

Anthony Hoekema, in his book *Created in God's Image* p. 150, states:

What I prefer to call pervasive depravity has been traditionally known in Reformed theology as "total depravity" -- a term that has often been misunderstood. Negatively, the concept does not mean: (1) that every human being is as thoroughly depraved as he or she can possibly become; (2) that unregenerate people do not have a conscience by means of which they can distinguish between good and evil; (3) that unregenerate people will invariably indulge in every conceivable form of sin; or (4) that unregenerate people are unable to perform certain actions that are good and helpful in the sight of others. Since to many people "total depravity" suggests these misunderstandings, I prefer "pervasive depravity."

Pervasive depravity then, means that (1) the corruption of original sin extends to every aspect of human nature; to one's reason and will as well as to one's appetites and impulses; and (2) there is not present in man by nature love to God as the motivating principle of his life.

What then is the meaning of "total" in total depravity (or holistic or pervasive depravity)?

- (a) It means that all of a person's faculties and powers are corrupted by sin (thus depravity is total in extent)
- (b) It does not mean that any person is as corrupt as he or she can be in any or all of his or her faculties or powers (thus depravity is not total, but only partial, in degree)
- (c) It means that human beings are born totally depraved in extent but not in degree.
- (d) It includes the Idea that it is possible for a person to become more corrupt or (temporarily) less corrupt in degree than he or she has been.
- (e) It implies that although all human beings are equally depraved in extent they may be unequally depraved in degree

Some sinners may be more sinful in degree than others; some may be less sinful in degree than others. Though all are equally sinners, some may be more depraved than others.

Some may be more cruel than others, more hateful, more malicious, more lascivious, more adulterous, more dishonest, more untruthful, more spiteful, more slanderous, more greedy, or more dissatisfied with their possessions or their lot in life than others.