Jonathan Edwards on the Nature of Sin

Summer Study June 2018
Death of Infants

- St. Augustine, *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants*
  - Infants are burdened with original sin *contra* Pelagius (Ch. 7)
  - Infants are born in unbelief; even of believing parents (Ch. 17)
  - Unbaptized infants damned, but most lightly (Ch. 21)
  - It is an inscrutable mystery why some are saved, and others not (Ch. 29)
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• Council of Trent (1545), unless men be regenerated to God though the grace of Baptism, they are born to everlasting misery and destruction, whether their parents be believers or unbelievers.

• Ulrich Zwingli, 1. All believers are elect and hence are saved, though we cannot infallibly know who are true believers. 2. All children of believers dying in infancy are elect and hence are saved, for this rests on God’s immutable promise. 3. It is probably, from the superabundance of the gift of grace over the offense, that all infants dying in infancy are elect and saved; so that death in infancy is a sign of election; and although this must be left with God, it is certainly rash and even impious to affirm their damnation. 4. All who are saved are saved only by the free grace of God’s election and through the redemption of Christ.
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• John Calvin, while speaking with caution, clearly believes that some infants dying as infants, are lost

• Commentary Romans 5:17, “He is communicated to infants in a peculiar way; for they have by covenant the right of adoption, by which they pass over unto a participation of Christ. Of the children of the godly I speak, to whom the promise of grace is addressed; for others are by no means exempted from the common lot”
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- Reformed Confessions
  - *Canons of Dort* (1618/19, “Election”) I.17, Since we are to judge of the will of God from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they, together with the parents, are comprehended, godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children, whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy.
  
  - *Westminster Confession* (1646, “Effectual Calling”) X.3, Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth: so also, are all other elect persons who are uncapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word. Cf. Cambridge Platform (Reforming Synod, 1680)