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SERMON LIV.

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THE IMPUTATION OF ADAM'S SIN AND THE PENALTY, PROVED, AND VINDICATED.

ROM. 5:12.—*Therefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

In treating this subject I shall take occasion to shew,

I. THAT ALL MANKIND ARE, BY ADAM'S SIN BECOME GUILTY, DEPRAVED CREATURES.

II. SHEW WHAT THAT PUNISHMENT OR DEATH IS, TO WHICH ADAM'S SIN EXPOSETH US.

III. VINDICATE THE JUSTICE OF GOD THEREIN, OR SHEW THE REASONABLENESS OF OUR BEING PUNISHED FOR ADAM'S SIN.

I. I AM TO SHEW THAT ALL MANKIND ARE, BY ADAM'S SIN, BECOME GUILTY, DEPRAVED CREATURES.

If there was nothing but the light of nature, and the common observation of mankind to decide the matter, this melancholy truth would appear too evident for any judicious, unprejudiced person to deny it. The early propensity to sin that is observable in children, evinces the corruption of their natures. But the oracles of truth, which God has given us as the rule of our faith and practice, every where considers and treats us as apostate, guilty creatures. The offers of mercy, the promises of pardon, the necessity of regeneration, of taking away the heart of stone, &c., loudly proclaim that we are polluted creatures, exposed to punishment. But I know of no place in the sacred writings that declares it more expressly than our text and context. The apostle's main design in introducing these words, is to prove the doctrine of justification by grace through the merits of Christ; or rather to remove the prejudices of the Jews against it, by shewing its reasonableness. "If (says he, verse 17,) by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Verse 18: Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." As if he had said, It is granted by all that by the imputation of Adam's sin we are all become guilty before God: can it therefore be thought strange that we should be justified in his sight through the imputation of Christ's righteousness? If God may justly impute the sin of our first parents to us, surely we may more easily suppose, from

* When this sermon was furnished for publication, the author—"the apostle of the West"—was a living minister.

SERMON LV.

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HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

JOHN 3:6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*—ROM. 3:23. *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*

Human Depravity is at the foundation of the whole system of Christianity. Besides being plainly and repeatedly asserted, it is involved in every other peculiar doctrine of Revelation.

It is *the ruin* which the divine mission of Jesus Christ was designed to restore. It is *the disease* which the blood of the Son of God, and the divine influences of the Holy Ghost, are designed to remedy. Correct views of this subject give harmony and symmetry to the whole Revelation of God, while errors or superficial sentiments on this radical point introduce a corresponding looseness and superficiality into the whole system of religious belief.

The doctrine of the Holy Scriptures on this melancholy subject is definite and explicit. Their testimony concerning *human depravity* is, *that it is natural, universal, and total.* "BY NATURE ALL MANKIND ARE TOTALLY DEPRAVED." Let us explore this melancholy but profitable theme.

I. Human depravity is **NATURAL**, or *original*. The disease is seated in our very nature. By this we do not assert that it was always so. No: "*God made man upright.*" Originally he was formed "in the image of God," only "a little lower than the angels." Man once, for a short season, stood erect—lord of the creation—the earthly image of his Creator—reflecting his glory, and enjoying his constant presence. *The tabernacle of God was once with men.* But "the gold became dim, the most fine gold was changed." "By one man sin entered into the world." This sin defaced the image of God, deprived man of his presence, and introduced a fearful and fatal moral disorder, into the system and into the race. "**IN ADAM ALL DIE.**" The fountain was corrupted—the head was diseased—the representative of the whole race became polluted. Adam in his act of transgression, not only sinned personally and fell personally, but acting as the federal head and representative of his posterity, he involved them also in the consequences of his transgression. This is the plain doctrine of the Scriptures, on which the standards of our church* are founded. "By one man's offence death reigned by one." "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation."†

* The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression."—*Quest. 16, Shorter Catechism.*

† Much philosophy and curious speculation has been expended on the *why* and

By natural or original depravity, we mean to express, that all men since the transgression of Adam, and as a consequence of that transgression, are born without holiness, alienated from God, and possessing a nature so prone to evil, that until renovated, it will produce only evil actions. This we say is the natural state of man. *Involved in the guilt* of our first parent, from our connection with him as our representative, we are thereby liable to death—*partakers of their corruption*, in our nature we are utterly indisposed of ourselves to holiness, and *possessing the active principles of opposition to God, from our first moral being*, we are incapable of relishing his service or enjoying his presence. This is *natural depravity*. This is the humiliating fact, *expressly revealed in the Sacred Volume and confirmed by universal experience*.

1. (a) This fact is clearly revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. Two conclusive passages will suffice for the Old Testament evidence, although many more equally conclusive might be cited. "Behold," says the Psalmist in the penitential Psalm, "*Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*" Could any selection of words more definitely and unequivocally testify to the fact of original depravity? Can any philosophy, except that which is falsely so called, pervert this passage to mean any thing else? Again, the Psalmist testifies of human nature, as a fact undeniably certain, "*We go astray from the womb speaking lies.*" If plain, unvarnished Scripture testimony, capable of no misconstruction, is admitted to be conclusive, this ought to satisfy any man what is God's verdict on this subject.

(b) The New Testament is equally conclusive. We "were BY NATURE the children of wrath, even as others." This is the acknowledgment of Paul in behalf of himself and his Christian brethren. *Naturally*, Christians and all others are "*the children of wrath*"—possess the *depravity* which exposes to wrath. Our Savior testifies explicitly—"That which is born of the flesh, is flesh," or corruption. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Unchanged human nature is *enmity to God*, and surely this is depravity.

2. This fact, that depravity is natural or original, is moreover testified by observation. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" is a common-sense principle, as well as a Scriptural interrogatory. "The tree is known by its fruit." Now just so far back as human observation can extend, it confirms the Scripture doctrine. The very first actings of a child, that partake at all of a moral character, are consistent with the fact and the philosophy of Scripture, and are inconsistent with, and utterly inexplicable upon, any other principles. *Waywardness, obstinacy, and perverseness*, mark the earliest buddings of its moral nature. The bitter tears of parental anguish give sorrowful demonstration that "foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child." And in the loveliest and most attractive exhibitions of infantile sweetness, flowers almost like Eden's, the most partial eye

the *how* of this doctrine—the rectitude or the expediency of this constitution of things. The Scriptures plainly and broadly reveal the fact. The apostasy of *one* was the ruin of *all*. The *sin of Adam* involved his whole *posterity*. "The guilt of Adam's first sin;" that is, liability to punishment on account of it, is imputed to all his posterity, and forms a fearful part of what we mean by original sin,

—a mother's—is pained to detect the slimy track of the serpent. We cannot go back into the subject very far—we cannot tell how soon moral and accountable action commences—we cannot ascertain where is the boundary between the physical actings of *the animal*, and the moral actings of the immortal spirit,—*but as far as we can go*, the testimony is conclusive. Without such an explanation as the Bible gives, *the facts* would be distressingly mysterious; with the Bible explanation, the mystery is unravelled and the mournful doctrine confirmed.

II. HUMAN DEPRAVITY IS UNIVERSAL. The disease belongs to our race. “*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” “There is none that doeth good: no, not one. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable. There is none righteous: no, not one.” These passages are decisive and sweeping. Paul, in quoting these from the Old Testament, tells us, that his object was, “that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world might be guilty before God.”

There is this peculiarity in this testimony. It is not only the plain meaning of the passage, but this meaning is essential to his purpose, and no other meaning will possibly suit his design.

In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul shows the impossibility of salvation except through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing so, he argues two things—1st. *That God has determined to punish sin**—and 2d. *THAT ALL MEN HAVE SINNED.* If these two positions are substantiated, the inference is irresistible, that none can be saved except through some remedial system. The quotation just cited is a part of his proof of the second position, *that all, both Jews and Gentiles, have sinned.* We see, then, beyond controversy, what is the only meaning of the passage—*the absolute universality of human depravity*: any thing short of this would leave a fatal flaw in the apostle's connected and unanswerable chain of argument for the impossibility of salvation out of Christ, or the necessity and suitableness of the atonement. Besides, Paul's testimony is the testimony of Inspiration. He wrote as moved by the Holy Ghost, when he testified that “*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” So it is—“Thus saith the Lord.”

This is not solitary testimony. “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God.” Here the omniscient God is represented, in accommodation to human ideas, as examining this question—whether human sinfulness is literally universal. None could more satisfactorily answer the question: for from the height of heaven he “beholdeth all the dwellers upon earth;” and by his omniscience, to which nothing is past or future, but every thing present, he can examine the question from the beginning to the close of time, and bring all the nations and the history of men at once before his scrutiny.

None could more impartially settle the question; for “the just Lord loveth justice.” He “cannot lie.” And so lovely is rectitude to his infinite holiness, that he would discover even a single feature amidst a mass of deformity.

* The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men.”

And what is the result of this divine investigation?

"They are ALL gone aside." "They are *altogether* become filthy. There is none that doeth good: no, not one." Nothing relieves the dark picture of human deformity to the eye of Jehovah. *Depravity* is superscribed over all. *No spot of moral verdure* momentarily cheers the vision. All is gloomy—all is polluted—and Heaven gazes on the scene of unmingled moral death, where once he beheld all to be "very good."

The same fact, the universality of human depravity, is testified in many other portions of the Scriptures. And, in general, we may remark, that it is always directly involved in the doctrine of Christ's mediation. The very basis of the plan of redemption is, that *all were lost*—all alike and irretrievably ruined. "Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." From every portion of Scripture it is plain, that the disorder which originated in Paradise has infected the whole human race. The poison of the old serpent, which is the devil and satan, has corrupted the whole race by corrupting the head and representative.

Need we appeal, in confirmation of this plain and Scripture testimony, to the facts of human history. How dark but decisive is the commentary thus afforded to the doctrine of Revelation. Take the whole map of human history, from the first murder that stained the earth with a brother's blood, down to the present period, and it gives unvarying and unequivocal attestation to the fact, that "ALL have gone astray," although its details show also, that "*each has gone in his own way.*" The principle of depravity has been endlessly modified by circumstances, and in different ages; but the principle has been the same in all. New, and strange, and mysterious developments of iniquity, have marked the successive stages of human history; but in all, no better, or milder, or softer name can be given than **DEPRAVITY**. Sometimes the drapery has been more attractive, and the veil more impenetrable; but underneath all the serpent is coiled, and the poison rankles. In the Jew and the Gentile—the Greek and the Barbarian—the ancient and the modern—human nature has been the same. Paul's description in the 1st chapter of Romans—Juvenal's biting but just sarcasms, addressed to the same people—and the journals of modern missionaries—all agree in the essential characteristics of human nature. In the most polished city of ancient times, and in the most degraded hovel of Africa, heathenism, or more properly human nature, may be described in precisely the same words of inspiration: "*Filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.*" Deep and dark as these lines of deformity are, they are not deeper nor darker than the reality. They are not libels on humanity; they are an epitome of human history. The wars, the strifes, the bloodshed and treachery, the falsehood and barbarity, of ancient times; the tricks and chicanery, the corruption and venality, the voluptuousness and profligacy, of modern times; might swell the picture even more frightfully and pitifully, and show more vividly that all mankind are *depraved*. The only bright features in the world's his-

tory, or green spots in the world's geography, are those times and places where the results of *grace* are seen renovating nature and regenerating man into the image of God. *Religion* is the only drapery that can effectually hide human deformity—the only polish that can soften human depravity. Much of what are considered objections to the fact of universal depravity, originates in this superadded influence, and may be traced directly or indirectly to religion. The great reason why depravity is less abhorrent in modern times and Christian countries, than in ancient times and pagan lands, is, this indirect but powerful influence of Christianity, not renovating but restraining human nature; not purifying the fountain but damming up the streams. Christianity has incorporated itself with the structure of society; it has insinuated its benignant influence into the laws, and has powerfully controlled the habits of mankind; and has thus thrown a veil over the most disgusting exhibitions of human depravity.

But Christianity itself has furnished *an occasion* for the strongest evidences of the universality of human depravity, even amidst circumstances best adapted to break its power. *Depravity* has sometimes assumed the badge of *religion*; and if human nature can exhibit depravity, under this guise, and use the blessing of Heaven to serve the purposes of hell, surely it must be considered *universal*. Is this going too far? Has depravity never assumed the cloak of Christianity? Has ambition, as fell and foul as ever disgraced humanity, never been decked in pontificals? Has *lust*, as loathsome as that of the brothel, never been veiled by the monastic cowl, and lured its victims to destruction by the proffer of spiritual assistance? Has covetousness, as idolatrous and damning as a miser's, never put on the cloak of the Jesuit, and made princes pander to its appetite and bow to its sway? Alas! we must admit it; although it shows *human nature*, even surrounded by the blaze of Revelation and in the costume of its ministers, to be depraved as really as at the darkest nook of creation, and when bowing down in adoration to a dumb stone.

The two views of human depravity given now, mutually elucidate and strengthen each other. If human depravity be *natural*, it is obviously probable that it would be *universal*; for what belongs to *nature* will operate essentially alike under all circumstances.

If it be *universal*, there is the strongest possible ground for believing that it is *natural*; for nothing short of a cause as deeply seated and as powerfully operative as the nature of man, would sufficiently account for this effect.

III. HUMAN DEPRAVITY IS TOTAL.

We premise here a remark by way of explanation.

We do not desire to be understood by total depravity to mean—that *every man is equally depraved*; or, *that every man is as depraved as he can be*. Men may have degrees of depravity, and yet be totally depraved. For instance, *Judas Iscariot* and *the young man* in the gospel, were both totally depraved; and yet they were far from being alike in the degree of their depravity. If *total depravity* meant an unvarying character of the greatest possible enormity, it would be disproved by facts and observation. There is amongst unconverted men, almost innumerable diversities of character, arising from temperament, natural disposition, early restraints, and particular circumstances. Diversity of character does not argue against total depravity: as one

star differeth from another in glory, though all are luminous; so one sinner differeth from another in enormity, though all are totally depraved.

And so, also, depravity is total, and yet men are not as bad as they might be. A man may be *totally* depraved, and yet not be a *fiend*. Probably no man on earth is as depraved as he might be. The grace of God, the customs of society, the *present interest* of virtue, and a variety of causes may prevent the full tide of depravity from rushing forth into action. We do not mean by total depravity, the *greatest possible wickedness*.

Having thus disclaimed misconstruction of our meaning, and obviated the standing objection against this doctrine from this misconstruction, we assert *that human depravity is total*.

Many may be disposed to call this "*an hard saying*," and ask, "Who can bear it?" The question is not, is it an hard saying, but is it true?

1. The Bible is the great fountain of truth. What is its testimony? Decisive and unequivocal. "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart, is evil continually." "The *whole* head is sick and the *whole* heart faint." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Unconverted men are "*painted sepulchres*." Beautiful indeed to the eye, but "*within full of rottenness and dead men's bones*." Does any one inquire, after these plain citations, How are we to dispose of the virtues of the heathen? and what becomes of all the excellence and amiableness of unregenerated man? We have to answer, in the spirit of the last passage quoted, their morality may please us as the architecture of a tomb; but external loveliness no more involves internal purity, than a splendid mausoleum converts putrescence into life. "*The heart is desperately wicked*."

2. The Bible making such revelations, appeals directly to the human *conscience*, and asks *there*, "*Are not these things so?*" Holding up the standard of right and wrong, appointed by infinite wisdom and purity, before the sinner's moral sense, it asks him to deny, if he can, that the testimony of God on this point is true? And whatever verdict the feelings and pride of the heart might be disposed to render, the conscience of every man, if not seared or darkened, must acknowledge the truth of *total depravity*. We say unequivocally, that *the human conscience* is with the truth of God. It does not always *speak out*, but its language is conclusive when it does. When not bribed by passion, or stupefied by the deceitfulness of sin, its testimony is distinct and definite. Remarkable instances of this kind sometimes occur, when the light of truth first bursts upon the darkened and stupid conscience. Its verdict then is given with the energy of conviction, amounting almost to immediate revelation. The Bible, read or heard, under such circumstances, seems like a message sent from Heaven to an individual. It displays his heart to himself; pours light on the very motives and principles by which he has always been actuated, but which he had never put into words or breathed to any mortal. He starts at the accuracy of the portrait. He feels himself in the grasp of a giant—within the glare of omniscience; and conscience then responds to the darkest delineations of human depravity, as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

The testimony of conscience is given unequivocally in another shape. It speaks loudly and plainly in *the effects* which the Scripture doctrine produces. The Scripture testimony on this subject awakens uneasiness and restlessness, agitation and opposition. Would these views of human character produce these effects—stir up the writhings of enmity, and often the bitterness of open and decided opposition, if conscience did not echo their *truth* in every bosom?

Moreover, these are precisely *the effects* which the Bible declares its doctrines will produce. “*Men hate the light*, neither will they come to the light that their deeds might be reproved.” “They love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.”

Now it is a very striking confirmation of the truth of total depravity in its darkest colors, that this view of the doctrine and no other, produces the effects described in the Sacred Volume. Garbled or accommodated views of this point are palatable enough to the carnal mind, and of course are radically defective. The view of conscience speaks unequivocally although wrathfully, when *the full truth* is developed. It is soothed and quieted by falsehood, but does not endorse it.

3. The verdict of the Bible and of conscience is sustained by *reason*. What is the evidence of *reason* on this point? Let us understand the point in hand. *Total depravity* is an entire lack of spirituality or holiness. Now reason tells us that the essence of an action is its motive. The essence of a spiritual action is a spiritual motive: without this, it is nothing that can be called good or holy. This is the precise secret which detects the fallacy of supposing the actions of unregenerate men to be holy or spiritual. As to *motive* they are dead and hollow. Actions externally the same may be widely different, if their motives are examined. Let us put a case or two for illustration of this very important point.

Here are two men on the ocean, buffeting its waves, enduring hardships, and braving death. Follow them to a distant shore! They both land—both toil—suffer—and experience immense privations. Both it may be perish, and both are buried. *Here*, all seems the same on the surface. To those unacquainted with the heart both are alike. But here is the mighty difference. In the heart of one from his departure, through all the perils of the way to the close, there burned the inextinguishable *love of gold*. In the other, love equally ardent—equally inextinguishable—burning also till death; but *love to Christ and perishing souls*. Difference of motive stamps a moral character immeasurably different, on seemingly similar conduct. In the buffetings of the billows, as well as in the dying toil of one, might be traced, “*Holiness unto the Lord;*” on every part and parcel of the other, beginning, middle, and ending—life and death—was written, “*The love of money.*”

Let us present another illustration: *There* is a face pale with study. The mists of midnight have gathered on his countenance. His frame groans under the pressure of intellectual toil, and his eye sinks with weary and long-continued watching! *Why?* He has heard the voice of fame—ambition lights the midnight lamp—“the honor that cometh from man,” or death in the unsuccessful pursuit, fires all his ardor!

Here is another frame that tells of toils—another eye that sinks with watching—the fires of another soul wasting away by over-exertion!

Why? The love of Jesus urges him to toil—the care of souls keeps his eye waking and weeping—the wickedness of men and their awful doom wears away his spirit and his life! What makes the amazing difference? Can we hesitate to say: *the motives*.

These illustrations will show what we design when we say, that the spirituality or moral excellence of specific actions, or general conduct, depends on *motives*. Now the most commendable or amiable actions of unregenerate men, viewed in this light, have “Tekel” written on them. They lack the motive which is required to make them *holy* in the sight of God. The law of God requires the heart and affections to enter into the acts of men, in order to be spiritual. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole mind, and strength, and understanding; and thy neighbor as thyself.” These are the motives which the law requires. And supreme love to God does not govern the conduct of unconverted men. This is the great fountain of depravity. This deficiency of motive attaches to the whole conduct. The heart is not set on God. The conduct, though externally proper, cannot be called holy. Reason, therefore, exercising her powers in conformity with a plain and unquestioned revelation, decides that man is *totally* depraved: because he is wholly deficient in proper motives.

4. The proposition deduced from the text may be strengthened by another kind of proof. *The testimony of Christians*.

The unanimous testimony of those who have been converted is, that *human depravity*—i. e., their own depravity by nature—is *total*. This testimony is credible and valuable. They have no motive to make uncandid statements. They view their former state accurately and not with prejudice. What do they say of the actions of unregenerate men, or depravity? They tell us, that the actions for which they once received praise—which were once given as evidences of something excellent in human nature, and which are no doubt praised in the same way in others, were, as far as spirituality of motive was concerned, hollow and deficient; and now awaken shame and regret rather than self-complacency. The candor which conviction of sin gives, is remarkable and very valuable. This candid testimony ratifies the verdict of the Bible, and conscience, and reason—that human depravity is *total*: no really regenerate man has ever been found to give a different testimony.

5. This proposition, also, receives confirmation from *unconverted men*. When they have a point to carry, they may and do deny this doctrine, but when speaking of their fellow-men, under circumstances producing candor equal to Christians, they give the same testimony. Who has not, at one period of his life or other, heard the dispassionate verdict of those who have mingled much with their fellow-men in the intercourse of life, on this melancholy subject? What lawyer will dare to deny that his experience does not confirm the decision of Holy Writ? What secrets might they not promulge, to substantiate the whole of Scripture testimony, if they would draw the picture of *human nature* as it acts out before them in the ordinary details of business? What selfishness and covetousness; what naughty tricks and constructive lying; what mean advantages and dirty practices, would not be shown to belong to those whom the world calls *honest*, and who would be insulted if they were not thought virtuous!! Can we call this any thing but total depravity.

When some reverse of circumstances, or change of friendships, displays the real motives and genuine character of a man, how much of the kindness and courtesy, so much esteemed, is found to have been assumed to serve a purpose. How bitterly, but correctly, will human depravity then be described by those who suffer its cruel effects!!

The abstracted recluse who sees only the surface, does not probably imagine human nature to be totally depraved. The minister of God, to whom the fairest side is always shown, and with whom politeness often makes men appear pious, may not see the truth. But some do see it. They could, and would, if they were candid, bear emphatic testimony, that "*the heart of man is desperately wicked.*" Hear a hoary veteran in sin talk of others. Listen to what he will say, after intercourse with every variety of character, and then see what any virtue is worth, but what springs from conscientious principles. Talk with those who have watched the windings of human depravity in the most polished circles, and who have lead the counsels of the greatest nations. Read their recorded verdicts on the depravity of human nature, and you will find that the Scripture declarations, though harsh, are amply confirmed. "*The whole head is sick; the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores, they have not been closed, nor bound up, neither mollified with ointment.*"

The strongest evidence of human depravity is, the envenomed thrusts at religion which wicked men make through the character of its professors. The charges of hypocrisy, and inconsistency, and selfishness, *true or false*, which are so lavishly made against professing Christians, prove human depravity to be total. If *true*, it shows that depravity can veil itself even in the garb of holiness; if *false*, it shows that depravity can vilify the only loveliness and excellence that is ever engrafted on man's nature.

We are thus, by the united verdict of the Bible, of the human conscience, of human reason, of the regenerate and the unregenerate, constrained to believe that human depravity is total; that there is no spirituality or moral excellence in unchanged human nature; that all men by nature are dead in sins; that the head and the heart, the intellect and the affections of men, are alike the subjects of this blighting curse. The *apparent* exceptions in the character and conduct of the unregenerate, may all be explained upon other principles. While no man is as bad, probably, as he might be, and while there are almost infinite degrees in the depravity of the human family, all are entirely depraved. Whatever may be the influence of conduct uninspired by proper motives on the affairs of society; however much such actions may serve to keep the world from utter confusion and ruin; however sweetly they may sometimes soften the asperity of human adversity, or smooth the ruggedness of life, in regard to spirituality they are totally deficient. At best, they are "*amiable instincts;*" proofs of the original beauty of the structure of man's nature, rather than evidences of any present moral excellence. These do not at all interfere with the position that men are *totally depraved*. The deadliest poison is sometimes concealed by the fairest flowers.

We have no wish to make human nature darker than it really is. We do not dive into human degradation, or take the covering from plausible actions, because we love these discoveries. It is hard thus

to apply the stern sword of the Spirit to the only flowers that have outlived the fall, or the fire of truth to the graceful drapery around human character. But *the truth of God is at stake*. He describes human depravity in the Sacred Volume. And we must endeavor to show that God is true and every man a liar, even though it sweep away all that man is proud of; **THAT GOD IS TRUE** when he testifies—**THAT BY NATURE ALL MEN ARE TOTALLY DEPRAVED**.

It is not pleasant to dwell on the spiritual deformity of our nature. But it may be *profitable*. It is better to describe the disease painfully, if it will lead to the remedy, than to lull to security by false representation. It is better to unveil the deformity, if it lead to salutary abhorrence, than veil it to the ruin of the soul. If the doctrine be harsh, remember it is true. If it thwarts the natural feelings of the heart, it is the plain revelation of that Bible which gives us the only hopes of eternal happiness. If it crushes every proud passion, and humbles us in the dust, it is the truth of that God who only has life and death in his hand. We will disbelieve or disregard it at our eternal peril.

We might, by compromising the truth, present a view of this subject much more palatable, than natural, universal, and total depravity. But with compromise on this point, we must make a corresponding change in all that is peculiar and precious in the Christian system. If we veiled the truth on this point, we might form a system which no sinner would oppose. It would flatter human pride, and foster human merit, and permit the aspirings of human dignity, and lay no fatal axe at the root of human greatness. This we might do; for it has been done. This system would naturally withdraw a Divine Savior from the Sacred Volume, and present his sufferings as a model for our imitation, and not a sacrifice for our innumerable sins. This system would take away the Holy Ghost as an unnecessary appendage of Divine Revelation—change Satan into a personification—and all the fires of hell and the solemnities of the judgment, into figurative phraseology.

Such a system would be palatable to proud human nature. To such a law “the carnal mind would have no enmity;” such light it would not hate; of such a plan of salvation it would shout hosannas; and for such a *faith*, involving no sorrow for sin, nor change of heart—no self-denial or holy obedience, there might be found votaries as numerous as the myriads that worship the Beast, or that follow the false Prophet.

But a minister must be far gone in depravity or in error himself, before he can be brought to the dangerous experiment of defending such a system to please the taste or buy the favor of his fellow-men; and we honestly believe that every man taught by the Spirit of God, is taught that depravity is natural, universal, and total—and the deeper his views of depravity, the clearer his conceptions and stronger his evidences of salvation.