



The Reflector

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Depravity and the Indwelling Spirit

Robert Turner

Does man need a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit; (1) to overcome his inherited sinful nature; (2) in order to (a) understand the Scripture, (b) be converted, and (c) to live a sanctified life? I am especially thankful that this special issue is planned, for our generation is not well schooled in logical consequences of Total Hereditary Depravity. Also, sometimes our own brethren have accepted specific concepts that logically derive from depravity, and when they try to defend their careless statements they are drawn deeper into the fatal web. In order that you may know we are not “shooting in the dark” we will cite recognized sources for these doctrinal concepts.

Charles Hodge’s Systematic Theology, is a three volume set of books, making all the usual arguments. He advocates “the Augustinian doctrine of original sin,” and offers his proofs (?) as well as his answer to arguments made against it (Vol. 2, pp. 231-309). His first affirmative argument is based on the universality of sin. Since all men sin, he reasons they are inherently depraved (some brethren even say man “must” sin). He argues (2) from the entire sinfulness of men - seen by the dreadful fruits of sin and what he calls the “universal rejection of Christ,” and man’s inability to extricate himself. And (3) he argues from the early manifestation of sin in our lives. These things, says Hodge, make depravity a part of the “nature” of man. “Nature” can refer simply to the usual pattern of conduct (“according to the course of this world,” Eph. 2:2-3), and none of these arguments prove we inherited a sinful bent from Adam. But we are concerned with the relation of depravity to Spirit indwelling.

Philip Schaff, a recognized Reformed scholar,

ties depravity to the indwelling Spirit as he tells us of Augustine (354-430), the theological father of the doctrine under consideration. Augustine treated grace as an “enabling power,” and considered that power the results of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Schaff explains, “(Christ) does not merely influence believers from without, but lives and works in them through the Holy Ghost, as the principle of their spiritual life” (History of the Christian Church, Vol. 3, p. 814).

Does man need the Holy Spirit to overcome a depraved nature? Schaff says, “Augustine reaches his peculiar doctrine of redeeming grace (via H.S., rft) in two ways. First, he reasons upwards from below, by the law of contrasts; that is, from his view of the utter incompetency of the unregenerated man to do good. . . . In the second place he reasons downward from above; that is, from his conception of the all-working, all-penetrating presence of God in natural life, and more in the spiritual. . . . With him grace is, first of all, a creative power of God in Christ transforming men from within. It produces first the negative effect of forgiveness of sins, removing the hindrance to communion with God; than the positive communication of a new principle of life. . . . He stands on essentially Evangelical grounds. . . . Faith itself is an effective of grace; indeed, its first and fundamental effect, which provides for all others, and manifests itself in love.” He is reasoning man cannot, God must, and making “redeeming grace” something in addition to the message of the cross.

From the fact that all men sin it does not follow that none are competent to do anything good. It only proves man’s need for mercy, and Paul’s

arguments are all aimed in that direction (Rom. 3:26; Gal. 3:24). Man can not be free of guilt by doing other good, but he can do other good, including trusting in Christ for mercy. The Scriptures treat man as a sinner, yes; but they also treat man as capable of responding to the faith producing word (Jn. 20:31). When Christ says, "Come unto me" we believe man can accept and obey that invitation (Matt. 11:28). When alien sinners are called upon to repent, we believe they are capable of repenting (Acts 17:30). Every conditional promise (Mk. 16:16; Acts 8:37) is further evidence that man's sin is not sufficient reason to conclude he is incapable of responding to God's call.

Anyone who can see that a Just God can be Merciful, should be able to see that a Sovereign God can treat man as a free agent, make him conditional promises, and offer him a way of mercy that awaits man's response or acceptance. It is actually a limiting of God's "all-working, all-penetrating" presence, to conclude He can not extend mercy on conditions - He can not be merciful and Just at the same time. God's promise to punish the sinner is not contradicted by His mercy. He is "longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). But the Calvinist concept of sovereignty limits God, forcing upon Him the election of individuals, thus denying His own claim to be "no respecter of persons" (1 Pet. 1:17; and many like passages).

Is the indwelling Spirit necessary for understanding the Spirit inspired word? Charles Hodge (Ibid. Vol. 1, pp. 187-8) says, "The Scriptures are to be interpreted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. . . . The ground of this rule is twofold: First, the Spirit is promised as a guide and teacher. He was to come to lead the people of God into the knowledge of truth." And secondly, the Scriptures teach, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The "natural man" in his view is one who has not been given the indwelling Spirit of God. Of course the passages in John 14, 15, 16 are clearly made to the apostles, not to the public in general. "I have yet many things to say . . . but ye can not bear them now" (16:12) shows that, When

compared with Luke 24:48f there can be no doubt in the mind of a fair scholar.

And the context of 1 Corinthians 2 contrasts the man who depends on human wisdom with one who accepts God's word because of its source. Both of these men are descendants of Adam, yet they are two kinds of listeners: the believer and the man who tests the message with human wisdom, and calls it foolishness. Paul says he came not with human wisdom, but with demonstrations, that faith might be "in the power of God" (2:1-5). The "we" who have received, are the inspired speakers - "which things we speak" (2:12-13). Then v. 14: "but the natural man receive th not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness. . . . kept in context, refers to one who refuses information, perhaps even seeks to speak, on the basis of human wisdom rather than by revelation. This passage does not say the words of inspiration can be understood only by those who also have the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Inspired speakers intended their word to be understood (Eph. 3:3-4; 2 Pet. 1: 13-15; 3:1-2). If inspiration failed in the first instance, how can we expect it to succeed in the second? Of course, the Calvinist denies that God wanted all to understand - only the elect individuals. This limits the atonement, the "all the world" for preaching, and again, makes God a respecter of persons. According to Scriptures, the ones who will not understand are those who close their eyes to truth, being blinded by their capitulation to Satan (Acts 28:26-27; 2 Cor. 4:34).

Must man have the indwelling Spirit to live a sanctified life? In K.C. Moser's book, *The Way of Salvation*, he says: "Man is even now unfit for Christianity until he is 'born from above,' until the crucifixion of the 'law of sin'" (p. 21). Then on page 133, "The fundamental weakness of man is the 'law of sin' within him." Page 134: "Under Christ this 'law of sin' called elsewhere by the same apostle the 'old man,' is overcome by a principle of life given by the Spirit. It then becomes the work of the indwelling Spirit to keep this 'old man' under subjection so that the child of God can successfully serve Him" (Emphasis mine, rft). If Moser believes the Spirit can work through the word to convert an alien, can

the Spirit not work through the word to “keep” him? Compare Moser’s statements with basic Evangelical ideas discussed earlier, and you can see why this concept is questioned.

The convicted alien crucifies the “old man” in repentance, as a preparation for baptism, where the guilt of the past is forgiven (Rom. 6:1-6; cf. “Killing the Old Man” in an earlier article). God calls on men to repent, implying they can do so. The Spirit’s work in all of this is to “convict the world . . . of sin, righteousness, judgment” which He does through the revealed and delivered truth (Jn. 16:8). The “law of sin” in man (Rom. 7:18f), his desire for satisfaction of fleshly desires, and it exists side by side with the “law of mind” or determination on man’s part to serve God instead. We are urged to “walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit” (mind, will; 8:4-8); which must, in turn, be filled with truth (cf. Eph. 5:18 with Col. 3:16). Much of our weakness in discussing these matters is in failing to appreciate the real meaning of the law “written on the heart” - a work of the Spirit but ministered by preaching, not by some mystical operation (2 Cor. 3:3; Eph. 4:20-24).

God’s Spirit works hard, but His tool is the word of God (Eph. 6:17). That word is powerful, in physical creation, and in spiritual creation. Powerful enough to shake a governor and a king; to convert pagans, and change lives. When it is used in faith, the Spirit works - as God would have it offering life through Christ to a who will accept and obey Him.

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Two Unscriptural Concepts

Frank Jamerson

The New Testament speaks of the church in both the universal and the local senses. In the universal sense, there is one body and it is composed of all the saved of all the world (Eph. 1:22,23; Acts 2:47). In the local sense, a church is composed of Christians who agree to worship and work together, and in this sense there are many churches (Rom. 16:16).

The two unscriptural concepts that we want to study involve how we become members of the universal and the local church. The “language of Ashdod” that is too prominent today indicates that

many brethren do not have a clear understanding of the distinctions between these two uses of the word “church.”

First, some talk about “joining the church” when they are speaking about their baptism into Christ. This indicates a lack of understanding about how we become a part of the body of Christ. We do not “join” the universal church. The Bible says, “And the Lord added to the church day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). The one who saves us, adds us! When does He add us? The context in Acts 2 shows that those who “repented and were baptized for the remission of their sins” were saved (Acts 2:38,41). Paul told the Corinthians, “For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). The penitent believer is baptized “into one body,” or “into Christ” (Gal. 3:27) in the sense that God forgives his sins and saves him because of his obedience to his commands. That does not make one a member of a local church, but of the universal church.

The second unscriptural concept that we want to notice is the idea that baptism automatically makes one a member of a local church. Just as we do not join the universal church, we are not baptized into a local church.

The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized by Philip, and “went on his way rejoicing” because he was saved (Acts 8:38,39), but he was not a member of any local church at that time. Saul of Tarsus had been baptized into Christ, and accepted by brethren in Damascus, but when he went to Jerusalem and “assayed to join himself to the disciples” there, he was not automatically accepted (Acts 9:26). After Barnabas “took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus,” they agreed to accept him (Acts 9:27). The next verse says he “was with them” (v. 28). He did not just “join up,” he “joined in”! But there had to be the desire to “belong” on his part, and the willingness to “accept” on their part. When Apollos wanted to go from Ephesus to Achaia, brethren in Ephesus wrote a letter “to the disciples

to receive him” (Acts 18:27). What the word of mouth accomplished for Saul, the written word accomplished for Apollos! Before there can be local church membership, there must be a desire to belong and an acceptance on the part of others.

How is this desire and agreement expressed? The Bible does not give the details about this, therefore we must use our judgment in applying these principles. There are three ways that I know that have been used. (1) When a person moves to an area, or is baptized into Christ, and begins worshiping with a congregation, his participation is accepted by the church and understood by him as indicating desire to belong and acceptance, and no word is spoken. (The danger of this method is that one party or the other may misunderstand the intentions of the other. Simply worshiping with a group does not necessarily indicate a desire to belong, nor a willingness to accept.) (2) A person goes forward and states his desire to the preacher, or expresses it to the elders and a public announcement is made of this person’s desire to “identify” or join this group. Unless there is some reason to question the person’s faithfulness, he is accepted by the congregation as a member. (3) When a person expresses a desire to be a part of the church, the elders meet with him, or her, and discuss their mutual responsibilities. After such discussion an announcement is made that this person is a part of the congregation. (Elders have a special responsibility toward members of the flock and such a meeting serves to let the prospective member know what we are doing, as well as what we do not practice, and find out what they have done in other places and are willing to do here. This is the approach that the elders here use.)

Other methods may be just as good in fulfilling the two requirements for local church membership, but we need to keep clearly in our minds that we are baptized “into Christ” (this is not “joining a local church”), and we join a local church (we were not baptized into it). ■

“Fellowship” - as the Word Is Used in the New Testament

Luther W. Martin

Twelve different times in the King James Version, the word “fellowship” is taken from the Greek “koinonia,” which according to Thayer’s Lexicon, means: “1. The share which one has in anything, participation” ... ‘fellowship of the Spirit’ (Phil. 2:1). ‘The fellowship of his sufferings’ (Phil. 3:10). ‘The fellowship of ministering to the saints’ (2 Cor. 8:4). Luther Martin ‘To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery...’ (Eph. 3:9). ‘Ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord’ (1 Cor. 1:9).

“2. Intercourse, fellowship, intimacy” ‘they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship . . .’ (Gal. 2:9). ‘For what’ fellowship hath righteousness?’ (2 Cor. 6:14.) ‘They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, ...’ (Acts 2:42). ‘For your fellowship in the gospel from the very first...’ (Phil. 1:5). ‘That ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ’ (1 John 1:3). ‘if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another...’ (1 John 1:7). See also 1 John 1:16.

“3. A benefaction jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution....” See 2 Cor. 8:4 as referred to under No. 1 above. 2 Cor. 9:13 renders the word “liberal distribution.” Heb. 13:16 uses the term “communicate.”

The word “koinonia” is actually used some twenty times in the New Testament, but is translated “fellowship” only twelve times. In the other instances, it is translated “communion,” four times; “communication,” once; “contribution,” once; “distribution,” once; and by an inexact translation, according to Thayer, is rendered “to communicate,” one time.

Thus “*koinonia*” refers to our relationship with God, with Christ, with the Holy Spirit, with one another ...but in each instance it is used in reference to the work and worship of the Lord. In no instance does the word refer to a gathering for entertainment or recreation. ■

(The three articles in this issue were written by men who have passed on to their reward. We print these articles in hope that especially our younger readers will profit from the clarity and soundness of men of yesterday. Truly, being dead yet they speak)