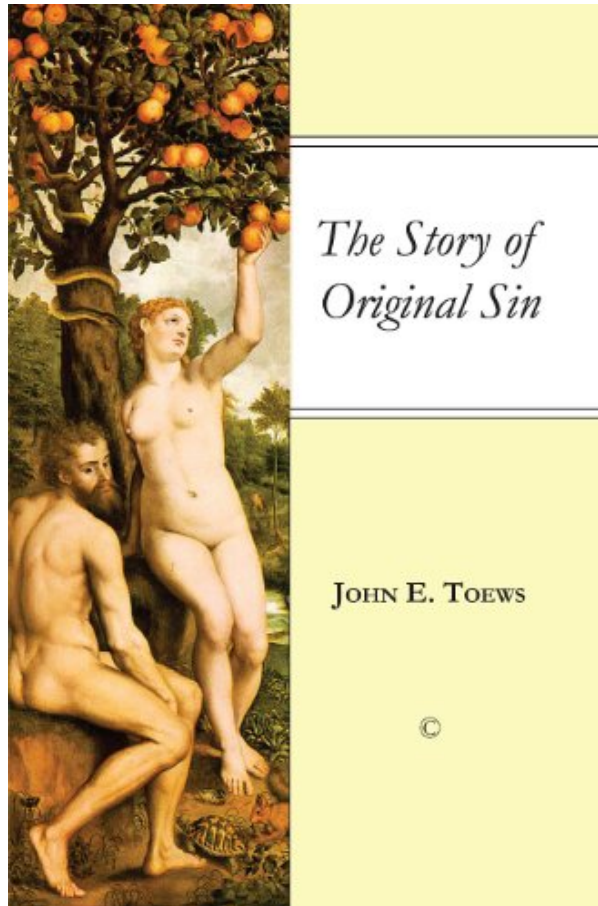


THE STORY OF ORIGINAL SIN BY JOHN E. TOEWS



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*The Story of
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JOHN E. TOEWS



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Review

I would highly recommend this fascinating monograph for biblical scholars, theologians, and seminarians interested in the history of sin within the Old and New Testaments and its reception in Second Temple Judaism and patristic literature. (Igal German, University of Toronto Theological Book Review, Vol. 25, No.2, 2013)

Toews makes some important points along the way - understanding sin as a relational and political concept not an ontological one, for example - ...in the process he offers the slenderest of loose threads which could be pulled in various interesting directions. Perhaps he has done us a service in piquing our curiosity and loosening those threads through his determined focus. (G. R. Evans *Theology*, vol 117, issue 6, 2014)

About the Author

John E. Toews is the retired President of Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo, and the Academic Dean and Professor of New Testament Literature emeritus of the Fresno Pacific University Biblical Seminary.

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THE STORY OF ORIGINAL SIN BY JOHN E. TOEWS PDF

This book traces the history of the interpretation of the disobedience of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 through the biblical period and the church fathers until Augustine. It explains the emergence of the doctrine of original sin with the theology of Augustine in the late fourth century on the basis of a mistranslation of the Greek text of Romans 5:12. The book suggests that it is time to move past Augustine's theology of sin and embrace a different theology of sin that is both more biblical and makes more sense in the postmodern West and in the developing world.

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The Untold Story

By Alexander Chow

In this book, John Toews goes on to tell the story of original sin and its invention by the 4th century church leader, Augustine of Hippo. Many scholars in the last two centuries have tried to redefine or dismiss sin, arguing against an image of an angry God. Toews does not do this. Instead, he gives a very strong exegesis of both the Bible and Christian history to point out the novelty of Augustine's theory, and suggests what Christians can learn from this.

Toews begins by focusing his study on Genesis 3, and post-exilic and Pauline interpretations of the Eden story to show the overall absence of the concept of "the Fall," but an analysis of the scriptural basis for this theology. He goes on to show the varying theological theories of how what happened in Eden and to the human race, from both Greek and Latin church fathers from the early church until the year 400. After setting the scene, Chapter 6 is perhaps the most important in that it sets out to show how Augustine came up with his theology of original sin through (1) a bad Latin translation of the Bible and (2) an attempt to emphasize the importance of infant baptism. The final chapter shows how three traditions - Judaism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Anabaptist-Mennonites - have never held to a notion of "original sin" but have nonetheless upheld other views of why humans continue to sin in this world.

John Toews gives a scholarly, yet accessible telling of a story that is so vitally important for today's Church in the West and around the world (my own book engages this and other subjects in the context of China). Glad to have read it and look forward to hearing more discussions on this important subject.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

What will replace Augustine's doctrine of original sin?

By Paul R. Bruggink

John Toews begins his book with a discussion of what is and what is not actually in Genesis 3. This is followed by five chapters that trace the changes that took place in the doctrine of original sin as the story was retold and re-interpreted in Second Temple Judaism, by Paul, by the Greek Church Fathers, by the early Latin Church Fathers and by Augustine. Toews regards Augustine's view on original sin as unbiblical, problematic, and scientifically untenable.

Toews begins his final chapter ("Where Do We Go From Here? Toward a Constructive Proposal") by describing the Old Testament and New Testament perspectives on sin in general. He then discusses theologies of sin in the Jewish, the Eastern Orthodox, and the Anabaptist-Mennonite traditions. He concludes by describing some contemporary options: re-affirming Augustine, rehabilitating Augustine (e.g., sin is "transmittable through the dynamics of social relationships"), and moving past Augustine by using sin language but abandoning "original sin" language.

In the end, he doesn't resolve the issue, but points to approaches to possible resolution. He concludes with Paul that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and that this is volitional, not biological.

I recommend this book for anyone who is interested in and/or has issues with the doctrine of original sin.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Incredible work

By Fr. Chad Lynch

Like many, my earliest understanding of sin was that of original sin as a spouse by most western theologians since Augustine. It was an understanding that I grew increasingly troubled with, as I began to be aware of how little sense it actually made.

This book does a wonderful job of tracing the development and a history of Original Sin, showing that it is not the biblical understanding, and that both Jews and early Christians have a different understanding, and much more healthy and useful understanding of sin.

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