**Total Hereditary Depravity**

There are five major tenets of Calvinism: Total hereditary depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace and Perseverance of the saints. These beliefs did not originate with John Calvin but he was, perhaps, their most influential proponent. One of the most effective documents to articulate these tenets is the Westminster Confession of Faith although John Calvin was not its author.

This set of doctrines rests on the foundational belief in the concept of original sin; that the guilt of the sin of Adam and Eve has been imputed to every human being since. If the very premise upon which the doctrine rests amounts to nothing but human philosophy, the resulting tenets are not only worthless, but destructive. Are the teachings of the Westminster Confession the word of God or the doctrines of men?

The Confession tells us that, when Adam and Even sinned, they became “wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.” Who said so? Not Scripture. We are then told that “the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity…” Really? Give me book, chapter and verse. Finally, “Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation.” More creative thinking on someone’s part. There is not a hint in Scripture of the concept of Total Hereditary Depravity. None.

In the limited space we have, please consider with me three disturbing but unavoidable conclusions associated with the premise of Total Hereditary Depravity.

**God imputes the guilt of the father on the son.** This flies in the face of the words of God Himself. He made it crystal clear that the soul that sins will be held accountable for the sin he commits (Ezekiel 18:2-4). The whole concept of one person bearing the guilt of a crime they did not commit is foolishness. Lots of people suffer the consequences of sins committed by others, but there is no such thing as imputed guilt.

**Babies are born totally depraved and are sinful creatures before God.** This was the primary basis for infant baptism. An unscriptural assumption about the depravity of infants led to the unscriptural practice of baptizing them. Jesus Himself said that “the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14). Little children don’t need to be saved, they are *safe* until they are old enough to choose to sin.

**The gospel message becomes impotent.** Paul said the gospel is God’s power to save (Romans 1:16) because hearing it produces saving faith in the heart of the hearer (Romans 10:17). Paul spent his life persuading men because he knew the terror of facing God unprepared (2 Corinthians 5:11). If each individual lacks the capability of responding to the gospel without a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, persuasion has nothing to do with it.

It is the sovereign will of God that each of us exercises his or her will in accepting the grace He is offering. He wants us to choose to love and serve Him. Programmed robots can’t offer real love; only real people with free will of their own can.

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