

Keswickism

by Harmon A. Baldwin

Harmon A. Baldwin critiques Keswickism, emphasizing the biblical call to true holiness and the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification.

Scripture: Luke 1:73, Luke 2:35, Acts 10:15, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Galatians 4:22, Ephesians 4:22, Ephesians 5:25, Colossians 3:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 12:1, 1 Peter 2:1

Topics: "Holy Living", "Sanctification"

Description

Harmon A. Baldwin addresses the dangerous doctrine of 'suppression' which teaches that depravity always lurks beneath consciousness, advocating for the eradication of the carnal nature from the soul. He contrasts this with the biblical teaching of sanctification and cleansing through Christ's sacrifice, emphasizing the possibility of living a holy and blameless life. Baldwin challenges the idea that the baptism of the Holy Spirit does not involve cleansing from sin, urging believers to allow the Spirit to rid them of the old man instead of suppressing him.

Transcript

One of the most dangerous enemies of the experience of holiness which has re-arisen in the last few years clothed in modern apparel is what is commonly called "suppression." Its advocates teach that the heart of man is such an unfathomable depth that while one may honestly think that he is delivered, yet hidden below the line of consciousness depravity always lurks and will spring up when provocation comes. The housekeeper must not think that she can clean her house, that would be presumption and self-righteousness, she can only keep the dirt hidden or suppress it. This is the Keswick doctrine and is championed by some of the world's most noted preachers.

The danger is all the greater since the poison is concealed by tempting sweets. The advocates of this theory are often very pious and are quite successful in their line of work. They talk sweetly of God, grace and holiness, but they must be allowed to put their own interpretation on the word holiness, for they give us to understand that such a thing as the entire eradication of the carnal nature from the soul is an impossibility in this world. Some of us prefer to believe the teachings of the Bible which says, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it (the church) that he might sanctify and cleanse it (the church) with the washing of water by the word and present it (the church) to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it (the church) should be holy and without blemish" -- Eph. 25-27.

The time and fact of this sanctifying operation was confirmed by the oath of God, and whoever denies its possibility in this world makes God a perjurer. "The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." -- Luke 1:73-75.

Rev. R. A. Torrey says: "The baptism of the Holy Spirit has no direct reference to cleansing from sin. This is an important point to bear in mind for many reasons. There is a line of teaching on this subject that leads men to expect that, if they receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the old carnal nature will be eradicated. There is not a line of Scripture to support this position."

Rev. F. B. Meyer says: "On this platform (Keswick) we never say self is dead; were we to do so, self would be laughing at us around the corner."

Rev. H. W. Webb-Peploe says: "It is ever taught at Keswick, as in every part of God's Word (In what part of God's Word? It is easy to make statements. -- H. A. B.), that there are, to the very last hour of our life upon earth, powers of corruption within every man which defile his very best deeds, and give even to his holiest efforts the nature of sin."

The writer has no desire to enter into a discussion of the original text as such a course would be of no value to the popular reader and would prove practically nothing but what is proven in our English Version. But we will give one quotation from Daniel Steele which is to the point. "It is a remarkable fact that while the Greek language richly abounds in words signifying repression, a half-score of which occur in the New Testament, and are translated to bind, bruise, cast down, conquer, bring into bondage, let, repress, hold fast, hinder, restrain, subdue, put down, and take by the throat, yet not one of these is used of inbred sin (the carnal mind) but such words as signify to cleanse, to purify, to mortify, to kill, to crucify, and to destroy."

The word of God abounds with exhortations, entreaties and commands to get rid of the old man, not suppress him, but cast him out, not hide him behind the door like a dirty housekeeper does the filth, but let the Spirit of God kill him and rid the house of his presence. To copy these passages would take more space than the limits of this little work would allow. We will cite a few and the reader can look them up for himself. Gal. 4:22-30; Col. 3:8-10; Eph. 4:22-24; Co. 2:11; Heb. 12:1; 1 Peter 2:1; 1 Thes. 5:23-24; 1 Thes. 3:10; Eph. 4:11-14; 2 Cor. 7:1; etc.

As to whether sin remains so deeply hidden that no person can ever know he is delivered is mainly a question of individual experience and of how much dependence one can put in the operations and testimonies of the Holy Ghost. True, man's heart is a depth unfathomable to himself, but on the authority of God's Word (Luke 2:35) and of the testimony of many unimpeachable witnesses we can unhesitatingly say that God reveals this depth, and many persons declare that they were shocked when the Holy Spirit began to turn up the sod. Note this fact: As to whether any person ever saw all the depths of his soul is not material since we do not depend on sight for evidence, but the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit; our sight might fail and deceive us, but the Holy Spirit -- never. When the Spirit takes us down through the depths of our soul and says, "Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee," or "Thou art holy and without blame before me in love," who am I that I can call him a liar? He knows all things and "his testimony is true." Let all men stand back when God speaks; he says, "What God has cleansed call not thou common or unclean," and if they do they are fighting against God and will receive their reward.

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