

THE CAUSE AND EFFECT PRINCIPLE RE. INDWELLING

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III. INTRODUCTION

1. In this study we are entering a discussion of the cause and effect principle as it relates to the operation and indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
2. In the NT we find passages where the Holy Spirit was given as the cause of an effect where, in actuality, the power of the Holy Spirit was the immediate cause.
3. The Holy Spirit was the initial cause of every miraculous manifestation and all inspired communication, but the immediate cause behind both activities was the “power” of the Holy Spirit.
4. It was this “power” that indwelt the person performing miracles and speaking by inspiration.
5. The Holy Spirit never filled anyone with his person, only with power and/or communication.
6. Thus we begin our discussion of the cause and effect principle as it relates to the operation and indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

II. DISCUSSION

A. 1ST WE CONSIDER THE INITIAL CAUSE AND THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE.

1. By analogy let us consider a light bulb; then ask what cause produces the effect of light in that bulb?
 - a. Is it the hydro-electric power plant that fills the bulb?
 - (1) This is the cause lying behind the effect of light in that bulb.
 - (2) It is the initial cause but not the immediate cause.
 - (a) “Initial”, “first, prime, primary, original.”
 - (b) “Immediate”, “having direct effect; without an intervening medium or agency, cause or event.”
 - b. We may ask if the transformer on the pole outside the house is the cause.
 - (1) The answer would be yes, but again it is not the immediate cause.

- (2) Rather, it is an intermediate cause; neither does it fill the bulb.
 - c. What then is the immediate cause which produces the effect of light in the bulb?
 - (1) It is electric power itself which fills the bulb and produces the light, not the initial cause of power nor the intermediate cause of power.
 - (2) The immediate cause that actually fills the bulb and produces the effect is electric power itself.
 2. The rational man can easily see it is not necessary for the initial cause to fill the bulb in order to produce the effect of light in the bulb.
 - a. If we can see this in the realm of physics, why can we not see it in other realms?
 3. In the juridic realm, is it the lawyer or his arguments which convinces the jury?
 - a. The lawyer is most definitely the cause which produces the effect of convincing the jury, but is he the initial cause or the immediate cause?
 - b. He is the initial cause.
 - c. However, his case (i.e., the logical argumentation drawn from the evidence) is the immediate cause which fills the minds of the jurors and produces the effect of convincing them.
 - d. It is not the initial cause (the lawyer) which fills them and produces the effect, rather it is the immediate cause (the words and arguments of the case presented) which fills them and produces the effect.
 4. By the same line of reasoning one should conclude that it was not necessary for the Holy Spirit (the initial cause) to fill those persons of the first century with his person in order to produce the effects of miracles and inspired proclamation and/or writings.
 - a. What was necessary was miraculous power and miraculous illumination.
 - b. Supernatural “power” was the immediate cause which filled those capable of performing supernatural acts or producing inspired writings.

5. It should be easy to see how metonymy of cause (the cause stated where the effect is meant) is used in the expression “filled with the Holy Spirit,” in the NT.
 - a. The effect created by the initial cause was miraculous power and illumination.
 - b. This effect was, in itself, a cause identifiable with the initial cause.
 - c. However, the miraculous power was the immediate cause which (as an indwelling force) produced the effects of miraculous healing, inspired Scripture, etc.

B. NOW CONSIDER THE CASE OF THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD IN THE PRESENT-DAY; THAT IS, OUR DAY, OUR TIME.

1. This phase of our study involves applying this whole reasoning process to, perhaps, the most problematic aspect of the Holy Spirit discussion; i.e., the indwelling and operation of the Holy Spirit in the present day.
2. I contend, without doubt, that the Holy Spirit is the initial cause of the effects of faith and knowledge of God in our lives today; however, he is not the immediate cause.
3. The word of God (the gospel of Christ, God’s worded grace) is the immediate cause which produces the effects of faith and knowledge of God in our lives.
4. There is no reason for the Holy Spirit to personally dwell in the baptized believer, nor operate upon him directly.
5. The Holy Spirit is the initial cause which convicts us of sin (Jno.16:8).
6. No one can successfully deny the fact that the NT teaches that the Holy Spirit is the cause lying behind these effects in our lives.
7. But in none of these effects is the Holy Spirit the immediate cause nor is it necessary for him to personally dwell within the believer to bring about these effects.
8. What then is the immediate cause of all these effects?
 - a. The Holy Spirit inspired Word of God!
 - b. The word is the immediate cause which convicts us of sin, Rom.6:15-18; 1Jno.3:4; 5:17; Jas.4:17.

- c. To argue otherwise would be to fall into the same error as Augustine and Calvin, the fathers of Calvinism, on this point.
 - d. The word of God is the immediate cause which effects in us the mind of the Spirit, Rom.10:17; 12:2; 2Tim.3:16,17
9. It is obvious then that even though the Holy Spirit is the cause lying behind these effects, he is not the immediate cause. For the Holy Spirit effects all these things in the believer through, and only through, the word (i.e., the inspired writings).

C. MISUNDERSTANDING AND REJECTING THIS TRUE BIBLICAL CONCEPT LEADS TO THE DOCTRINE OF “SOMETHING ELSE.”

1. Think what this biblical line of reasoning does to the concept of a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It means that if he dwells in the believer personally, then he must do so as a latent or dormant cause; that is, existing but not manifest; lying inactive as in sleep.
 - a. If this be the case, then what would be the point of such an indwelling?
 - b. Some advocates of the personal indwelling position freely admit that the word is the immediate cause for all these effects in our live.
 - c. If that be the case, then what does the personal indwelling of the Spirit effect as an immediate cause?
 - (1) Does he cause the word to “come to life” as John Calvin and the present-day evangelical and neo-orthodox theologians would argue?
2. Is it any wonder that so many professed believers of our day will not go to the Scriptures for their guidance in matters of religion as their only rule of faith and practice? ***The fact is that they think there is “something else.”***
3. That “something else” may be:
 - a. The philosophical and theological ideology of *existentialism* (which is nothing more, in essence, than rank subjectivism, emotionalism, and irrationality), which is running rampant today.
 - b. The claim of the direct, inward guidance of the Holy Spirit to faith and practice.

- (1) After all, if we keep telling them he is in there, they are going to keep expecting him to give evidence of his personal presence.
- (2) If we reflect upon his matter carefully, we can see how this seems so reasonable to so many people.
 - (a) For example, I know I have a human spirit in my body because Scripture teaches me it is there and its presence is evidenced in my body in various ways as that conscious life force which animates the body.
 - (b) Now, why does it seem strange to us that one would naturally reason that if he also has another spirit inside of him, a divine Spirit, that divine Spirit also should animate his body, i.e., give evidence of his presence?

III. CONCLUSION

1. If the word is the immediate cause which effects the matters of NT Christianity in our lives (and it is and does), then there is no reason for the initial cause (the Holy Spirit) to personally dwell within us.
2. God throughout the Scriptures consistently and persistently instructs us that his word is powerful enough (Heb.4:12), and adequate enough (2Tim.3:16,17), and so purposed (Isa.55:11) as to produce in us the faith of Christ.
3. Why won't we see, believe and fully accept this simple Bible truth?
4. Could it be that we do not see that we are tacitly giving impetus to this doctrine of "something else," and the affinity this doctrine has with the theological systems of neo-Calvinism, existentialism, evangelicalism, and even neo-pentecostalism?
5. With the thinking of so many brethren today, or with their non-thinking, on these matters, there is great cause for concern – not only for the souls of men and women, but for the future of the Lord's church in our day!

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