

Think about it! (5)

"Deep down, so-and-so is a good person", says someone; and someone else chimes in, "Yes, very deep down!" Behind the humorous comment, there is a pretty serious truth: no matter how often people repeat the idea that human beings are basically good, the weight of the evidence seems to point clearly in a different direction: in the opposite direction!

A few days ago I heard a comment (by a theologian) that struck me as being devastatingly perceptive; he said that in almost all the universities around the world students are being taught not only the intrinsic goodness of mankind, but that evil as such simply doesn't exist; and that comes just after the worst century ever as far as 'man's inhumanity to man' is concerned! – the century that witnessed the massacre of Armenians in Turkey, two world-wars, the Nazi Holocaust, Stalin's countless victims, many others in countries like China and Cambodia, and, much more recently, the genocides that have taken place in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda – to name but a few of the more widely publicised examples. Yes, deep down, human beings are very good!

But in order to realise the truth about human nature, we don't need to go over the media headlines of the past hundred years; we only need to observe any normal family. Where do children learn to behave badly? From their parents? Sure, they learn plenty of bad things from them. But are all parents really that bad? And can a child under two years of age observe, take in and then imitate his or her parents' bad behaviour as easily as that? Anyone who's been a mother or a father knows from experience that children don't need anybody to teach them how to be self-centred, greedy, jealous, manipulative and even cruel! All of that just comes naturally to them! No, mothers and fathers spend years of their lives 'killing themselves' in a desperate attempt to 'dissuade' their children from doing what's wrong, and to 'encourage' them to do what's right! Do the 'little angels' really come into the world so pure and innocent?!

What the Bible teaches about all this is that the human race 'fell' from its original state of perfection, that since then we've been in rebellion against our Creator, that sin (etc.) is in our very 'genes', that what comes most naturally to 'the natural man' is not what's right, but what's wrong, and that the only thing that can change us on the inside is the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ! Maybe all of this doesn't go down too well with sophisticated modern man, with all his self-confidence, but is there any other explanation of the way things really are, that's more convincing than the Bible's? Has knowledge, or science, or the social sciences, or politics (any politics), or any philosophy, or any religion, or anything else whatsoever, been able to go to the root of the human problem and solve it?

Listen to the wisdom of the true prophets: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick..." (Jeremiah 17:9); "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you" (Ezekiel 36:26). Only God can cure the heart's disease!

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