

95 THESES FOR THE RE- FORMATION

By

Richard L. Barker

Copyright 2023

ISBN 9798858009016

INTRODUCTION

I first published a listing of these theses on my website on Halloween 2017, 500 years to the day that Martin Luther allegedly placed his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. It was a somewhat tongue in cheek gesture on my part (not least the title), but I have since developed a more rigorous version which hopefully provides a useful summary of the theological fundamentals and biblical interpretations set out in “The Little Book of Providence” (available at Amazon).

I am the first to acknowledge that biblical proof-texting can be utilized to prove almost anything. What is really needed is a comprehensive biblical synopsis that is ***intrinsically coherent*** and accords with the realities of secular, religious and church history as each has panned out. And unlike some earlier Institutes of Religion to which I once adhered, the cosmic outcomes derived from its theology should do justice to the sovereign yet equitable and loving nature of God as He is revealed in Scripture. Those earnestly seeking after Truth rather than simply wishing to defend a particular ecclesiological persuasion should not only pay careful attention to the original Greek and Hebrew text of the Bible but also examine the writings ***of the second and third century churches***. The earliest of these assemblies will have been founded by the apostles themselves or their immediate appointees so they cannot have uniformly been in error regarding the essentials of the faith. Yet none of the available writings of the earliest Church Fathers bear much resemblance to my former (Calvinist Evangelical) theology or polity – it is more akin to my new understanding, especially in the area of (so-called) natural law, an appreciation of which is essential if the broader benign providence I have been outlining is to be perceived.

I believe a unified biblical synopsis ***has*** now been provided in “The Little Book of Providence”, so-called as I understand its subject matter is likely to pertain to that of “The Little Book” referred to in Revelation chapter ten. It is the result of a

prophetic insight concerning our Creator's extraordinary providential strategy and His magnanimous intentions towards the human family, both of which have been historically obscured, more especially through the influence of Augustine's writing and teaching in the fourth/fifth century.

These theses were originally issued as separate posts, either for each individual or in some cases, small group of related theses, posted over a period of several months. Their amalgamation results in some repetition of commentary and proof-texting, for which I apologize. A more orderly biblical synopsis has been provided in *The Little Book of Providence*, referenced and accessible from this document.

Firstly then, a listing of the 95 theses followed by short commentaries with scriptural support for each one in turn. Commentaries for specific theses can be selected from the Table of Contents page.

95 THESES - LISTING

1. Humans were made in the image of God and even after the fall are to be regarded as such.
2. Cain and Abel as the first humans to be born of woman were representatives within a *de facto* covenant that has been eluded by theologians.
3. Abel was not “saved” by anticipating Calvary when he sacrificed an animal, he **remained justified** within a *de facto* covenant for fallen humanity by exercising faith/faithfulness, offering the best of his produce with a good conscience.
4. Cain defaulted from this Universal Covenant after killing his brother.
5. Such an inclusive covenant is indicated by the fact that Cain was neither entirely alienated from God nor cursed by Him until **after** his fratricide.
6. Cain rather than Adam is the type of the damned or reprobate, later described in the New Testament as derived from the Evil One (Greek: *ek tou ponerou* - 1Jn3:12).
7. Adam is mankind’s federal head and the type of those Paul describes as “dead” due to the malign influence of the procreated vessel inhabited by the soul whose moral instincts oppose that of the God-given spirit. Cain is effectively the type of the **twice** dead [Jude12] in whom both flesh *and* spirit have died to God and become united in evil.
8. Those who go in the way of Cain [Jude11] are described in the New Testament as children of the devil.
9. Children of the devil are distinguishable by their lack of conscience and their inability to emphasize or show compassion to others. They also have a total disregard for the truth.
10. Children of the devil are alluded to by Paul in Rom9 as vessels of wrath created and prepared by God for destruction. They were not “planted by the Father”, neither retain His seed , so no longer bear a reflection of His moral

image. In that sense they cease to be fully human but exist to fulfil God's purposes set out in theses 92 and 93.

11. When Paul speaks of non-Christians being "dead" he is not referring to damnation but to the disruption of the incarnate soul's communion with the Source of its spiritual life.
12. Original sin is a reality and the "death" described above is its result.
13. Our first parents "died" *immediately* they ate the forbidden fruit.
14. Spiritual death arises as soon as the conscience is defiled for that faculty has a spiritual dimension.
15. Death results from sin but Paul indicates sin is itself a result of death [1Cor15:56] arising from the corrupted intellectual vessel in which the human soul is planted.
16. Infants do not experience spiritual death until in Paul's language "the law comes" being a clear sense of right and wrong; for where there is no law sin is not imputed and the conscience is not defiled.
17. Adam and Eve's offspring do not inherit their parents' guilt but through procreation inherit an intellectual vessel that has been "shaped in iniquity" acting as a malign influence on the soul.
18. The soul/spirit of man, being that which returns to God is not derived from human sperm but directly created by God [Eccles12:7].
19. The God-given soul/spirit of man is innocent but pliable (liable to corruption).
20. Apart from gospel grace or infantile death the soul is bound to experience a measure of corruption.
21. The soul/spirit of man is not intrinsically corrupt having come from God, unlike the procreated vessel into which it is planted at birth.
22. The intellectual vessel that the soul/spirit inhabits is innately corrupt, governed by a triple concupiscence.

23. Paul refers to the intellectual vessel that the soul/spirit inhabits whilst on Earth as “the body of THIS death”, referring to its current spiritual status.
24. Paul’s “law within his members” or “flesh” pertain to the governing principles adopted by the human brain as it processes the senses of the body.
25. Since the soul and spirit are immortal the human psyche cannot be confined to the physical brain.
26. For the soul/spirit that leaves the human body when the brain dies is itself an intellectual entity with a memory of its bodily existence.
27. Man is composed of body, soul **and spirit**.
28. The human’s spirit is also alluded to in Scripture as the heart or inner man.
29. The human’s spirit (not to be confused with the human spirit) is often mistaken for the Holy Spirit when interpreting the Pauline epistles, for example in Rom8:6.
30. The fruits of the spirit pertain to man’s spirit, for those currently devoid of the Holy Spirit also produce good fruit.
31. The inner conflict described by Paul in Romans 7 arises from conflicting motivations derived from the processing of the brain on the one hand and the conscience-directed spirit of the “inner man” on the other.
32. Such an inner conflict is not restricted to the Christian, but to everyone with a functioning conscience.
33. The guiding principle or engrained law within the human’s spirit or “heart” is the conscience.
34. The conscience is the light of the incarnate Word/Logos that is diffused within every soul that comes into the world.
35. In taking heed to conscience one is effectively responding to something or Someone superior to oneself.
36. Conscience is therefore a sufficient object of faith, being man’s positive response to the divine revelation he has received.
37. Those who defer to the dictates of their conscience are exercising a form of godly fear.

38. Regardless of race or creed everyone who fears God and seeks to do what is right is accepted by Him.
39. "Justification" or acceptance before God within the inclusive Universal Covenant is on the basis of **evincing a God-given quality** (faith/faithfulness), manifested by the exercise of compassionate love.
40. Justification within the **exclusive** covenant sealed with Christ's blood is by faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour.
41. Paul's teaching regarding Law and grace in his epistles to the Galatian and Roman churches is in the context of Jewish infiltrators who insisted that Christian believers complied with works and rituals pertaining to the Torah such as circumcision, observing festivals and the like. On the contrary, said Paul, justification within the new covenant required faithfulness towards Christ, not compliance with "deeds of the Law".
42. Natural law in its anthropological context pertains to the functioning of conscience and is normative for humane living and acceptance with God.
43. Biblical salvation is provided to a specially chosen people for them to relate to God whilst in mortal flesh and function within His royal priesthood. For such they require spiritual renewal and ongoing sanctification through a mystical participation with Christ.
44. Acceptance as a subject of God's kingdom at death and final judgement does not require adherence to a religious creed, simply the exercise of compassion arising from the promptings of conscience.
45. In showing deference to the dictates of their conscience, even avowed agnostics and atheists unknowingly exercise faith in Christ [as Logos]. They may have cause to mourn for their sin and disbelief but will readily submit to Him when He is made known to them.
46. Calvin's description of little children as by nature "odious" and "an abomination to God" opposes the teaching of Christ [*Calvin Institutes of the Christian Religion 2nd Book Chapter 1 para 8*].

47. In describing infants presented to Him as “little ones who believe in Me” Jesus was alluding to an internal witness of the light of Christ, reflected in their God-given spirits/consciences, guaranteed in their case not (yet) to have been obscured or distorted by the lusts of the flesh or impurities of the mind.
48. Those who show compassion to the destitute are judged as serving Christ and rewarded accordingly.
49. Pelagius was right in believing that man possessed the innate spiritual faculties to perform good works such as exercising compassion towards his fellow man.
50. Pelagius was wrong if he believed that man possessed the innate spiritual faculties to live a sinless life or merit co-heirship with Christ. [*Much of Pelagius’ writing was destroyed so it is not known precisely what he believed*]
51. Pelagius was wrong if he believed that any man could be saved in the gospel sense apart from being in a living cognisant relationship with Jesus Christ.
52. Augustine’s assertion that Adam’s disobedience resulted in God degrading human nature to the extent that man could do “*absolutely no good thing, whether in thought or will, affection or in action*” is unbiblical, an observable falsehood, an affront to God’s gracious magnanimity and the dignity of the human person [*Quote is from Augustine’s “On Rebuke and Grace” chap. 3*].
53. On the contrary, acts of compassion, kindness and courage delight God’s heart and will be rewarded by Christ.
54. The mature Christian has a sense of what pleases God for he already possesses the mind of Christ whom even whilst incarnate had the mind of His Father.
55. God is Love, and any theology that demands for its intrinsic coherence the notion that divine love is different in nature and outworking to that quality as it is defined in Scripture should be rejected, however revered its formulator may have been.
56. God’s qualities such as love, holiness, compassion and kindness are superior in degree but the same in nature to

those of man, for every good quality man possesses originates from Him.

57. For much of their history the churches especially in the West have been under the misapprehension that their institution and the practice of the Christian faith primarily exists to enable people to go to heaven when they die.
58. Many more liberal churches are in error in believing that anyone other than a Christian can be saved in the gospel sense.
59. All people of good will shall go to heaven when they die regardless of their religious beliefs.
60. The notion implicit in some Roman Catholic teaching that people of good will are “saved” in the same sense as a Christian undermines the role of the gospel, Church and sacraments.
61. For the incarnated soul cannot be healed (saved) unless Christ had first been admitted to the vessel and united with the spirit
62. **Biblical salvation is *the restoration of divine communion whilst still incarnate* through spiritual regeneration and devotion to Christ and His teaching.** This is what is meant by “eternal life”. It is for fallen man to become properly re-acquainted with God, His Son and Spirit before he dies (or Christ returns) so that the called chosen and faithful may be fitted for future glory as the corporate Bride of Christ.
63. An essential means for communicating spiritual renewal and progression is through the sacraments of the Church.
64. An essential component of the Christian life is participation in the Divine Eucharist.
65. The Lord has ensured throughout the Church’s history that faithful assemblies in East and West are gathered to Himself, so that from the rising of the sun until its setting a pure sacrifice may be offered to His name.
66. In some meaningful albeit mystical sense Christ’s body must be eaten and His blood drunk by the Christian for “*whoever eats Me will draw life from me*” and “*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person*”.

67. Luther's revolt was triggered by deformed practice and doctrine within the Roman Catholic Church but the Eastern Orthodox Church was relatively unaffected by the sixteenth century upheavals and continues to affirm the historically understood sacerdotal and sacrificial nature of the Holy Eucharist, describing it as *"the awesome sacrifice entrusted to the Church to be re-enacted and given to the faithful for the nourishment of their faith and forgiveness of their sins"*.
68. Participating in the Eucharistic feast is at best ineffectual if unaccompanied by the obedience of faith.
69. What Christians are being saved **from** is the malign influence of the mortal intellectual vessel which the soul/spirit currently inhabits.
70. By attending to the means of grace and persevering in the faith the Christian is enabled to *"possess his vessel in sanctification and honour"*. Such is the central and immediate purpose of Christian salvation as well as to preserve the soul for future glory as the corporate Bride of Christ.
71. The Abrahamic covenant superseded by the Covenant of Christ's blood are **exclusive** covenants.
72. Ishmael was blessed by God and his father Abraham but not elected to the exclusive covenant designated for Isaac and his seed.
73. Abraham is the father of faith but the Church, *like Isaac*, are the children of promise.
74. Like Isaac, those within the Covenants of Promise are elected through unmerited grace.
75. Christ as personal Saviour may only be apprehended by those the Father chooses for Him.
76. Covenantal admission is by grace alone; faithfulness is required to continue benefitting from its privileges.
77. Everyone is to be judged and rewarded according to their life and legacy; not for the gifts they were privileged to receive but how they have been utilized.
78. Hell is as much a reality as Heaven and potentially can involve sensual pain for its inhabitants.

79. As in life, post-mortem punishment can be for the purpose of healing as well as destruction.
80. God has intimated that every soul that *can* be healed and restored shall ultimately be so, for He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.
81. The Bible may offer hints but does not positively affirm the idea of absolute universalism. Given that the wicked shall undoubtedly receive post-mortem punishment, the matter should have no impact on one's conduct or life choices.
82. The Christian's ultimate destiny is bodily resurrection as Joint-Consort to the King of Kings, not "Requiem Eternam".
83. There is to be a new Heaven AND a new earth where righteousness dwells.
84. The precise role and destiny of God's elect people has yet to be disclosed but it in view of their undeservedly exalted status it must align with that of their Spouse, whose universal governance and reign of peace shall continue for ever.
85. The Elect are not the totality of God's children but their firstborn, the first-fruits of humanity.
86. The current age is not the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies in a spiritualized form but in terms of salvation history is a dispensation established to *recruit Gentiles* to the Messianic community.
87. The Gentile's unexpected, and according to Paul "unnatural" incorporation into the messianic community [Rom11:24] was to create "the fellowship pertaining to the secret (plan) hidden in God". Although fore-ordained by the Father, this augmentation resulted from the refusal of God's first-choice nation to acknowledge their Messiah even after His resurrection and ascension to glory.
88. Through Israel's failure, fullness of salvation, "an inheritance with the sanctified" and the "gift of eternal life" initially understood to be exclusively for the Jews has been extended to people chosen from every nation and succeeding generation.

89. Such a mystery was known by God (i.e. the Father) but not communicated to *any* other being until revealed by the apostle Paul who described the mystery pertaining to the Gentiles' unexpected inheritance as "*to euaggelion mou*" – *my* gospel.
90. When Ephesians 3:9-12 and especially Romans 11:11-15 are taken as read and integrated within a cohesive biblical synopsis it will be appreciated that God's benign providence extends well beyond those elected to the exclusive covenants of promise. For if Paul is taken at his word, biblical salvation as we know it would not have been offered to the Gentile nations in the current age, yet the Old Testament is clear enough that people from every nation would ultimately be reconciled to God, for all the world is His and He loved it enough to send his Son to save it.
91. God's strategy has always been to redeem and heal the world **through** a Spirit-led messianic community, not exclusively **for** them.
92. In choosing to retain Adam and Eve as the procreative fountainhead of humanity after their rebellion, it must have been God's intention to permit evil and suffering to enter the world.
93. The ultimate purpose of human suffering is indicated in Heb 2:10. Even the sinless Saviour was perfected for His priestly office and future glory **by suffering**. How much more the need for such salting and grist to be provided for the mere mortals who will come to share His glorious inheritance. Hence, the perennial existence of evil in the world until Christ comes to restore all things.
94. Certain important (but non-essential) mysteries have been hidden from the Church during much of its earthly pilgrimage.
95. If the assertions in this document are broadly correct, the final mystery John was told not to write about (concerning the little book – Rev 10:4) is likely to pertain in nature to the broader providence here outlined.

COMMENTARY

I now set out and briefly comment on each of the 95 theses that summarize key outcomes from The Little Book of Providence.

THESIS 1



Thesis #1 of 95 – Human beings were made in the image of God and even after “the Fall” are to be regarded as such

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Gen9:6: *Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.*

Jn14:9: *Jesus said to him, “Have I been **with you for so long a time**, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? The one*

who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?

COMMENTS

Given that God is invisible, the image referred to in Genesis cannot be God's appearance but His NATURE. That nature has been besmirched by the fall, but as Gen 9 indicates, by no means obliterated. Every virtue that man is still capable of exhibiting such as compassion, mercy, a sense of fairness and justice, humour, tolerance and the desire for the wellbeing of others, is derived from God. The point is, God possesses ALL the above, and to a superlative degree. Any theology that infers through its eschatological outworking that God's nature is alien to that of man when he is at his best (as perfectly portrayed by Jesus, ***even whilst in human flesh*** – Jn14:9) needs to be revisited.

THESIS 2



Thesis #2 of 95 – Cain and Abel as the first humans to be born of woman were representatives within a de facto universal covenant that has been eluded by theologians

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Gen4:7 (Masoretic) *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, Sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*

COMMENTS

“Will you not be accepted?” might also be translated “will your countenance not be lifted?” which is utilized by some versions of the Bible. The King James Version quoted above rightly understands “sin” to be referring to a person (the Sinful One), for he is lying or crouching (Hebrew: rabats) at the door and has a desire to control Cain. Sin *per se* could hardly be at the door in Cain’s case, it’s already in Cain’s heart and about to wreak havoc. Cain is described elsewhere as “of the evil one”, confirming that the Sinful One was indeed at the portal of his soul and was able to master Cain and thereby control him, in fact own him. From the human perspective, that would not have been so if Cain had responded differently to the challenge JHWE presented to him in Gen4:7, so the verse ***effectively reflects a Universal Covenant for fallen humanity***; for Abel was fallen but he was accepted. The focus of the Cain and Abel story

which is drawn upon in the New Testament is not concerning Abel's salvation but Cain's reprobation (rejection), indicated by the vital yet typically glossed references to "this day" and "now" regarding the elder brother's fate.

Whilst there may be a prophetic connotation to Calvary, the idea that Cain and Abel were expected to anticipate a future Sacrifice for sin by killing an animal is unsustainable; cultic sacrifices were not clearly established as a religious system until the Law of Moses. Paul, James and the writer to the Hebrews make it clear why Abraham had been counted as righteous, being a belief in the God he had encountered evidenced by obedience, in his case that he would be rewarded with a great family. No one in the Old Testament is declared to be justified based on offering an animal sacrifice, so Abel cannot be an exception. Abel exercised faith and produced fruit in the form of good works. Abel didn't "get saved", he remained accepted (justified) and was acknowledged as righteous within the Universal Covenant; Cain reprobated (became rejected) and was brand-marked for Satan, and as a warning to those who would cross him, but that was not at the point he failed to offer his first-fruit in sacrifice, for although God was not pleased with his offering, He still held out an olive branch. Rather he was called to account immediately he had killed his brother. The issue was never the brothers' religious observance per se for as always God delights in compassion more than religious offerings as Jesus Himself affirmed. This historically eluded universal covenant is fundamental to the misrepresentation of divine providence within Western theology.

THESIS 3, 4 AND 5

Thesis #3 of 95 - Abel was not “saved” by anticipating Calvary when he sacrificed an animal (Gen4), he remained justified within a de facto covenant for fallen humanity by exercising faith/faithfulness, offering the best of his produce with a good conscience

Thesis #4 of 95 Cain defaulted from this Universal Covenant after killing his brother

Thesis #5 of 95 Such an inclusive covenant is indicated by the fact that Cain was neither entirely alienated from God nor cursed by Him until after his fratricide

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Gen4:13-16 *Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is too great to bear! Behold, You have driven me THIS DAY from the face of the ground; and **from Your face I will be hidden**, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” So the Lord said to him, “Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.” And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him. Then Cain **went out from the presence of the Lord**, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.*

COMMENTS

As explained in thesis #2, whilst there may be a prophetic connotation to Christ’s Passion, the idea that Cain and Abel were expected to **anticipate** a future Sacrifice for sin by killing an animal is unsustainable; cultic sacrifices were not clearly

established as a religious system until the Law of Moses. Even Jesus' own disciples had no idea that their Master and Saviour of the world was to die and become a Sacrifice for sin, still less would the immediate descendants of our first parents have such an understanding. Apart from which, no one in the Old Testament is declared to be justified based on offering an animal sacrifice, so Abel cannot be an exception.

Abel exercised faith and produced fruit in the form of good works. Abel didn't "get saved", he remained accepted (justified) and was acknowledged as righteous within the Universal Covenant. Cain reprobated (became rejected) and was brand-marked for Satan, and as a warning to those who would cross him. That was not at the point he failed to offer his first-fruit in sacrifice, for although God was not pleased with his offering, He still held out an olive branch. Rather he was called to account immediately he had killed his brother, showing himself to be psychopathic: devoid of conscience or compassion – a child of the devil (1Jn3:12).

THESIS 6



Thesis #6 of 95 - Cain rather than Adam is the type of the damned or reprobate who is later described in the New Testament as derived from the Evil One (Greek: ek tou ponerou)

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

1Jn3:12 *Be not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because **his deeds** were evil, and his brother's deeds were righteous.*

COMMENTS

These first few theses focus on Genesis, and it should already be evident that Cain features as much as his father Adam. Cain's parent Adam is several times referred to in Paul's epistles. For at the human level it is through Adam and his partner Eve that sin came into the world. *"For as in **Adam** all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive"* (1Cor15:22). Adam is our federal head; his fate is our fate – **but that is the point being made** in this thesis. We are in Adam, **not Cain**. Quoting from The Little Book of Providence on the subject:

The historical error of mainstream Christian theology since its systemization in Late Antiquity has been a failure to distinguish between disobedient Adam and his psychopathic eldest son. That was not the case amongst the earliest Fathers such as Irenaeus [ref1] and Origen [ref2] who classified fallen Adam with righteous Abel not Cain. Adam was the first man to be created; Cain the first to be born of woman; the one was the federal head of humanity and the progenitor of “the body of this death”, the other was the type of the damned, being those who through an act of free will leave the intuitive path of sound reason and deference to God’s still small voice speaking through the conscience “to walk in the way of darkness, and rejoice in evil and delight in the waywardness of the wicked, whose ways are perverse and devious” (Prov2:13-15).

Sound reason, even the spiritual faculty of conscience will not instruct a man how to be a disciple of Christ – His demands go well beyond such faculties. They require special revelation, spiritual empowerment and the means of sanctifying grace. However, innate human reason, informed by conscience is effectual and normative regarding what is to be pursued and what is to be avoided in the cause of being humane, and that is the basis upon which everyman is judged, being without excuse if he has opposed and rejected the light that he has received (Mt25:31-46). Cain did just that, killing his innocent brother in cold blood and so was

cursed, whilst Adam had never received such a curse. Cain became alienated from such light, Adam did not. Cain came under Satan's mastery, Adam did not. Cain was a plant of the devil, Adam a lost child of God: for whom Christ came to die – providing pardon for the many and fulness of salvation for those destined to partake in His life (Rom5:10; Rom8:29; Jn6:53-54). [From: The Little Book of Providence chapter two]

*Ref #1: Irenaeus against heresies Book III
chap. 23 (5)*

*Ref #2: Origen de Principiis Preface (4)
194 Mt25:31-46*

THESIS 7

*Thesis #7 of 95 - Adam is mankind's federal head and the type of those Paul describes as "dead" (in trespasses and sins) due to the malign influence of the procreated vessel inhabited by the soul whose moral instincts oppose that of the God-given spirit. Cain is effectively the type of the **twice dead** in whom both flesh **and spirit** have died to God so as to be united in evil*

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Jude12 *"These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about[a] by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, **twice dead, pulled up by the roots**".*

COMMENTS

A key motif running through The Little Book of Providence and therefore apparent within these 95 theses is an affirmation of trichotomy against duality (3 not 2). That starts with the Godhead as most Christians would agree, but equally applies to soteriology/spirituality (see below), anthropology (body, soul **and spirit**) and the ongoing witness to God's saving work on earth (Spirit, water **and blood** – 1Jn5:8). In Romans7, Paul speaks of an inner tension between the moral impulses of the flesh ("the body of this death") and the spirit or inner man. Only those who come to know Christ as Saviour, being empowered by the Spirit are able to overcome this so as to experience spiritual Life even whilst in mortal flesh (Rom7:25; Jn6:53). However (and **as** ever), there is a third category: the twice dead.

Such, like Cain, have given in to evil and the Evil One. Their flesh like everyone else's is dead (in the Pauline sense) but their spirit (encompassing conscience) is also dead or non-functional such that the material and spiritual components of the person are no longer in tension. Dead (flesh) versus dead (spirit) results in a chilling serenity in which the soul is unhindered in its response to the instincts of the flesh.

Such a soul may satisfy its worldly, carnal appetite by any means. Unlike all who are to be liberated as the children of God (Rom8:19-23), these desolate ones have no Pauline "inner struggle" for what is dead cannot struggle. They therefore may be cool, calm and at peace with themselves as they pursue evil. **This** is death of the soul; **this** is total depravity, and these are the children of hell (Mt23:15). They are the wicked and godless who must be despatched at the renaissance, for they were not planted by God but by His enemy (Mt13:25 & 15:13). This pertains to the mystery of providential evil, considered more fully in chapters six and seven of The Little Book.

THESIS 8

Thesis #8 of 95 - Those who go in the way of Cain are described in the New Testament as children of the devil

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Jude11 - Woe to them! For they have **gone in the way of Cain**, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Jn8:44a You are **of your father the devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do.

COMMENTS

It's that man again! In theological terms, **Cain** is as significant as Adam and Abraham, but this has been eluded just as the covenant in which he was a participant was eluded (thesis #2). The Little Book of Providence elucidates:

“Those who go in the way of Cain are in effect an inverted image of that other vocational group called out from the world to go in the way of Christ. Like Christians, the devil’s children are also no longer their own; they are in the ownership and service of another^[1]; they too are spiritually directed and empowered by the effectual working of their lord^[2]; they too are no longer one of the lost: the “sheep without a shepherd” upon whom Christ will have compassion^[3]. These are not lost for they have found their herdsman or rather he has found them. He had been prowling around seeking whom he

may devour^[4]; he had crouched at the portal of their souls desiring to possess them. It looked promising, and so he had sifted them as wheat to see if there be any underlying faith within them^[5]. Such an analysis will appear obscure and arcane to many: but it is scripturally based and pertains to the mystery of evil; by far the most intriguing aspect of divine providence required to unlock the Mystery of God”.

*[1] 1Jn3:12 [2] Eph2:2 [3] Mt9:36
[4] 1Pet5:8 [5] Lk22:31-32*

*[Excerpt from The Little Book of
Providence chapter six]*

THESIS 9

Thesis#9 of 95 - Children of the devil are distinguishable by their lack of conscience and their inability to empathise or show compassion to others. They also have a total disregard for the truth.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Mt25:41-46 “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his agents (Greek: ἄγγέλοις); for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ “Then they also will answer Him saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ And these will go away into age-enduring punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

Jn8:44 “You are **of your father the devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

1Jn3:10 “By this the children of God and the children of the devil **may be identified**: anyone who does not live uprightly (ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην) is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother”.

COMMENTS

My thesis #9 is really another way of expressing 1Jn3:10 in combination with the teaching of Jesus regarding lies and the truth. In the providential context, it is as much concerned with who the children of the devil are **not** as with who they are. Scripture is not referring to the unsaved or non-Christians. That is a notion derived from the Augustinian dualism on which Western theology has so long relied. In the definitive passage on final judgement (Mt25) quoted above, religion or religious practice is not the issue (it is not even mentioned). Rather, it is compassionate love or the lack of it that determines who are “sheep” or “goats” together with their respective post-mortem fate.

St John concurs – those who **fail to love** are “not of God”. What? – those who fail to love perfectly? No, we all fall into that category – Christian or otherwise. ***It is not a question of degrees:*** certain people cannot love **at all** in the *agape* sense. For “***love is from God and everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God; whoever fails to love does not know God because God is love***” (1Jn4:7-8). Likewise, such people **never** do what is right – they no longer possess any inclination, for the light of conscience has been extinguished. Of course, such may give a fortune to charity or the like, but it will never be out of compassion, duty or reparation. It will only be to impress others and enhance their own reputation so they might attain their heart’s desire.

Jesus pointed out that such people are also **devoid of truth** (Jn8:44). They are compulsive liars, being the sons and daughters of their spiritual father, the Father of Lies. So (as ever), there are three categories in this regard at the human level, and three-in-one at the divine.

1. children of the devil, who have no interest whatsoever in telling the truth – they will say whatever suits their narcissistic purposes;
2. man by nature, who has an inclination to lie but will never feel entirely comfortable about it. That is in view

of a functioning conscience (a faculty of the spirit – a prompting from “the inner man” – cf. Rom7:23);

3. the elect of God who avoid lying like the plague – even an exaggeration is abhorrent to them (for they are governed by the Spirit of Christ);
4. Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who are **incapable** of lying. That is the best news the universe has to offer, in view of the promises God has made to those who love Him.

More shall be said regarding the children of the devil in the next thesis, a misrepresentation of which has allowed the mystery of God’s munificent providence to be sustained to this day (Rev10:7).

THESIS 10



Thesis #10 of 95 - Children of the devil are alluded to by Paul in Romans 9 as vessels of wrath created and prepared by God for destruction. They were not planted by the Father, neither retain His seed, so no longer bear a reflection of His moral image. In that sense they cease to be fully human but exist to fulfil God's purposes set out in theses 92 and 93 (regarding the providential role of evil and suffering)

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Rom9:22 – What if God, willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His authority known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath **designed** for destruction?

Mt15:13 – Jesus answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted".

1Jn3:9 – No one who is born of God (continually practices) sin, **because his seed REMAINS in him**; and he cannot continually practice sin, because he is born of God.

COMMENTS

In Rom9 Paul refers to vessels of wrath and vessels of God's mercy, making clear the latter refers to elect Jews and Christians (v24). It is therefore assumed there are two groups whereas in fact there are three. The third are the bulk of humanity who are neither destined to be co-inheritors with Christ, nor those Paul defines as having been fashioned/designed/adjusted (Greek: καταρτίζω) for ultimate destruction. Like their archetype Cain, these "vessels of wrath" (σκεύη ὀργῆς) were souls created by God (the Potter) but not planted by Him (Mt15:13). They were destined for satanic use to fulfil God's wondrous purposes, such as having His own Son betrayed and executed for the salvation of mankind and the ultimate defeat of His archenemy. This is typified in the example Paul himself provides in Romans9 regarding the exaltation, hardening of heart and final humiliation of the Egyptian Pharaoh to display JHWE's power to save and deliver His people from their oppressors.

It would surely be an affront, both to divine providence and humanity as a whole if Paul were identifying such hateful, accursed vessels with the souls of everyone who would fail to respond to the gospel. For the Potter analogy is indicating that these people were *specifically fashioned or designed* (καταρτίζω) so as to act in a God-grieving way resulting in their eternal ruin. Yet such a dire providential perspective is unavoidable applying the Augustinian derived binary soteriology that these theses are vehemently repudiating. The Potter illustration becomes still more unpalatable once Paul, Jesus and John are taken at their word regarding election, namely that those who **are** chosen for Christ are appointed to gospel salvation **by unmerited grace** and that no one of their own resources is able to attain to it. Again, The Little Book's tripartite soteriology resolves the matter entirely.

Even then, it will still be problematical for many that a God who the bible defines as love personified would create such hateful beings for **any** purpose. But there is a hint to the solution in the Romans 9 passage itself: *"He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon the objects of mercy, which He is ready-preparing for glory (v24).* But that's only a part of the story. The writer to the Hebrews elucidates further when to the astonishment of many he writes: *"For it was fitting **for (Christ)** for whom are all things, and through whom are all things in bringing many sons to glory **to perfect the Originator of their salvation THROUGH SUFFERING**" (Heb2:10).* This pertains to the ultimate, long sustained mystery of divine providence and God's extraordinary Plan for humanity (Rev10:7). More light is shed on this mystery in the final (seventh) chapter of The Little Book of Providence.

THESIS 11

Thesis #11 of 95 - When Paul speaks of non-Christians being "dead" he is not referring to damnation but to the disruption of the incarnate soul's communion with the Source of its spiritual life

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Eph2:1-2: "And **you were dead** in trespasses and sins, in which you previously walked according to the pattern of this world".

Rom7:24: "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of **this** death? [Greek: ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου **τούτου**]

Col3:2-5 Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth. **For you have died**, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore, treat the parts of your **earthly body as dead** to sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which is effectively idolatry.

Jn6:53: "Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you **have no life** in yourselves.

COMMENTS

Regarding what Paul actually means by death in the context of the gospel, in Romans 7 he describes the temporary vessel our souls inhabit as "**the body of this death**". Regrettably, "*Somatos tou thanatou toutou*" is often inadequately translated, for example in the New Jerusalem Bible utilized by Catholics where it is "the body doomed to death". That is not

what the Greek relays and entirely misses the point. The apostle is not referring to the human body's fate but its **current condition** that he had outlined in the previous verses. Hence his reference to the body of **this** death, as the KJV, NASB and Greek literal translation among others rightly relay “τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου”. The effect of that condition is summarized in his earlier statement: “*Whilst I joyfully agree with the law of God in the inner man, I am aware of a different law in my bodily members waging war against the law of my mind, making me a prisoner of the law of sin, the law which is in my bodily members*” (vv22-24). For Paul is affirming that it is the degenerative procreated intellectual vessel that leads the divinely planted soul into death (i.e. disruption in divine communion).

Such deprivation is what the apostle means by “**this** death”. It is not damnation or total depravity, which would pertain to the soul or whole person. The mortal body is indeed “doomed to die”, an obvious fact but not the point Paul was making; for that issue can and will be resolved at resurrection. The body of **this** death on the other hand requires a more immediate remedy for those chosen to relate to God **whilst still in it** – so that their soul may be fashioned for a still greater destiny.

That remedy is participation with Christ – but note from the Col3 reference Paul states “For you (*Christians*) **have died**, and your life is hidden with Christ in God”. The Christian is (or should be) “dead” in terms of his worldly allegiances and aspirations, just as he was previously dead to things pertaining to the Spirit, the gospel and the world to come. That is the sense in which Paul utilizes the term “death” (and Jesus “life” – Jn6:53) in the context of the gospel, and the next few theses will elaborate further.

THESIS 12

*Thesis #12 of 95 - Original sin is a reality
and the "death" described in the previous
thesis is its result*

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Rom5:14 – *Death reigned from Adam until Moses, **even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the violation committed by Adam**, who is a type of Him who was to come.*

Rom7:23-24 – *I see a different law in the parts of my body waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin, the **law which is in my body's parts**. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the **body of this death**? Thanks be to God, it is through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

Rom8:23 – *We who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, **the redemption of our body**!*

COMMENTS

By “original sin” I mean that the **effect** of Adam’s sin has been passed on to his offspring (i.e. all humanity) through procreation, that effect being “death” as described in the previous thesis/post. This is assuredly not “original sin” as Augustine defined it in which, partly through a mistranslation of biblical Greek, he believed that all humanity was deemed to have sinned **in Adam** and that his guilt had been imputed to all. Augustine’s misreading of Paul is no longer such a matter of controversy and is perhaps most clearly contradicted in Paul’s statement that “*death reigned from Adam to Moses even over those **who had not sinned in the manner of Adam**.*” (Rom5:14).

The father of Western theology's error here, as with so many of his distinctives, disfigures divine providence and depicts human nature as innately abhorrent. It resulted in his assertion that God's intention for those made in His image was that "*many more are to be left under punishment than are delivered from it, in order that it may thus be shown what was due to all*" (De Civitates Dei XXI chap. 12). Even little children who died unbaptized must endure "mild sensual pain" for all eternity (New Advent Catholic Encyclopaedia - "Unbaptized infants – teaching of Augustine").

Such misrepresentations of divine providence and the underlying goodness of the human spirit will have delighted Satan's heart, especially as it has impacted upon the presentation of the gospel to this day. The reality is so very different: God IS love and He created the universe and especially those creatures made in His image so that He might lavish His love upon them; ultimately to unite them to Himself starting with those He chooses to become associated with His Son whilst still in mortal flesh.

Theological resolution occurs when the **source** of mankind's problem with sin has been rightly ascertained. It is not the God-given soul/spirit but the procreated intellectual vessel (body and brain) that temporarily houses it, referred to by Paul and Peter as our tent or vessel (2Cor5:1-4; 2Pet1:13-14). The **outworking** of original sin is in fact what Paul is depicting in Romans7, as this quote from The Little Book of Providence explains:

"As a result of original sin, the divinely created human spirit finds itself within a morally sickly environment. Expressed another way the soul/spirit is required to operate through an impure medium – the procreated body of death. Physiologically the physical and spiritual entities (body and

soul/spirit) are in union, yet they have opposing moral impulses.

Paul exemplifies this in Romans chapter seven: the material (fleshly) and spiritual components of man have opposing moral inclinations as a result of which the human mind becomes a battleground, receiving conflicting advice or motivations from each: the selfish creaturely inclinations derived from the bodily members processed through the brain on the one hand; the more idealistic sometimes altruistic impulses arising from the conscience that governs the God-planted spirit on the other. It is not that the immaterial part of man (the soul and spirit) is in any Platonic sense generically superior or purer than the material housing or “vessel” (the body) because the former happens to be immaterial. The dualism in the form of moral antagonism arises from the immediate source of the component parts; the spiritual components are pure not because they are immaterial but because they are from God; the body is impure not because it is material but because it originates from the loins of fallen Adam and carries the contagion of sin. Paul explains how precisely that affects human morality and how for Christians the matter is partially remedied by gospel salvation, yet not wholly so for anybody until resurrection. Such anthropological duality was recognized by the very early Christian writers. In the epistle to Diognetus (c. AD130), Mathetes, the anonymous disciple likens the soul’s relationship to the body to that of the

Church to the world: the latter (equating to the flesh) wars against the former (the soul) and hates it because it is perceived to restrict its worldly enjoyment, whereas the Church (the soul) loves the body (the world) and seeks to preserve and sanctify it. Likewise, Cyprian (A.D.200-258) recognized the body to be of the earth and the human's spirit to be from heaven and that through the Fall they have opposing natures. He affirms that Paul's references to the spirit being opposed to the flesh are not (as many translations infer) referring to the Holy Spirit but the human's spirit; similarly, the fruits of the spirit.

The consequence of original sin is that the physical component's latent instincts as they are processed within the brain are intrinsically corrupting, tending to concupiscence (disordered desire), and will inevitably gain the upper hand over the divinely planted spirit unless aided by divine grace. The inner struggle is not between human nature in its entirety and the Holy Spirit as most have come to understand Paul in Romans 7, for it applies equally to those who do not possess the Spirit. Rather it is a conflict between the inclination of the bodily members (Paul and Peter's temporary vessel or tent) and the influence of the human's spirit; the one governed by concupiscence, the other by conscience; the one having been created after God's own nature, the other created originally from God's good earth but degenerated through the Fall and procreated therefrom. "O wretched man

that I am; who can deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God it is through Jesus Christ our Lord". Truly, this is the essence of Christian salvation, for in the believer that battle is aided and can be turned into victory by becoming one spirit with Christ."

[Excerpt from The Little Book of Providence – chapter two]

THESIS 13



*Thesis #13 of 95 - Our first parents "died"
immediately they ate the forbidden fruit*

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Gen2:17 *From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for **in the day** that you eat from it you will surely die.*

Rom8:20-21 *For the creation was subjected to futility, **not of its own free will**, but because of **Him** who subjected it, in the certain hope that **creation itself** also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

Rev10:7 *In the days of the voice of the seventh messenger, when he starts sounding off, then the mystery of God will be completed, as has been announced to His servants the prophets.*

COMMENTS

Humanly speaking, the Little Book of Providence and these theses related to it arose from applying a highly literal (some might say pedantic) approach to scriptural interpretation. Every word, including how it is parsed in its original language has been taken into consideration. Usually, such a literal approach results

in seeming contradictions with other passages, indeed many passages of the bible. But that is not the case with The Little Book; interpreted in the way that I have been shown the bible should be results in total coherence, at least to the author's satisfaction.

So here is an example: "***In the day you eat from it you shall surely die***" (Gen2:17). Eating the forbidden fruit did not result in our first parents merely becoming mortal and liable for punishment, ***they died*** on the day the fruit was eaten [Heb: **וַיָּמָוּתוּ בַּיּוֹם**]. What they experienced ***that very day*** is what Paul was referring to in my earlier thesis with regard to his reference to individuals by nature being "dead" in trespasses and sins – a defiled conscience resulting in a disruption in their relationship with their Creator.

For as we know, Adam went on to live for centuries, and as the earliest Church fathers rightly testify, he was neither cursed nor damned. The first man to experience that fate was Adam's firstborn son Cain (Gen4:11). As a consequence of his parents' folly, Cain's soul like everyone else's must inhabit a corrupted intellectual vessel (body and brain) with instincts alien and opposed to God's law (Rom7:23-24). But in Cain's case he was also dead in spirit, i.e., twice dead (Jude1:12). Body, soul and mind had become united in evil, hateful towards God and humanity. He had succumbed to the Evil One (Gen4:7); become a child of the devil (1Jn3:12) and the archetype of a theologically ***eluded third soteriological category of humanity***. Counterintuitively, this is great news for all of us, as is the related Rom9 passage considered in thesis#10. If you're not yet acquainted with The Little Book of Providence, this is likely to appear 🌈. So, it's time for a ditty:

"A snake and trees,

Aug's twos for threes,

Disaster now at last shall please"

[Ref: Rom8:20; Rev10:7]

THESIS 14

Thesis #14 of 95 - Spiritual death arises as soon as the conscience is defiled, for that faculty has a spiritual dimension

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Rom2:14-15 (New Jerusalem Bible) *When Gentiles, not having the Law, still through **their own innate sense** behave as the Law commands, even though they have no Law, they are a law **for themselves**. They can demonstrate the effect of the law engraved on their hearts, to which **their own conscience bears witness**; since they are aware of various considerations, some of which accuse them, while others provide them with a defence.*

Rom13:8-10 *Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for **the one who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law**. For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, **love is the fulfilment of the Law**.*

Heb9:14 *How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, **cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God**?*

COMMENTS

The three references above cover the essential meaning of this thesis. Paul's teaching pertains to humanity as a whole and to natural law. The New Jerusalem Bible translation of Rom2 is amongst the more accurate. In terms of Protestant bibles, NASB for example is fine, whereas KJV/NJKV are not so – they amongst others imply Paul is being condemnatory towards the Gentiles' response to conscience whereas it is quite the contrary

– they “**behave as the Law demands**”. Indeed, with the exception of the children of the devil featured in earlier theses, the rest of humanity possess a working conscience and often act upon it. Quoting Paul “*through their own innate sense (Gentiles) behave as the Law commands, even though they have no Law, they are a law for themselves*”. Anyone who shows compassion to another does just that – fulfilling the spirit of the Law (Rom13:8-10; Mt25:40; 1Jn4:7).

Note, the previous paragraph already covers two spiritual/soteriological categories – those who defer to the faculty of the human spirit we know of as conscience, and those who do not. That correlates with those for whom truth, compassion and integrity matter (albeit they do not consistently practice it) and those who are narcissistic psychopaths. This in turn correlates with those who retain something of God’s image and those who have entirely lost it (1Jn3:8-10). Secular society may apply different language, but they generally recognize such a distinction. Regrettably many Christians are less inclined to, thanks to the binary theology referred to in the previous thesis’ ditty. According to their understanding (and mine in the past), whilst they may acknowledge degrees of punishment, all who do not respond to the gospel (as the various denominations interpret it) are deemed to be bound for perdition.

Repudiating such a notion is central to this work; for it is an offence to God’s nature and providential care, being a misrepresentation of humanity’s standing before God. Nevertheless, what *is* true about the above two categories of people is that neither is saved in the gospel sense. But what is such salvation *from* and what is it *for*? The “from” was covered in the last few theses: it is to be delivered from what Paul refers to as the body of this death. For whilst through the faculty of conscience working within their spirit, the first category may “*joyfully agree with the law of God in the inmost being, they are aware of a different law (principle) in the bodily senses waging war against the law of the mind, making them a prisoner of the law of sin within the bodily members*” (Rom7:23-24). The second category on the other hand knows nothing of such inner

moral turmoil, nor any guilt or shame for their sin. Their whole being is united in evil – they are quite different from the rest, for they are not **“of God”** (1Jn3:10).

But thanks be **to** God, there is a third category who **are** being saved. And what are they being saved **for**? The Hebrews text I have quoted refers: *“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, **cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**”* Such are to be the servants of God on earth – they need to know Him, love Him and serve Him **now** whilst in mortal flesh, and be fashioned for still nobler service in the future, i.e., immediately Christ returns in glory. For such honourable service they need to be cleansed in Christ’s blood. Peter describes them as *“the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father **through a hallowing of the spirit leading to obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus**”* (1Pet1:2 – to be clarified in later theses). As Hebrews affirms, that is so that their consciences may be cleansed from the works that result in death (as previously defined). Again, this is indicative of the spiritual nature and origin of the faculty of conscience – being as Paul stated, the witness to the Law of God written on the heart.

THESIS 15

Thesis #15 of 95 - Death results from sin but Paul indicates sin is itself a result of "death" arising from the corrupted intellectual vessel in which the human soul temporarily resides

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Psa51:5 – *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

1Cor15:54-56 – *When this corruptible puts on the incorruptible and this mortal puts on immortality, **then** will come about the saying that is written: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?" **The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law.***

Rom8:23 – Even we who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, being **THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY!**

COMMENTS

One needs to observe carefully what the apostle writes concerning spiritual death: *"The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law"*. The converse idea, namely that the sting of sin is death is better understood and Paul quotes as much from Hosea. But once again the apostle intends exactly what he writes. It confirms among other things that when Paul speaks of death it is not a reference to a state of damnation for in this case sin results *from* death, not leads to it. Something *being* spiritually dead has resulted in sin, that something being the mortal body and brain. In responding to the body's natural inclinations, the soul rebels against the divine

light of conscience and so disrupts the relationship with the Source of its spiritual life. For what had been conceived in sin (Ps51:5) has “died” leading in turn to sin that destroys Life once the “law” (a sense of right and wrong) is perceived and inevitably breached (Rom7:9).

Hence the need for heavenly grace by which one can be spiritually purified, receiving ongoing cleansing of the soul so that **those predestined to it** may serve God whilst in mortal flesh. The apostle had further asserted that “*death will be swallowed up in victory*”, yet even celestial grace does not fully resolve the problem of mortal embodiment. God intends to save our soul and body, but He does not do so simultaneously. So even the Christian is tempted to sin whilst in mortal flesh which is why it is his body that is to be **offered as a living sacrifice** “*so that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk after the flesh but after the spirit*” (Rom8:4). For it is the spirit that having been supplied by God loves His law and wishes to serve righteousness. Not until “this corruptible” (body) has been transformed at resurrection will death (physical and spiritual) finally be swallowed up in victory when the body itself is redeemed (Rom8:23). [Note – to Paul, salvation’s apotheosis is not the soul going to heaven but **bodily resurrection**]. The soul’s **vessel** in its current degenerative state is the cause of the human problem being the outworking of original sin; the final solution will not be for the soul to lose a body altogether and be eternally at rest in the spiritual realm (a spurious dualism), but to be re-clothed in a new body which is **from** heaven (2Cor5:2) and to be united to the Man who is God and actively participate within His realm; that will be joy unspeakable and full of glory.

THESES 16 AND 17

Thesis #16 of 95 - Infants do not experience spiritual death until in Paul's language "the law comes" being a clear sense of right and wrong; for where there is no law sin is not imputed and the conscience is not defiled

Thesis #17 of 95 - Adam and Eve's offspring do not inherit their parents' guilt but through procreation inherit an intellectual vessel that has been "shaped in iniquity" acting as a malign influence on the soul

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Rom5:13 – *Until the Law sin was in the world, **but sin is not imputed when there is no law.***

1Cor15:56 – *The sting of death is sin, **and the power of sin is the Law.***

Eccles12:7 *Then the dust will return to the earth that it was, and the **spirit will return to God who gave it.***

COMMENTS

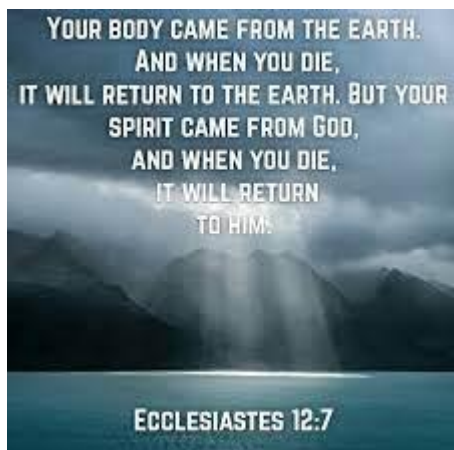
I commented in thesis #12 on Augustine's teaching that infants who died unbaptized must experience mild sensual pain through eternity. Thankfully this is one of his teachings the Catholic Church did not fully endorse, instead teaching the more palatable notion that such souls would be in a state of limbo – happy and at peace but not fit to experience heaven itself. But as the Church readily acknowledges such a concept had "no clear foundation in revelation". Their 1992 catechism

progressed to the position that *“infants who die without baptism are entrusted by the Church to the mercy of God”*. Still more recently, in 2007 the Church’s International Theological Commission concluded (no doubt in the light of historical cultural and religious formation), we might *“**hope** that infants who die without baptism may be saved and brought into eternal happiness even if there is not an explicit teaching on this question found in revelation.”*

These two related theses demonstrate that the whole matter should never have been an issue in the first place, causing as it has, unnecessary distress for many of the faithful through the centuries, not to mention incredulity from many outside the Catholic Church. The problem largely arose from the Western Church’s interpretation of original sin which deemed that not only Adam’s corrupted nature but his personal **guilt** was imputed to his offspring, resulting in spiritual death and alienation from the light of Christ **from birth**. As explained in recent posts/theses, not only was Adam’s sin not imputed but the corrupted nature that **has** been passed on to his offspring pertains to the procreated intellectual vessel (fleshly body and brain) that the soul inhabits, not the spiritual essence itself, i.e., that part of us that **returns** to God at physical death (Eccles12:7). As the same verse affirms, that spiritual essence was given to us by God – it is innately pure. But it is also pliable, i.e. liable to corruption – from the morally degraded fleshly intellectual components with which it is temporarily associated. Hence the need for gospel salvation for those God elects to relate to Himself in Christ and become conformed to His image whilst in mortal flesh (Rom8:29; Jn6:44). But in terms of infant baptism, substantive corruption of the spirit cannot occur before a person attains the age of reason. For in Paul’s language, sin is not imputed when there is no law, in this case an infant’s sense of right and wrong. As Paul also wrote concerning the progression of his own life: *“There was once a time when I was alive without the law, **then** the commandment came, sin came to life and so I died”* (Rom7:9).

Once these principles are grasped, infants dying unbaptized cease to be an issue. And the fact that the temporary body/brain rather than the eternal soul/spirit is the **source** of mankind's problem with sin (covered in the previous thesis) is a truth that has broader and yet more favourable implications for human destiny that we shall continue to unravel.

THESIS 18



Thesis #18 of 95 - The eternal soul/spirit of man, being that which returns to God is not procreated but directly created by God

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Eccles12:7 – *Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.*

Heb4:12 – *For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of **soul** and **spirit**, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

1Thes5:23 – *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your **spirit** and **soul** and body be kept complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Rom8:16 – *The **Spirit** Himself testifies with **our spirit** that **we** are children of God.*

Gal6:18 – *The **grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ be with **your spirit**, brothers and sisters. Amen.*

COMMENTS

I comment a number of times on soul creationism and the tripartite nature of man in my book. Here is one such reference:

Primarily through Augustine's influence and his prosecution of the Pelagian controversy, the post-Nicene Church defected from the orthodox tripartite understanding of most earlier Fathers who believed man to be comprised of body, soul and spirit [note#1]; the latter being provided directly from God and the means by which one receives sound reason and a pure conscience, the Light of Christ by which little children cannot but "believe" in Jesus the Word (Mt18:6). This has exacerbated difficulties when interpreting Paul's epistles; the "spirit" not being conceived by most readers to be a separate entity (a component of human nature) distinct from the Holy Spirit. Paul refers more frequently than others to the human spirit because of his substantial handling of the inner struggle concept. On one occasion he refers to body, spirit and soul together (1Thes5:23) in terms of sanctification. Likewise, the writer to the Hebrews speaks of the word of God penetrating between soul and spirit as it does between the joints and marrow (Heb4:12). The latter two materials of the body are closely related yet distinct, as are the soul and spirit.

In terms of the witness of the Apostolic Church, Justin Martyr spoke of the soul housing the spirit just as the body houses the soul (ref#2) the latter being a kind of

ethereal interface formed in the outline of the body enclosing the spirit – invisible when it leaves the body at death yet clearly visible in the realm it inhabits prior to resurrection (cf. Lk16:23). Irenaeus concurred: the soul possessing the figure of the body in which it dwells (ref#3) whilst “the complete man is composed of flesh, soul and spirit. One of these does indeed preserve and fashion the man – this is the spirit; whilst as to another it is united and formed – that is the flesh; then comes that which is between the two – that is the soul which sometimes when it follows the spirit is raised up by it but sometimes it sympathises with the flesh and falls into carnal lust” (ref#4). In the New Testament the Greek word for soul (psuche) is often translated as “life” for it more often relates to the physical: “Take no thought for your “psuche” what you shall eat or what you shall drink” (Mt6:25).

Ref#1 Historical background to trichotomy: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripartite_\(theology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripartite_(theology))

Ref#2 Justin on the resurrection chap. 10

Ref#3 Irenaeus against heresies Book II chap. 19 (6)

Ref#4 Irenaeus against heresies Book V chap. 9 para 1

[Quote from The Little Book of Providence chapter two]

—

As a bishop in the 4th/5th century Catholic Church, Augustine cannot have been a total maverick, but without doubt he was the most influential voice (and pen) the Church possessed during its most formative period in terms of doctrinal development and biblical interpretation. Most of his distinctive teachings were accepted by the Catholic Church of his day and built upon later by the Protestant Reformers. Denying the existence of the human's spirit was such an example, even though I have just demonstrated from Scripture and the testimony of earlier Church Fathers that it was initially well understood that man consisted of body, soul **and** spirit (the ditty in thesis#13 refers). For Augustine, the idea that fallen man possessed **any** spiritual enlightening or enabling faculties didn't fit with his interpretation of original sin, namely that through Adam's disobedience, every soul was doomed to perdition apart from an act of sovereign grace, reserved for the minority. Such seemingly inexplicable justice, undermining as it does God's munificence and self-declared salvific intentions, stemmed in part from a misunderstanding of what the bible actually means by "salvation" – i.e., what it is **from** and what it is **for**.

These early theses are focussing on the former: what man by nature must be delivered **from**, not to avoid perdition but to relate to God whilst in human flesh. Later theses shall touch upon the especially glorious destiny awaiting those who **do** embark upon such a relationship through a **divinely orchestrated** encounter with Jesus Christ so as to be sanctified in body, soul and spirit (Jn6:44; Rom8:29; 1Thes5:23). In the meantime, note Paul's closing benediction to God's chosen people in Galatia: "*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ **be with your spirit**, brothers and sisters. Amen*" (Gal6:18).

THESES 19, 20 AND 21

Thesis #19 of 95 - The God-given soul and spirit of man is innocent but pliable (liable to corruption)

Thesis #20 of 95 - Apart from gospel grace or infantile death the soul is bound to experience a measure of corruption

Theses #21 Of 95 - The soul/spirit of man is not intrinsically corrupt having come from God, unlike the procreated vessel into which it is planted at birth

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Eccles12:7 – *Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to **God who gave it**.*

1Thes5:23 – *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your **SPIRIT AND SOUL AND BODY** be kept complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Rom7:22-24 – *For I joyfully agree with the law of God in the inner man I see a **different law in the parts of my body** waging war against the law of my mind, making me a prisoner of the law of sin, the law which is in my body's parts. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God, it is through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

Gen6:3 – *God said "My spirit shall not perpetually strive with man for he is flesh, so his days shall be (reduced to) 120 years [Note: this cannot be referring to the Holy Spirit, for fallen man by nature neither encounters nor possesses the Holy Spirit. Rather, he possesses a spirit from God which is constantly at*

enmity with his fleshly parts (body and brain) – so God does man a favour by reducing his time in the flesh].

1Pet4:6 – *Therefore the gospel has been preached even to those who have died, so that though they have been judged in the **flesh** as people, they may live in the **spirit** in accordance with the will of God.*

COMMENTS

Three theses have been lumped together in this post as they are closely related, and each one hopefully helps explain the other two.

The biblical references are firstly to confirm that Paul (together with the writer to the Hebrews and the witness of the early Church) asserts that a human being consists of flesh, soul **and** spirit. As all Christians will agree, the spiritual essence of man is eternal, but the reference from Ecclesiastes affirms **its origins** as well as its destination. Man's spirit **came** from God and shall return to Him when the body is laid to rest. Many Christians ("traducians") effectively believe that the eternal soul/spirit is somehow derived through human procreation. Others (creationists) believe the spiritual essence of man is directly created by God and planted into the human embryo at some point before birth. These theses affirm the latter. Creationism is the official teaching of the Catholic Church, although in practice many (not least Augustine himself) have struggled with it in view of incompatibility with his distinctive teaching on original sin that the Western Church (alone) adopted. For it would imply that the God who is love personified implants a morally degenerated soul within man and then condemns him for possessing it. The traducian notion is equally illogical and irrational, for how can that which is spiritual and eternal be generated from what is mortal and material? – apart from which, as already indicated the notion is unbiblical.

The matter is resolved by Paul's teaching in Romans chapter seven, that is when **taken literally**. The spiritual essence of man (which Paul refers to here as the "inner man" – elsewhere to the

heart or spirit) is not the **source** of mankind's problem with sin, for it instinctively loves what is good and in accordance with God's law (7:22). The problem stems from what the apostle refers to as law in the body parts, by which he must mean the bodily senses as **processed through the brain**. It might appear blindingly obvious but I for one did not previously think the matter through – at death, the brain returns to the ground with the rest of the body. What goes into eternity, being the invisible spiritual essence planted by God **is itself an intellectual entity**, rational and memory-retaining. The parable of Lazarus and rich man confirms as much (Lk16:25 – note also from that verse why the rich man and Lazarus were experiencing what they were – to be covered in later theses). It is the moral tension between the fleshly and spiritual intellectual entities within man that Paul is describing in Romans 7, prompting him to ask, "*Who shall deliver me from the **body of this death**?*" All Christians know Jesus Christ to be the answer, and Paul confirms it (v25). But what of the **question**? It pertains to the very purpose and nature of what the bible means by "salvation" – what it is *from* and what it is *for* (previous thesis).

The innocence of the soul

It is not the God-given soul and spirit but the procreated intellectual vessel they inhabit that prevents man by nature rightly relating to God in the present. Only the Christian is provided with the spiritual resources to "**possess his own vessel in sanctity and honour**" (1Thes4:4). That is so that his soul can be fitted for immediate divine service in the world to come. In the meantime, the Christian is to present his mortal body to God as a living **sacrifice**. That, says Paul, is his reasonable service (Rom12:1). But it is not what the apostle regards as the ultimate purpose of salvation, neither is "going to heaven when you die" which the bible (including Paul) describes as "falling asleep" (Acts7:60; 1Cor15:6). No, **here** is the focus and cosmic outworking of Paul's gospel and it is line with the message of the Christmas angels: Good news/great joy/all people (Lk2:10) –

*“The creation was subjected to futility, not of its own choice **but because of Him who subjected it**, in the hope that **the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption** into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. That whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And **not only they, but we also** who have the first fruits of the Spirit – we also groan within ourselves waiting eagerly for our adoption, **being the redemption of our body**” (Rom8:20-23)*

This is not my gospel, it is Paul’s. Some of his teaching was new revelation; none of mine is, nor can it be. Rather, it is new interpretation that will appear alien to many. That is to be expected – for the Roman Church has long regarded **Augustine** as their preeminent doctor whilst the founder of the Protestant Church’s introductory statement for **his** 95 theses at Heidelberg declared Augustine to have been “Paul’s most trustworthy interpreter”. The Spirit has shown me something very much to the contrary, the supernatural aspect of the revelation testified to in a number of earlier posts. The resulting synopsis has been set out in The Little Book of Providence, made freely available to all as a PDF. What is more, I believe that such a course of events was foretold in Scripture – cryptically so in Revelation chapter ten, more overtly so in the non-canonical yet inspired and biblically quoted Book of Enoch.

THESES 22, 23 AND 24

Thesis #22 of 95 - The intellectual vessel that the soul/spirit inhabits is innately corrupt, governed by a triple concupiscence

Thesis #23 of 95 - Paul refers to the intellectual vessel that the soul/spirit inhabits whilst on Earth as "the body of THIS death", referring to its current spiritual status

Thesis #24 of 95. Paul's "law within his members" or "flesh" pertain to the governing principles adopted by the human brain as it processes the senses of the body

BIBLE REFERENCES

1Jn2:16 – *All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father but is from the world.*

Rom7:23 – *For I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.*

Rom7:24 – *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*

1Thes4:4 – *That each of you know how to **possess** his own **vessel** in sanctification and honor*

COMMENTS

In commenting on each thesis, I endeavour to place it and any related biblical citations in their broader context. As a result, I have already covered most issues pertaining to these

three related theses in earlier posts. But to reiterate the main points:

By “*procreated intellectual vessel*” I am referring to what comes out of a mother’s womb minus the spiritual element that (as creationists recognize) is placed there by God and later returns to Him (Eccles12:7). Paul and Peter both refer to this fleshly component as a vessel, tent or tabernacle. Of course, a vital part of that temporary fleshly vessel is the brain, hence my reference to it being intellectual. For it tends to be forgotten that the spiritual component that all Christians acknowledge leaves the body after brain-death is itself an intellectual entity – rational and memory retaining (Lk16:25). It follows therefore that whilst in mortal flesh there are two distinct intellectual entities within man. They are **not** in union but oppose each other morally and spiritually. The fleshly component is “dead” in terms of its spiritual relationship with God, whilst that which God has planted is unsurprisingly alive in that respect. That is, in most cases but not all, for the devil’s children are **twice** dead. For in such, like Cain (Jude11-12), flesh and spirit no longer are in tension. And it is a scary prospect; the spiritual and fleshly parts of these human devils (Jn6:70) have both died to God and become united in evil, devoid of a functioning conscience, being a faculty of the spirit, whose very existence Augustine and consequently much subsequent theology rejects.

Not so the apostle Paul on either count. He knows a human being to comprise body, soul and spirit (1Thes5:23). He also knows and has articulated in Romans chapter seven that the instincts of the flesh (i.e. the bodily senses as they are processed by the brain – thesis #24) are at odds with the instincts of the spirit perceived in the promptings of the conscience, being God’s law written on the heart. Paul cannot be referring to himself as a Christian within that passage (Rom7:14-24) as even Augustine rightly acknowledged, but many later commentators do not. In so doing they contradict what Paul goes on to outline in the very next chapter (8:12-16). For the Christian is **not** a slave to the flesh whereas man by nature is. It prevents him consistently practicing what he knows in his heart to be right

and just. Not so the Christian who is enabled in Paul's words "*to possess his own vessel with sanctification and honour*". For he has become one spirit with Christ and is further empowered by the Holy Spirit to overcome the deceitful enticements of this world (1Jn2:16).

The latter is what thesis #22 is referring to – the triple concupiscence which has governed the brain since the Fall, exacerbated by the influence of he who is still the prince of this world. Paul refers to our earthly vessel as the body of **this** death (thesis #23). The "this" (v24 – τούτου), often subtly omitted or misplaced within the translation, is important for it shows that the death to which he refers is not "a state of damnation" but what he is describing in the passage – the inability to overcome the desires of the flesh as long as the soul resides in mortal flesh (cf. 1Pet4:6). That in turn results in a breach of God's laws that are referenced by the conscience (Rom2:15) such that even those who have a sense of right and wrong and seek to practice the former are currently innately unable to serve the living God (Heb9:14). [They are nevertheless justified by "faith" evinced by love through the merits of Christ's faithfulness, but that is for a later thesis]. As Paul concluded, for those called to divine service and spiritual worship whilst still in mortal flesh so as to be fitted for yet more glorious service in the ages to come, there is only one solution – a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Rom7:25).

Even then, the matter is not finally resolved until the **body itself** is redeemed and replaced with that which is equally material yet incorruptible, having a brain spiritually attuned to God and the things of God. Note carefully, **that** is the eventuality Paul refers to as the Christian's point of adoption (Rom8:23) – not the day of his conversion or when the soul goes to heaven but when he finally receives a resurrection body. For man is incomplete ("asleep") without a body – and it was the temporary version that had been the **source** of his problem with sin. As Peter affirmed, the lusts of the flesh war **against** the soul – not **within** it for they do not derive **from** it (1Pet2:11). Nevertheless, such a soul can potentially be damaged

(corrupted) to the point of requiring the painful remedy (salting) Jesus spoke of in Mk9:45-50. That is one of the more troublesome passages of Scripture for many Christians.

THESES 25 AND 26

Thesis #25 of 95. Since the soul and spirit are immortal the human psyche cannot be confined to the physical brain

Thesis #26 of 95. For the soul/spirit that leaves the human body when the brain dies is itself an intellectual entity with a memory of its bodily existence

BIBLE REFERENCES

Luke16:25 – Abraham said (to the rich man in Hades), Child, **REMEMBER** that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; consequently [vūv] he is being comforted here whilst you are in agony.

Rom7:22-23 – I joyfully concur with the law of God in the **inner man** but I perceive **a different law** in my bodily members warring with the law in my mind and bringing me into captivity to the sinful law that is in my bodily members.

COMMENTS

It may be stating the obvious to some, but if one believes in an afterlife then our motivations whilst in human flesh potentially **derive from two sources**: the brain (that wondrous organ in our head that is nevertheless heading for the grave) and the internal “psyche” or whatever you wish to call the intellectual, memory-retaining **spiritual entity** that leaves the body after death – for it is itself an intellectual memory retaining entity (Lk16:25). So, within fallen man there are two psychological motivating forces in tension as Paul teaches in Romans chapter 7. They have opposing laws or governing

principles: *“For I am gratified by the law of God in my inner man, but I perceive **a different law** in my bodily members warring with the law in my mind and bringing me into captivity to the sinful law that is in my bodily members” (Rom7:23).*

Clearly our “bodily members” are not laws to themselves – Paul is referring to the bodily senses as they are processed through the brain.

The point the apostle is making which few have grasped is that our sinful inclinations derive from the procreated intellectual vessel, not the eternal spirit, “inner man” or “heart” as it is elsewhere described. As creationists better understand, the spirit/soul has been provided by God and is governed by the spiritual faculty we know of as conscience. I say “spiritual” for it is not identifiable within the brain itself; indeed, it has only relatively recently been clearly ascertained which part of that organ is responsible for **processing** the conscience’s responses [note#1].

A spiritual faculty indeed, for as Paul himself affirms in Rom2:14-15 (NIV/NASB not the KJV), the conscience witnesses to the Law that God has placed in the “heart”/inner man/spirit, enabling many who are devoid of a particular creed to do **by nature** what God’s Law would wish them to. [The KJV amongst others obscures that facet of natural law in Rom2:14 – the Greek will not permit it]. But **as a result of the Fall**, the instincts of the brain itself no longer accord with God’s law as reflected in the conscience. The fleshly organ’s instincts have become concupiscent, i.e., lustful for the things pertaining to this currently disordered world (1Jn2:16).

I refer to this issue a lot for it pertains to what the Christian is being saved **from** (Rom7:24). As for what such salvation is **for**, it is in order that as the **first fruits** of God’s new created order (Jam1:18) we might, through an interest in the Saviour’s blood and a purified conscience, serve the living God even whilst in human flesh (**Heb9:14**). That in turn is so that those predestined to the role become conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom8:29), with souls ready to be incorruptibly reclothed and maritally associated with Him in the ages to come (Rev19:6-7).

Note #1 – The “lateral frontal pole prefrontal cortex” appears to be responsible for the processing of moral decisions and empathetic responses. Amongst mammals, only humans possess this feature which is not the conscience itself (for that is spirit) but the area of the brain in which its promptings are processed. It is an area of the brain that has been found to be clearly and visually underdeveloped in the case of certain psychopaths that have been studied, for in their case there is less to process.

THESES 27 AND 28

Thesis #27 of 95 - Man is composed of body, soul and spirit.

Thesis #28 of 95 - The human's spirit is also alluded to in Scripture as the heart or inner man

BIBLE REFERENCES

1Thes5:23 – *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your **spirit and soul and body** be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Rom8:16 – *The Spirit Himself testifies **with our spirit** that we are children of God.*

COMMENTS

There is considerable overlap with this thesis and the ones covered in recent posts. Again, the key point is that contrary to Augustine's teaching upon which so much theology has been based, the human being comprises body, soul **and spirit** – one of "Aug's twos-for-threes" referred to in my recent ditty. For especially after his fracas with Pelagius, the fearsome bishop was insistent that God had failed to provide mankind with any **effectual** enlightening or enabling spiritual faculties following the Fall. Consequently, he believed every soul to be doomed to perdition, apart from an act of sovereign grace reserved for the minority: "*Many more are to be left under punishment than are delivered from it in order that it may thus be shown what was due to all*". By "punishment", Augustine was referring to eternal torment of the soul. Surely a delight to the Adversary's ears, for such teaching maligns the Creator's

character as much as it demonizes humanity. It profoundly disfigures God's providential care of the world that His Son suffered so agonizingly to save, turning the Christmas angels' message of "*good news of great joy for all people*" into a cosmic catastrophe.

Such was the consequence of this sainted churchman's rejection of any positive role for natural law (innate spiritual enlightenment/enablement) combined with his bipartite anthropology. The latter also had the effect of confounding Paul's teaching on human nature, especially the critical passage in Romans 7 concerning the conflict of flesh and spirit within man, impacting upon the very nature and process of salvation itself. For example, where Paul writes in Rom8:13 that "*if you live in accordance with the instincts of the flesh you shall die, but if **by the spirit** [note#2] you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*". Clearly, the Holy Spirit once present in an individual does not thereafter act independently, effectively becoming a human faculty, otherwise it would follow that every Christian would attain an equal and perfected state of sanctification. Rather He is the divine Enabler with whom the believer must cooperate. Indeed, the God-given **human** spirit (whose existence Augustine had denied) has been provided to **all men** to enlighten them such that they possess **effectual free will** to act with integrity and compassion, even at times altruism, but **not** to attain what the bible means by "salvation" (previous thesis/post).

So, Pelagius went too far and compromised the gospel if he actually taught that man had an innate ability to avoid sin altogether, being effectively able to master his own flesh (Paul's "body of this death") through a life of asceticism. For Paul makes clear that as a result of the Fall, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is required to overcome the malign moral influence of the procreated intellectual vessel (body and brain) with which the eternal soul/spirit are temporarily associated (Rom7:24-25). Whilst innate spiritual faculties may enable a person to fulfil the spirit of God's Law (Gal5:14; Rom2:14) and be finally accepted as a citizen of God's Kingdom through the

exercise of compassionate love towards their fellow man (cf. Mt25:34-40), common grace/natural law cannot provide what is necessary to experience a two-way living relationship with God whilst in mortal flesh. **Celestial** grace and the spiritual resources of the gospel are required to “*possess one’s own vessel in sanctification and honour*” (1Thes4:4). Such who do shall attain a scarcely imaginable degree of glory, providing they persevere in the Faith and gain victory over the morally malign intellectual vessel their soul currently inhabits: “*He **who overcomes**, I will grant to him to sit with Me on My throne, as I **also overcame** and sat with My Father on His throne*” (Rev3:21).

So much for Pelagius’s overly optimistic assessment of fallen human nature and its innate spiritual potentialities, yet virtually **all** Augustine’s **distinctive** teachings [note#2] need to be deconstructed if the munificence of God’s providential intentions towards those He created in His own image is to be perceived. Such has been an irksome (for many) but necessary facet of my book, in which I commented: “*A bible-based articulation of God’s munificent providence will taste as sweet as honey in the mouth of every child of God, whilst in the gut there will be a bitterness and an urge to be rid of what had historically been understood concerning the harshness of God’s justice and the limited nature of His salvific intentions [cf. Rev10:10]. The true scope of God’s plan of loving goodness will redound even more to His glory, for it is entirely dependent on the atoning death of the Son He adores, the length, breadth and height of whose love passes all knowledge*”. [Excerpt from *The Little Book of Providence* chapter one].

Note#1 – Likewise Rom8:4 – “*The requirement of the law is fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit*”. The early scribes who penned the *Textus Receptus* knew Paul to be referring to the human spirit not the

*Holy Spirit, hence πνεῦμα, not Πνεύμα
[Rom8:4 Greek].*

Note#2 – I emphasize
*“distinctive teaching” for as a Catholic, the
Bishop of Hippo taught much that was
faithful to the written and verbal tradition of
the Apostolic Fathers, not least his
reaffirmation of the sacerdotal nature of the
Church, the Eucharistic sacrifice and the
substantial presence of Christ’s body and
blood at the altar.*

THESES 29, 30, 31 AND 32

Thesis #29 of 95 – *The human's spirit (not to be confused with the human spirit) is often mistaken for the Holy Spirit when interpreting the Pauline epistles*

Thesis #30 of 95 – *The fruits of the spirit pertain to man's spirit, for those currently devoid of the Holy Spirit also produce good fruit*

Thesis #31 of 95 – *The inner conflict described by Paul in Romans 7 arises from conflicting motivations derived from the processing of the brain on the one hand and the conscience-directed spirit of the "inner man" on the other*

Thesis #32 of 95 – *Such an inner conflict is not restricted to the Christian, but to everyone with a functioning conscience*

BIBLE REFERENCES

Rom8:6 *For the mindset of the flesh is death, but the mindset of the Spirit (sic) is life and peace.*

Gal5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit (sic) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Rom7:23 But I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

COMMENTS

The above related theses again pertain to a fundamental flaw in the Augustinian derived biblical theology the Western Church has relied upon for the last 1600 years or so. It is one of his several “twos-for-threes” for those familiar with my ditty [note #1]. In this case, contrary to the teaching of Paul and the writer to the Hebrews, he insisted man consisted of body and soul alone rather than body, soul and spirit (cf. 1Thes5:23; Gal6:18; Rom8:16; Heb4:12). He also came to reject soul creationism – i.e., that the spiritual part of man (that which returns to God after physical death) is directly planted by God into the embryo (what Paul and Peter sometime refer to as our tent or vessel). For Augustine well knew its implications, whereas many creationists, including within his own Church have either failed to think it through or are content “to hold in tension” the notion that God would condemn a person for the soul/spirit He has just provided to them; indeed, that He would plant what was morally deficient within them in the first place.

The resulting denigration of both divine and human nature is resolved when what has been taken as read – that a human soul is either “saved” or “damned” is demonstrated from scripture to be a fallacy. Indeed, few souls proportionately speaking are in **either** category [note#2] in the context of what the bible actually means by salvation. Whilst those (starting with Cain) who are reprobate/cursed/damned/children of the devil are an eluded sub-category that has been lumped together with “the unsaved”. In terms of the Church’s evangelical mission such a misclassification has not essentially mattered (which is why God has permitted it for so long – cf. Rev10:9. For the Church must

preach the Good News of Jesus as Lord and Saviour, practice justice and offer compassion to **all** in the world, regardless of how deserving or otherwise the recipients may be.

But it **does** matter in terms of human perspectives on God's providential care, mercy and justice – whether such is munificent or draconian. And it **does** matter in terms of our understanding of human nature and how we perceive our fellow man. Is it sinful in its entirety as Augustine and the Protestant Reformers assert? Is it liable to corruption yet capable of maintaining its integrity through a self-discipline verging on ascetism – as Pelagius allegedly taught? Or is human nature basically sound – at worst neutral and capable of living a life that is pleasing to God without any enabling grace on His part?

With, I am clear, the Apostle Paul I would reply “none of the above”. Fallen human beings are indeed sinful by nature **in view of the flesh**. “The flesh” can be taken absolutely literally – from a creationist perspective it is the procreated material part of us: the body and brain. “Flesh” is not referring to our “sinful nature” as some bible translation infer (e.g. NIV in Rom7). For our nature **is** sinful, but not (normally) in its entirety: “*For I know that no good whatsoever dwells within me, that is, IN MY FLESH*” (Rom7:18a). And how does he complete the statement? “*For the willing (to do good) is present in me, but the capacity to do the good is not (18b)*”. In other words, human nature is **dualistic**. Why? Because its component parts although ultimately derived from God arrive in in the embryo from two different **immediate** sources: God plants the spirit whilst the corrupted intellectual vessel (body and brain) is procreated via the wondrous but entirely material processes of human childbirth.

Hence the psalmist's lament: “*Behold, I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*” (Ps51:5). But she did not provide his eternal soul – that had been God's domain. What **has** been materially procreated results in what Paul describes as “the body of this death” (Rom7:24YLT). “**This** death” for he is referring to what he had been describing

in that passage – the willingness to do good and adhere to the spirit of God’s law on the one hand; the inability consistently to practice it in view of “the law in the bodily members” on the other. The resulting transgression results in a defilement of the conscience leading to “death”, being a disruption in the access to the One who is the source of “life” – that abundance of spiritual Life Jesus came to give (Jn10:10 cf. Rom8:13). And through the Saviour’s **death** He provided what was needed for those His Father has chosen for His Son (Jn6:44): even *“the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God **to cleanse your conscience from dead works so as to serve the living God**”* (Heb9:14).

Applying the above to our theses, in terms of #29 (interpreting “spirit” as “Spirit”) I have already cited a verse in which the human spirit is understood by most bible translators to be the Holy Spirit. That is Rom8:13 and there are two others quoted above under “Bible References”. The one pertaining to the fruit of the spirit (thesis #30) is particularly important and is one I find especially irksome – for two reasons. Firstly, it is both observable and biblical that those who are not Christian are well able to produce good fruit. For acts of compassion, courage, bravery, endurance and the like **are** good fruit. To imply even indirectly that man by nature is incapable of such is abhorrent. I know from personal experience that such teaching can poison the soul – in my case regarding my attitude and behaviour in my Calvinist days towards my loving, caring but non-Christian parents.

Secondly, even in the case of the Christian, it is not the Spirit’s good fruit, it is the believer’s – the efflux of his or her own human spirit. Clearly, God the Holy Spirit’s fruit would be good, perfect in fact. Man’s rarely is – but it is his own and can be a blessing to others. In which case God delights in it and shall reward it as if it were performed to succour Christ Himself (Mt25:37-40). [The Mt25 “sheep” were actually justified by “faith” which I have explained elsewhere]. What Paul is contrasting in Gal5 is the fruit of the human spirit contrasted with that of the flesh (thesis #31). As for Jesus’ own teaching,

*“let your light should shine before people in such a way that they may see **your** good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Mt5:16).* Glorify the Father indeed, for though you or I may perform good works, it is a result of the grace given us to do it. But we, of ourselves and in accordance with our own will, perform the good. The Greek text does not lend itself to be interpreted as alluding to the Holy Spirit’s **enabling** as many understand it, it is either the human spirit or Holy Spirit’s **produce** that is being referred to. Likewise, when Jesus speaks of “trees” producing good or bad fruit, it is clearly **people** he is referring to, not God or the power of God within them (e.g., Mt7:17-19).

A cause for boasting? By no means. *“What do you possess that you have not **already received**? And if you receive it, why would you boast as if you had not received it? (1Cor4:7).* **What** has been received? The light of Christ in the spirit God gives to all at birth and that returns to Him at physical death (Eccles12:7; Jn1:9KJV). For unlike lesser creatures, *“God formed man of the dust of the ground **and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life** and man became a living soul” (Gen2:7).*

But the main point being made here is that grace (in this context being the benevolent enabling of God) is not restricted to the Christian but is present in measure in all who have a functioning spirit (thesis#32). However, not all **do** possess a functioning spirit or a working conscience (theses#6-10), hence the three soteriological categories being outlined. In terms of category three in the context of Rom7, there can be no inner tension for the twice dead (Jude1:12), merely a scary serenity – spirit and flesh have become united in evil. For the flesh like everyone by nature is “dead in trespasses and sins” whilst the spirit and its faculty of conscience has been rendered insensitive (Greek: *κεκαυστηριασμένων* -1Tim4:2). The seed of their humanity no longer **remains** (1Jn3:9); God’s image has been obliterated. And though they may not believe in such a being, they have, like Cain, joined the devil’s party (1Jn3:12). This scripturally subliminal mystery of evil actually works to

humanity's advantage (for our Sovereign God has superintended it). Why that is the case would take considerably more explaining. The Little Book of Providence and some later theses will expand on the matter, but here's a pointer from Scripture: Heb2:10 🤔.

Note#1 – Come, listen to my ditty:

"A snake and trees,

Aug's twos for threes,

Disaster now at last shall please"

קִיְיָ

*Note#2 – In terms of the bulk of humanity being neither elect nor cursed, this has effectively been the case since the Flood. **One** of the sixteen postdiluvian ancestral lines was cursed, stemming from the lastborn son (Canaan) of Ham who had exposed his father's nakedness; **one** was the elect patriarchal line stemming from the firstborn son of Noah's firstborn son leading down through a line of firstborns to Abraham; whilst the remaining **fourteen of the sixteen** postdiluvian national patriarchs retained the blessing imparted to Noah and his family on leaving the ark but were **not the elective line** of firstborns from which Abraham was drawn. God takes no pleasure in destroying anyone (Ezek18:23); He wishes rather to redeem all that **can** be redeemed within humanity but does not intend that all should go on to marry His Son. That is a role*

for which proportionately few are being prepared, still less shall be found worthy, having “overcome” (Rev3:4 & 19:7).

THESIS 33

Thesis #33 of 95 - The guiding principle or engrained law within the human's spirit is the conscience

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Rom2:15 – *(Gentiles) show the work of the **Law written in their hearts**, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts either accusing or defending (their actions).*

Rom7:23 – *But I see a **different law in the members of my body**, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.*

Jn1:9 – *(Christ) was the true Light which **gives light to every man** coming into the world (NKJV/KJV).*

COMMENTS

Like Paul in Rom7 (vv15-25), this thesis is contrasting the law of the human spirit with what the apostle refers to as the “law of the bodily members”. Clearly, the latter law must pertain to the brain, for the bodily members in themselves cannot possess moral law. With that in mind, the language in Rom7:23 quoted above is particularly interesting. For Paul writes that the law in his body “wages war against the law **of my mind**”. What “mind” can he be referring to? It cannot be the brain – that gives rise to “the law of the bodily members” with which his mind is at enmity. What I mean is, a man’s eyes see a beautiful woman – he lusts after her. His eyes see desirable, luxurious objects – he craves them and envies those who possess them. But of course, it’s not really the eyes – it’s the brain that processes the images they capture.

This will appear to be stating the obvious, but bear with me, the implications have significance to what recent posts have

been covering: the three rather than two components of man and the three rather than two soteriological categories of the soul. For answering my own question, it is the mind of the human **spirit** which Paul is saying is at war with the mind that controls the body. The “law” (or motivating principle) that governs the body is the brain; the “law” governing the spirit is the conscience. **And it is God’s Law** (Rom2:15 above), to which even those who do not know the Creator in a religious sense nevertheless defer. Their consciences either approve or accuse them with respect to a particular action (Rom2:15b). And as the previous verse affirms, they often do **by nature** the things contained in God’s Law. They often suppress the urge to lust after another woman and remain faithful to their wives; they may observe luxuries they do not possess but remain content and thankful for what they have. As a result, they are at peace with themselves. However, when they knowingly transgress, they develop “a guilty conscience”. However, as considered in the previous post, there is a category of person who does **not** possess such a guiding principle, for their spirit is dead and their conscience fails to function. For like Cain they are not “of God” (1Jn3:12; cf. Rev10:7). But as Paul affirms, especially in Rom2 and Rom7, that is not man by nature, Christian or otherwise. Hence there are three soteriological categories with distinct moral characteristics and divergent eternal destinies.

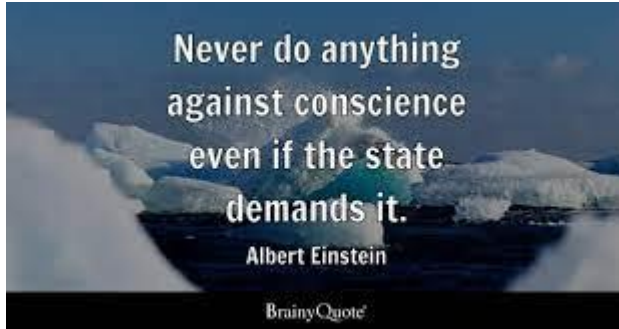
The mind of the spirit

Subsequent posts/theses will focus on the conscience itself – what I am principally drawing attention to in this post concerns the **two** minds within man that Paul alludes to in Romans7. But so in effect does Jesus in His teaching on the subject. The self-mutilation passages recorded in Matthew5:28-30 and Mark9:43-48 are referring to the need to control the bodily members so that the soul or “heart” is not polluted. It is clearly allegorical for it is obvious that cutting off an arm does not make someone a better person: they will still find a way to steal if that is their inclination. Jesus is highlighting the need for a disciple to keep his bodily members under tight control otherwise the whole person (soul) will be damaged and require

post-mortem purification (i.e., salting – earlier post). However, the key point I am making regarding Jesus' teaching **pertains to His use of reflexive pronouns**: "If your eye **offends you** pluck it out; if your arm **ensnares you** hack it off" etc. As with the apostle's teaching, this pertains to the disparate moral dispositions of spirit/heart and body. The "you" that is offended, ensnared or led into sin is the spirit/soul/heart, being that which is from God and survives physical death; the offenders or ensnarers are your bodily members driven by the physical senses processed through the brain pertaining to the temporary earthly tent **or vessel**.

Again, it may appear inane to mention it, but it is something that eluded my thinking prior to the revelations I received. That is that the brain, being part of the mortal body is buried or incinerated at physical death – yet that part of us that continues into eternity clearly has a mind of its own, even before any resurrection. For it is the body **including the brain** that Paul and Peter refer to as our vessel or tent. And what usually is more important in everyday life – the vessel or **what it contains**? In anthropological terms, the precious content of the earthly vessel is the eternal soul and spirit. In terms of our time on the current earth, what differentiates the Christian from everyone else is that the believer has been provided with the spiritual resources to "possess **his own vessel** in sanctity and honour" (1Thes4:4). And by cooperating with divine grace the Christian is enabled to "**put to death the deeds of the body**" (Rom8:13). That is so as to Live, love and serve the living God even whilst in mortal flesh – and to have souls ready prepared for something still more unspeakably glorious in the ages to come (Rev3:21).

THESIS 34



or the Church for that matter...

Thesis #34 of 95 - The conscience reflects the light of the incarnate Word/Logos that is diffused within every soul that comes into the world

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Jn1:9 (NKJV) – *That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world*

Col1:16 – *By Christ were all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or authorities— **all things have been created through Him and for Him.***

COMMENTS

The previous theses affirmed that the human's spirit is planted by God and will one day return to Him. It would therefore be surprising if it did not include A BLUEPRINT FOR HUMAN BEHAVIOUR. And so it does: the law of God written on the "heart" (Rom2:15). This divine blueprint manifests itself in the faculty of CONSCIENCE. It is also described (but often mistranslated) as the light of Christ that enlightens every man coming into the world (Jn1:9). That translation is suggested by

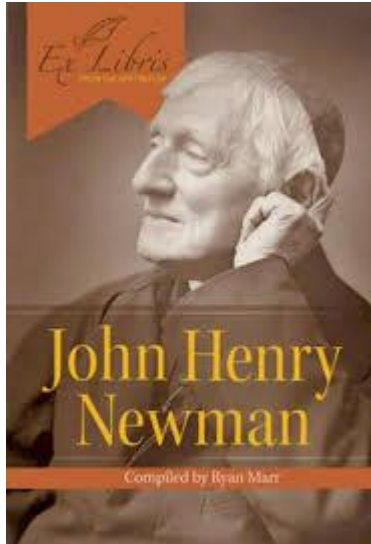
the Greek word order; apart from which it is hardly likely that John writing in the late first century would be informing his readers that the Light (Christ) “is coming” into the world” (e.g. NIV NASB). As with certain translations of Rom2:14-15 regarding the innate working of conscience, it is an attempt to obscure any positive role Scripture might ascribe to “natural law”.

Particularly in this context, natural law is not alluding to “Mother Nature” but to the very law of Christ. For all things, INCLUDING NATURE HERSELF and the precious human soul/spirit were created by the pre-incarnate Christ as Logos, through Him and for Him (Col1:16). Amongst the earliest Church Fathers such as Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, this principle was articulated in terms of the divine Logos (Word) whom they recognized had provided every age, race and each individual with seeds of divine truth – the “Logos spermatikos”, leading everyone to some knowledge of God and His law, however fragmentary. Origen specifically regarded the seed of reason provided to all men equipping them with a measure of wisdom and justice as the essence of Christ Himself, as did Justin Martyr (ref#1).

From such a perspective Christianity does not supersede natural law but rather builds on it. Even pagan literature, philosophy and mythology contain wisdom that could be regarded as a preparation for the gospel, and that is how the apostle Paul utilized it. For example, he drew upon a Greek poet Epimenides and a Greek philosopher Aratus in his sermon in Athens (Acts17:26-28). Such insights as they had in turn had sprung from the Light of Christ provided to all people. Whilst that light will have been fragmentary, in those who encounter Christ through the gospel it should fill the whole being and radiate out to the world.

*Ref#1 The first apology of Justin Martyr
chap. 46*

THESES 35, 36 AND 37



*Thesis #35 of 95 – In taking heed to **conscience** one is effectively responding to something or Someone superior to oneself*

Thesis #36 of 95 – Conscience is therefore a sufficient object of faith, being man's positive response to the divine revelation he has received

Thesis #37 of 95 – Those who defer to the dictates of their conscience are exercising a form of godly fear

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Heb11:6 *Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for the one who comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He proves to be One **who rewards those who seek Him.***

Rom2:15 *(Gentiles] demonstrate **the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience** testifying and their thoughts either accusing or else defending (a particular action).*

Ps51:5 *I was formed in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

COMMENTS

Conscience is the eluded medium of effectual common grace and pertains to the human's spirit, also largely eluded since the time of Augustine. Conscience pertains to natural law, and in the absence of a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ is "*the impression of a divine Light within us, a participation of the eternal law in the rational creature*" [ref#1]. As such, conscience as **the universal revelation of God**, anterior to the Gospel and supreme over all other human faculties provides everyone with "**a clear and sufficient object of faith**" [ref#2]. The quotations are from an earlier and far more scholarly Calvinist-turned-Catholic, John Henry Newman (pictured) – and he was right. For "faith" in its essence is man's positive response to what has been revealed to him from God, be it innately through his spiritual faculties or religiously through a creed. Either way, one comes to discern the nature of right and wrong and senses a benefit in practicing the former to be at peace with oneself. As Newman also observed, the cardinal truth that conscience teaches is that God rewards the good and punishes the wayward; again, a facet of faith as the bible defines it (Heb11:6).

The faculty derives from the fact that the **human spirit** is created in God's image and has been enlightened by Christ (Jn1:9KJV). In contrast, the vessel that temporarily houses our spiritual essence is drawn to worldly lust like a magnet. For unlike the God-given spirit it was conceived in sin and shaped in iniquity (Ps51:5). But by habitually taking heed to the dictates of conscience, the soul/spirit is responding to something greater than itself. Hence such a person is regarded as exercising faith in God and so is justified through the merits of Christ's atonement.

For by habitually taking heed to the dictates of conscience, the soul/spirit is effectively relating positively to something, ultimately to **Someone** superior to itself. Hence the person is regarded as exercising faith in God and so is justified through the merits of Christ's faithfulness (Note#1).

QUOTATION REFERENCES

#1 John Henry Newman: *"Grammar of Ascent"*

#2 Ibid.

NOTE

#1 Greek: *"ek pisteos Christou"* – as in Rom3:22, Gal2:16; Gal3:22, where it is usually (inappropriately) translated as if referring to a believer's faith in Christ rather than Christ's own faithfulness (to His redemptive mission).

THESIS 38

Thesis #38 of 95 - Regardless of race or creed everyone who fears God and seeks to do what is right is accepted by Him

BIBLE REFERENCES

Acts10:4 – Cornelius looked at (the angel) intently and he became terrified, and said, “What is it, lord?” And the angel said to him, “Your prayers and charitable gifts have ascended as a memorial offering before God”.

Acts10:34-35 – *Peter said, “I most certainly understand that God is not One to show partiality but **in every nation whoever fears God and does what is right is acceptable to Him.***

Heb9:14 – *How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, **cleanse your conscience from dead works in order to serve the living God?***

COMMENTS

This thesis is simply a restatement of Acts10:35 (above). The background to Peter’s proclamation was the revelation he had received concerning how God regarded the Gentiles that he recounts in Acts11:5-9. That had led to his meeting with the Roman centurion Cornelius. He and his household were described as devout, God-fearing, generous and prayerful. ***This Gentile non-Christian’s good works and prayers had been acknowledged by God*** (Acts10:4). Cornelius was already participating in the cause of God’s chosen people “giving generously to Jewish causes”.

The case of Cornelius is perhaps the clearest example in the New Testament of a non-Christian who feared God, acted

virtuously and was accepted in God's sight. It is an account that puts paid to the "Reformed" notion I long held that God is at best uninterested in human good works. On the contrary, God delights in human efforts to please Him, help others and do what is right, exemplified by Jesus' acceptance of the Mt25 "sheep" who had shown kindness to those in need. As I showed when commenting on that passage, it is not the works themselves that justify a person before God but the "faith" from which they spring. And as demonstrated in the last few theses/posts, the very act of responding positively to the dictates of conscience is itself an act of faith – in view of that faculty's spiritual nature (cf. Heb9:14), from Whom it is derived and the Law to which it witnesses.

THESIS 39

Thesis #39 of 95 - "Justification" or acceptance before God within the inclusive Universal Covenant is by evincing a God-given quality (faith/faithfulness), manifested by the exercise of compassionate love

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Gen4:7(Masoretic) – If you (Cain) do well, **will you not be accepted?** And if you do not do well, Sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”

Gal5:6 – For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but **faith working through love**.

COMMENTS

It took a full chapter of my book to explain what this all about. I will quote a few paragraphs which summarize what is meant by the Universal Covenant and suggest reasons why it has been eluded by theologians.

“Theologians cannot rely on a single passage in Genesis but must compare Scripture with Scripture, and the concept of a Universal Covenant for fallen humanity implicit in the Cain and Abel story (explicit utilizing the Masoretic text) does not fit well with much else as it has been historically and universally interpreted ever since Christian doctrine was systematized. Moreover, the

Greek Septuagint (LXX) renders the key verse about God's warning to Cain differently and that is the version to which most of the apostles and the early Church referred. The Hebrew (Masoretic Text) is no less reliable but it was not utilized by the apostolic Church, the Greek language being lingua franca for the Roman Empire and therefore the Greco-Roman Church.

"It is therefore no surprise that the apostles do not make direct reference to Gen4:7 in this context whilst the early Fathers always quote from the LXX, which refers to Cain's incorrect division of his offering and that he should "be at peace and rule over him"; the "him" or "it" presumably referring to the devil. Such obscurity will have been an intentional veiling on God's part regarding an understanding of a Universal Covenant, yet it is not dependant on this verse alone but can be deduced from Cain's punishment and curse in which he became excluded from the nature of the relationship with God that his brother, his fallen parents AND CAIN HIMSELF experienced before the fratricide (Gen4:11-14).

"But the main reason for what in a dual sense might be termed "the Lost Covenant" [It has been lost and concerns "the lost"] pertains to the nature of the Bible itself. This divinely inspired library of books was never intended to be a comprehensive account of God's creation. For example, relatively little is disclosed about the angelic realm from

which evil had sprung and with which mankind will one day participate. Scripture's focus is the salvation history for the world centred on Christ and His peculiar peoples – the Jewish nation and the Church.

“Hence Abraham is a vastly more significant figure than Abel. Both were representatives within covenants, but Abraham initiated the exclusive covenant by which God would work from within through an elect people to enlighten and reconcile the world to Himself. The inclusive covenant in which Abel was declared to be righteous and Cain defaulted does not have a direct role in that salvation story. That is firstly because it pertains to that which is intuitive, so is not dependant on special revelation, and secondly because individuals are not “saved” through it, i.e. they are not cleansed from sin and spiritually empowered to maintain in life the integrity of the intellectual vessel the soul currently inhabits (1Thes4:4).

“The Universal Covenant determines a person's post-mortem fate, but also prior to that his involvement or otherwise with Satan as an agent within God's mysterious providential role for evil (chapter six). That is why the type of those rejected from it being Cain was brand-marked and protected rather than destroyed. These issues are, as it were, the unilluminated side of the revelation globe, pertaining to the final Mystery of God.

“Consequently, biblical theologians have for ever been attempting to fit three square pegs (soteriological categories) into two round holes (soteriological outcomes). Hence the numerous, seemingly intractable tensions in Scripture typified by the “narrow way” leading to life that few will attain on the one hand and frequent intimations, not least by Paul, of God’s broader scale intentions to reconcile all redeemable humanity to Himself on the other.

“It is also to be observed that Adam had three sons as did our postdiluvian Patriarch Noah, and from these have sprung all humanity: Adam’s son Seth and Noah’s son Shem represent the elect line; Adam’s son Abel and Noah’s son Japheth the “righteous” within the Universal Covenant whilst Adam’s son Cain and Noah’s son Ham were the accursed defaulters albeit that only one of Ham’s sons was cursed (Canaan) as Ham had already received a blessing.

“Once we arrive at the Abrahamic Covenant, Isaac represents the elect line resulting in Israel whilst Abraham’s other son Ishmael who was also blessed by God and remained in His favour and care was not elected to the exclusive Covenant of Promise. Yet such as he, representing most of humanity, remain within the inclusive Covenant of life from which Cain defaulted provided they do not follow in his way (Jude11).

“Such multi-dimensional effectual grace (innate and celestial) can only be

distinguished and systemized within a sacramental and synergetic soteriological framework so it is no wonder that such a schema has yet to be established, for on the one hand it undermines some early (fourth/fifth century) Catholic biblical theological groundwork whilst on the other is incompatible with the Protestant conviction of total depravity, sola fide and sola gratia. The Reformed concept of “common grace” is not linked to the Atonement, does not pertain to the individual and is deemed ineffectual for forgiveness or the avoidance of perdition.

“Since Vatican II through the Spirit’s prompting the Catholic Church has effectively acknowledged a third soteriological category being the “people of good will” who do not find their way into the Church but will ultimately be accepted into God’s eternal Kingdom. What has been lacking for the last fifty years from the Catholic side is a workable biblical underpinning for such a proposition, for that cannot be provided without substantial doctrinal deconstruction involving contradicting earlier conciliar pronouncements that the Church deems to be immutable”.

[Excerpt from The Little Book of Providence – chapter two]

THESIS 40

Thesis #40 of 95 - Justification within the exclusive covenant sealed with Christ's blood is by faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Heb12:24 *Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.*

Heb10:29 *How much more severe punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the **blood of the covenant** by which he was consecrated, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?*

Jn6:44 *No one can come to Me **unless the Father who sent Me draws him**, and I will raise him up on the last day.*

Acts13:48 *When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and **those who had been appointed to eternal life** believed.*

Eph1:5 *He predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself, **according to the good pleasure of His will.***

Eph2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is **the gift of God.***

Jn15:2a *Every branch **in (Christ)** that does not bear fruit, God shall take away.*

COMMENTS

What is being drawn attention to in this thesis is the **exclusive and elective** nature of the New Testament Covenant sealed in Christ's blood, referred to by Paul as a Covenant of Promise. Such also was the Old Testament Covenant that God initiated through Abraham, its exclusive nature also evident from the fact that Abraham's son Ishmael,

who had been blessed by both God and Abraham and circumcised by the latter, was not admitted. It was the offspring of Ishmael's half-brother **Isaac** who were to be the children of promise, and such is the Church today (Gal4:28).

But as the above biblical references indicate (to which more could be added), those incorporated into the body of Christ are there, not through their own choice or merit, but by God's good pleasure. In Paul's language they were predestined; in Luke's language, appointed; according to Jesus, drawn by His Father. Truly, if these were the only covenants between God and humanity within each testament period, it would (to put it mildly) be a problem in terms of what it would say about God, His providence, His nature and His justice. I am here to affirm that this is simply **not** the case. ***The Covenant of Promise does not concern "who goes to heaven when they die" but who shall have a joint inheritance with the Lord of Glory.***

The previous post drew attention to a transhistorical **inclusive** covenant eluded by the churches' theologians, whilst the brief extract from my book below places both covenants within their providential context:

"Everyone in God's covenants enters them by grace alone, i.e., divine favour and generosity not dependant on merit. Unmerited grace clearly applied to a Jewish baby born within the Abrahamic Covenant; equally to the Christian baby baptized by the Church and incorporated within the Covenant of Christ's blood. Likewise, to the adult convert, divinely appointed to eternal life (Acts13:38) having been given faith to apprehend the gospel of Christ (Eph2:8) and go on to receive Christian baptism. And the human baby, starting with Cain as the world's first infant, freely incorporated within the Universal Covenant of life through the two-way age-enduring merits of Christ's

*righteous act that universally nullifies
Adam's act of disobedience (Rom5:18).*

"The issue then becomes how one retains the benefits of that covenant as opposed to defaulting. The answer is faith or faithfulness [same word in biblical Greek] evidenced by fruit. The Jew who turned from JHWE to idolatry defaults his covenantal privileges; those in Christ who fail to produce fruit may remain in the Church but will not participate in the marriage of the Lamb, for every branch in Christ that fails to bear fruit will be removed (nota bene: Jn15:2). Members of the human race who fail to produce any fruit in the form of compassionate love (agape) like Cain and the Matthew 25 "goats" remain on earth but become alienated from God's loving care; they have a new master to look after their interests, and at least as far ahead as Scripture permits us to foresee will not be incorporated within God's eternal Kingdom but will receive post-mortem punishment"

[Extract from The Little Book of
Providence chapter two]

THESIS 41

Thesis #41 of 95: Paul's teaching regarding Law and grace in his epistles to the Galatian and Roman churches is in the context of Jewish infiltrators who insisted that Christian believers complied with works and rituals pertaining to the Torah such as circumcision, observing festivals and the like. On the contrary, said Paul, justification within the new covenant required faithfulness towards Christ, not compliance with "deeds of the Law"

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Gal4:9-10 *How is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? **You observe days and months and seasons and years!***

COMMENTS

This wordier thesis relates to what has become known in Christian academic circles as "the New Perspective on Paul", aka the Sanders Revolution after the theologian who developed it. That was a product of the recent scholarly interest that has been shown in studying the Bible in the context of other ancient texts – aided by the **discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls**. Those manuscripts threw new light on the various forms of Judaism that prevailed in the first century, resulting in new perspectives on Paul's teaching arising, particularly within Protestant academia. These have considerably reshaped the understanding of justification by faith in the apostle's thought in the minds of many biblical scholars, although the development has had less impact at ground level within independent Evangelical churches. And no wonder, for it challenges what so many there understand to be the central focus of gospel salvation. But then so does virtually everything I have been setting out in these 95 theses and The Little Book of Providence.

Once again it is a case of the principal architect of Western theology Augustine misreading Paul and Luther distorting the

picture still further – in this case interpreting what Paul wrote about first century Judaism, law, faith, works and covenant. Hence the radical, alien-to-most synopses that I have been setting out, which as I stated recently are not entirely new revelation (which they could never be), but new insights as to how the bible should be interpreted. And as explained in a recent post, the extra-canonical Book of Enoch, written not for the Church through her history but as its opening verse affirms, for the blessing of Christians who would live to experience the tribulations and Parousia, foretold that such a process would occur at this time. And it could not have happened before all the necessary manuscripts, research materials and suitable propagation facilities became available. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the internet, digital printing and (I believe) the working of the Holy Spirit have seen to all that.

THESIS 42

Thesis #42 of 95 - Natural law in its Christian anthropological context pertains to the functioning of conscience and is normative for humane living and acceptance with God

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Rom2:14-16 – When Gentiles who do not have the Law **perform BY NATURE (the requirements of) the Law** [φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν], these, though not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the **Law written in their hearts, their conscience** testifying and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending (particular actions), with respect to that day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of mankind through Christ Jesus.

Rom13:9 For this, “You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,” and **every other commandment is summed up in this saying**, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Rom13:10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore **love is the fulfilment of the Law**.

Gal5:14 For the **whole Law is fulfilled in one word**, in the statement, “You shall **LOVE** your neighbor as yourself.”

COMMENTS

The previous thesis showed that the Covenants of Promise initiated through Abraham in the Old Testament and Jesus Christ in the New do not determine the destination of the soul after brain death. That, as exemplified in the definitive final judgement parable in Mt25 (sheep and goats) is not related to religious faith or practice at all, but to fulfilling the spirit of

God's Law, which as Paul asserts is focussed on love for neighbour (verses above). Likewise, in the Mt25 passage, God and religion are not so much as mentioned, only other people and how the "sheep" and "goats" respectively related to them. But herein lies the mystery: God, His Law and the very Atonement of Christ are, albeit subliminally, bound up within the divine judgement being made.

That would take a lot of explaining, and the first two posts linked below point the way. How this and the rest of my 95 theses fit in with the bible's teaching as a whole has been set out in The Little Book of Providence. The Mt25 judgements can be said to pertain to "natural law" which in view of what has just been said about them also being a function of the Atonement might appear to be something of a misnomer. The description relates to what Paul was writing about in Romans 2 concerning Gentiles performing *by nature* things contained within **God's Law** even though they did not materially possess it. It had been "written in their heart" and reflected in their conscience.

Given that Augustine of Hippo was the architect and primary influencer of Christian theology in the West, it is no surprise that my assertions concerning natural law will appear alien to many Christians today. However, the writings of 3rd century Church historian Eusebius and 2nd century Irenaeus indicate that such was unlikely to have been the case in the Church of *their* day. That blog also outlined how those same men witnessed to the remarkable *degree of unity* of essential doctrine and praxis that existed within the pre-Nicaean Church. It is surely another reason why the writings of the earliest Church Fathers should be examined carefully by genuine seekers of the truth.

THESIS 43

Thesis #43 of 95 - Biblical salvation is provided to a specially chosen people for them to relate to God whilst in mortal flesh and function within His royal priesthood. For such they require spiritual renewal and ongoing sanctification through a mystical participation with Christ

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

1Pet2:9 *But you are a **chosen people, a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.*

Jn6:44 *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and **I will raise him up on the last day.***

Acts13:48 *When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and those **who had been appointed** to eternal life believed.*

Jn6:54 *He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, **and I will raise him up on the last day.***

Phil3:13-14 *I do not regard myself as possessing it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the **prize of the high calling of God** in Christ Jesus.*

2Cor4:17 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal **weight of glory.***

Rev19: 7 *Let's rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and **His bride has prepared herself.***

Rev3:21 ***He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.***

Rev10:10 *I took the little book from the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey but when I had eaten it, my gut became bitter.*

COMMENTS

Whilst the gospel of Jesus Christ was intended to be preached to the whole world, as a result of historical cultural and religious formation, exacerbated by ecclesiological division and apostasy, relatively few have heard a faithful account of the gospel. And of those only the proportional few that God has chosen/predestined/appointed to eternal life have effectually responded. The above verses refer, and they make clear that those who **do** respond and persevere in the faith shall experience inestimable glory. In Paul's words such are the "*heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, providing that is we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him*" (Rom8:17). That such glory should be on offer to fallen humanity (Col1:27) is breathtakingly extraordinary, but then so is the notion that the vast majority who are not called and enabled by God's grace to attain such sublimity are to be condemned to hell, which is what so many Christians believe.

That prospect with its dire implications to God's providential care, loving nature and equitable justice results from a misunderstanding of what the bible actually means by "salvation". This thesis has briefly defined biblical salvation, but only its barest bones. The remaining 94 theses should help, some more recent ones having explained what salvation is **from** and what it is **for**. But for exactly how such soteriology is to be squared with the teaching of the bible as a whole, refer to The Little Book of Providence.

THESIS 44

Thesis #44 of 95: Acceptance as a subject of God's kingdom at death and final judgement does not require adherence to a religious creed, simply the exercise of compassion arising from the promptings of conscience

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Mt25:40 *The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did (these acts of kindness) to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.*

Gal5:14 *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word within in the statement, "You shall LOVE your neighbour as yourself."*

COMMENTS

To the befuddlement of many a theologian, Jesus' "sheep and goats" parable to which this thesis refers is the NT's most substantial and effectively its *definitive passage on final judgement*. In the past I also regarded that passage as an almighty fly in the ointment as far as my earlier (Reformed Evangelical) understanding of gospel salvation was concerned. For a start there is no reference to religious faith or practice whatsoever. What's more it appeared to be teaching justification by works.

Actually, it isn't as such, but it would take much of chapter three of my book to delineate the matter in full whilst at the same time demonstrating that neither Paul nor any other contributor to Scripture contradict this teaching. It pertains to the context of justification, gospel salvation and the Church within broader benign providence. That is the central theme of "The Little Book of Providence". So, for the purpose of this thesis, I'll quote a brief passage from the aforementioned

chapter three “Faith and Justification” which points towards the solution:

“It will appear to some that Jesus is here teaching justification by works in Matthew 25:31-45. Rather it is justification through faith by reference to works. The passage makes no mention of how consistently or perfectly the “sheep” showed compassion. They just demonstrated they possessed it. The sheep were justified by exercising it regardless of measure. They therefore demonstrated they possessed the quality called faith whose product is agape, being the essence of true humanity. On the other hand, faith alone if it be merely a passive belief, trust or reliance on someone or something is dead if it does not result in positive action. The “sheep” had not been passive; they showed compassion because they had responded positively to their “heart” motivating them to act in such a way out of sympathy, empathy and to be at peace with themselves”.

Jesus’ sheep and goats parable was thereby affirming that final salvation is not all of grace; there must be fruit. Yet it is entirely DEPENDENT on grace since the “sheep” are accepted by exercising the quality called faith; being an innate faculty provided through common grace, rather than having perfectly fulfilled God’s law or lived a sinless life. That would be justification by works. So, at the universal level justification is granted on the basis of such common faith. It is a positive response to

conscience (the light of Christ in the spirit). It is evinced by compassion through the kindly favour (grace) by which pardon for sin has been granted to all producing the fruit of faith through the all-sufficient merits of Christ's atonement.

[Excerpt from The Little Book of
Providence chapter three]

THESIS 45

Thesis #45 of 95 - In showing deference to the dictates of their conscience, even avowed agnostics and atheists unknowingly exercise faith in Christ [as Logos]. They may have cause to mourn for their sin and disbelief but will readily submit to Him when He is made known to them

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Rev1:7 *Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and **all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him.***

Jn1:9(KJV) *That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

Rom2:15 (Gentiles) *show the work of the **Law written in their hearts**, their conscience testifying and their thoughts either accusing or else defending (particular actions).*

Gal5:14 *For the **whole law is fulfilled in one word**, in the statement, “You shall **LOVE** your neighbour as yourself”.*

1Jn4:7 *Let us love one another; for love is from God, and **everyone who loves has been born of God** and knows God*

COMMENTS

The faith referred to in this thesis is what I along with some of the earliest Church Fathers have described as common faith (cited in next paragraph). Spiritual faith is man's positive response to God as He is in various ways revealed to the individual. At the universal level it is most definitively a **positive response to conscience**. Given that the human's spirit is planted by God and will one day return to Him it would be surprising if it did not include a blueprint for human behaviour, and so it does:

the law of God written on the “heart” (Rom2:15). That is also described (but sometimes mistranslated) as the light of Christ that enlightens every man coming into the world (Jn1:9). [In terms of the translation, it is hardly likely that John writing in the late first century would be informing his readers that the Light (Christ) “is coming into the world” (as per NASB, NIV)].

The atheist and agnostic, whenever they perform what they believe to be right, not merely for the praise of others or to be accepted within society are effectively exercising faith. They are responding positively to God (actually to the will of Christ as *Logos*) as He has revealed Himself and His law (the principles of sound reason and humane living) in their conscience. In that instant, they are choosing to do a good, for in their innermost being they sense it is good and should be practiced. It is not entirely altruistic for they receive inner gratification by performing it, for in their inner being they are concurring with a natural precept which is ultimately an eternal law. It is no different from a Christian receiving a measure of peace when he knows he is being obedient to Christ’s will; it is how conscience functions. In both cases it is a response of faith.

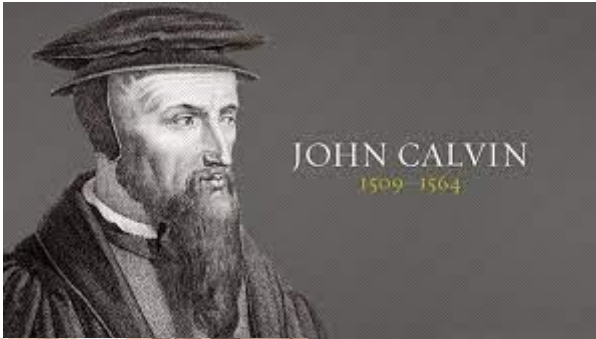
In the language of second century Christianity, it is that ***common faith*** which lies beneath as a foundation that is built upon and consummated in those who come to faith in Christ (ref#1). Such faith or faithfulness (same word in Biblical Greek) is shown to be present when love (*agape*) is exercised, being a genuine concern and care for another person, which is the heart of God’s law (Gal5:14). Since love is the efflux of faith, faith must be present for that love to flow out from it; love and faith being quite inseparable, faith being the agent of love and love being the product of faith.

A person is justified within the Universal Covenant by responding positively to God’s witness to them through creed or conscience regardless of the degree of accomplishment. Providing the person demonstrates *agape* they are accepted by God, for He knows that *agape* was derived from Him, being His Own nature (1Jn4:7). This aligns with Jesus’ teaching in

Matthew 25 concerning the sheep and goats considered in the previous post/thesis.

*Ref #1 E.g., Clement of Alexandria
(A.D.153-217) The Stromata Book V chap. 1*

THESIS 46



Thesis #46 of 95 – The Reformer John Calvin's description of little children by nature as "odious" and "an abomination to God" opposes the teaching of Christ

BIBLICAL QUOTATION

*Mt18:2-6 Jesus called a little child and set him among them, saying "Truly I say to you, unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. So whoever will humble himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such little child in My name, receives Me. But whoever causes one of these **little ones who believe in Me to sin**, it is better for him*

that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depths of the sea.

COMMENTS

This thesis alludes to a quotation from my one-time hero John Calvin: *“All men’s thoughts, inclinations and efforts are corrupt and viscous”,* even young infants being *“odious and an abomination to God; their very natures being a seed-bed of sin”* [*Institutes of Christian Religion – Second Book chap. 1 para 8*].

Such sentiments, intrinsic to the doctrine of “total depravity” are piously packaged and presented, claiming to exalt God’s grace whilst “trouncing man’s arrogant determination to in some way contribute to his own salvation”. Yet it is a doctrine that must delight Satan’s heart in view of what it implies about both divine and human nature. That is no doubt why his party has shown such displeasure that the Reformers’ ingenious fabrication is being systematically dismantled by yours truly.

The extent to which Calvin’s perspective on children opposes the teaching of Christ should be evident to anyone with a modicum of understanding of the Gospels. It will be the subject of the next post/thesis – in particular what the Lord was intimating in the passage I have quoted and highlighted from Mt18.

THESIS 47

THESIS #47 of 95 - In describing infants presented to Him as "little ones who believe in Me", Jesus was alluding to an internal witness of the light of Christ reflected in their God-given spirits/consciences, guaranteed in their case not (yet) to have been obscured or distorted by the lusts of the flesh or impurities of the mind

BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS

Mt18:2-6 *Jesus called a little child and set him among them, saying "Truly I say to you, unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. So, whoever will humble himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such little child in My name, receives Me. But whoever causes one of these **LITTLE ONES WHO BELIEVE IN ME** to sin, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depths of the sea.*

Mt6:22-23 *The (mind's) eye is the lamp of the body; so if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light. But if your (mind's) eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. So, if the light that is in you is darkness, how great **the** darkness!*

Rom2:14-15 *For when Gentiles who do not have the Law instinctively perform the requirements of the Law, these, though not having the Law are a law for themselves in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience testifying and their thoughts either accusing or else defending (particular actions).*

Jn6:44 *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*

1Tim2:4 *God our Saviour wishes for **all people** to be saved and to come to a recognition of the truth.*

Rom7:9 *I was alive without the law at one time; but when the commandment (i.e. an awareness of right and wrong) came, sin came to life, and I died.*

COMMENTS

This thesis is allied to the subject of the post before last on “common faith” – a concept alien to many Christians today but not to the earliest (pre-Augustinian) Church Fathers. The Christian’s “object of faith” is (or should be) the God of the bible, especially as He has been revealed through Jesus Christ. But as I have been at pains to point out, knowing Jesus Christ in a personal, saving manner is the province of those whom God the Father chooses to draw to Him (Jn6:44). [With respect to the previous post, that is something Calvin got right]. Yet that same Creator wishes **all** men, women and children to be healed and come to knowledge of the truth (1Tim2:4). That is why the light of Christ has been provided in the human spirit and conscience that all possess from birth (Jn1:9KJV; Rom2:15). So, at the universal level the object of faith is something innate. Yet it is still associated with Christ – **as Logos**. It is the inward eye of the spirit (Mt6:22-23 strictly NASB – see note #1). That inward eye is referenced by the conscience, by which those who do not know the Law of God as a creed become a law for themselves (Rom2:15)

In terms of our thesis, the above should provide a clue as to why Jesus described the little children who were brought to Him as “*little ones who believe in Me*”. I have included the preceding verses in the Mt6 citation, for **the context** makes it absolutely clear that Jesus is not on this occasion referring to His adult disciples that He also sometimes describes in such a way. Nor was He anticipating those infants who would go on to “receive Jesus as their personal Saviour” or become baptized Catholics. It was an inclusive observation concerning all young children who were placed into His loving embrace. Remember also that at that time his own chosen disciples scarcely

understood Who Jesus was, still less would little children have known Him to be the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Their simple “belief” in Jesus refers to what is innate and instinctive to all very young lives – the internal witness of the light of Christ (the Word/Reason – *Logos*) through Whom their souls were created. It is guaranteed in their case not (yet) to have been obscured or distorted by the lusts of the flesh or impurities of the mind, which when combined with a growing awareness of transgressing God’s law defiles the conscience and extinguishes Life (Rom7:9).

NOTE #1 re-Mt6:23 – “How great is **the** darkness” not “**that** darkness” (most translations). They obscure the fact that divine light is provided innately (aka natural law). Yet it still leaving man in a measure of darkness unless further aided by celestial grace. Then there is a third category whose mind’s spiritual eye is evil. Such are, like Cain, the children of the devil who have extinguished that light provided to all men (Jn1:9KJV) so as to be in **total** darkness – devoid of sound reason, conscience and integrity.

THESIS 48

*Thesis #48 of 95 - Those who show
compassion to the destitute are judged as
serving Christ and rewarded accordingly*

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Mt25:40 *The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'*

Gal5:6 *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but **faith working through love.***

Gal5:14 *For the **whole law is fulfilled in one word**, in the statement, "You shall **LOVE** your neighbour as yourself".*

Rom13:8 *Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for the one who **loves** his neighbor has fulfilled the Law.*

Rom13:10 *Love does no wrong to a neighbour – that is why love is the fulfilment of the Law*

1Jn4:7 *Let us love one another; for love is from God, and **everyone who loves has been born of God** and knows God.*

COMMENTS

This is another thesis relating to what I have described as "common faith" and its interrelationship with compassionate love – the above verses refer. Such "faith" is shown to be present when love (*agape*) is exercised, being a genuine concern and care for another person, which is the heart of God's law (Gal5:14). Since love is the efflux of faith (Gal5:6), faith must be present for that love to flow out from it; love and faith being quite inseparable, faith being the agent of love and love being the product of faith. A person is justified within the Universal Covenant by responding positively to God's

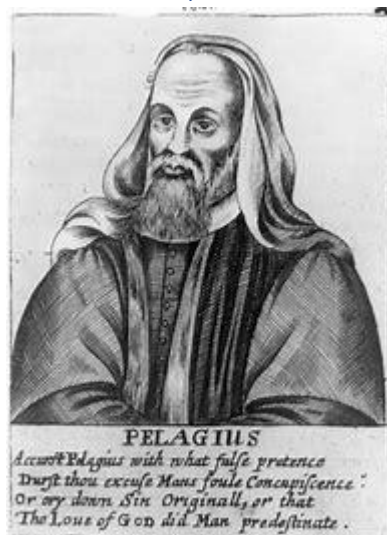
witness to them through creed or conscience regardless of the degree of accomplishment. Providing the person demonstrates *agape* they are accepted by God, for He knows that *agape* was derived from Him, being His Own nature (1Jn4:7). This aligns with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25 concerning the sheep and goats. In serving the weakest of humanity through any act of compassion, the "sheep" are regarded as serving Christ Himself even though they have no personal knowledge of Him:

"In truth I tell you in so far as you did this (act of kindness) to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to Me".

It will appear to some that Jesus is here teaching justification by works. But Matthew 25:31-45 is demonstrating justification through faith *with reference* to works. No mention is made of how consistently or perfectly the "sheep" showed compassion, they just demonstrated they possessed it and were justified by exercising it regardless of measure. They therefore demonstrated they **possessed the quality** called faith whose product is *agape*, being the essence of true humanity. On the other hand, faith alone if it be merely a passive belief, trust or reliance on something (or even Someone) is dead if it does not result in positive action. The "sheep" had not been passive; they showed compassion because they had responded positively to their "heart" motivating them to act in such a way out of sympathy, empathy and to be at peace with themselves. Jesus was thereby affirming that acceptance before God is not entirely a matter of grace for fruit must be produced. Yet it is entirely **dependent on** grace since the "sheep" are accepted by exercising the quality called faith, being an innate faculty provided through common grace. They will not have perfectly fulfilled God's law or lived a sinless life. So, at the universal level justification is granted on the basis of such common faith, being a positive response to conscience (the light of Christ in the spirit) evinced by compassion, through the kindly favour (grace) by which pardon for sin has been granted to all producing the fruit of faith through the all-sufficient merits of Christ's atonement.

Such divine magnanimity pertains to Who Jesus Christ is. During His earthly ministry He almost exclusively referred to Himself as the Son of Man. As Son of God, Jesus uniquely represented God to man, for He alone had been begotten of the Father. As Mary's Son, He uniquely represents members of the human race. You or I could never represent mankind as a whole, but Jesus does. So, when we show kindness to another, especially a person in need, we are regarded **by Christ** as serving Himself and shall be rewarded as such. It should not be such a surprise then that whenever the apostle Paul summarises **the requirements of God's Law**, such as in Gal5:14 and Rom13:8&10, religious service is never mentioned, only our dealings with our fellow man. Likewise, James describes love for neighbour as the Royal Law (Jam2:8), for when both apostles are rightly understood, they agree about everything. There is so much more that could be said on this subject, and it has been in the remaining theses. More importantly, these doctrines been synthesised with the teaching of the bible as a whole in The Little Book of Providence.

THESES 49, 50 AND 51



Thesis #49 of 95. Pelagius was right in believing that man possessed the innate spiritual faculties to perform good works such as exercising compassion towards his fellow man

Thesis #50 of 95. Pelagius was wrong if he believed that man possessed the innate spiritual faculties to live a sinless life or merit co-heirship with Christ

Thesis #51 of 95. Pelagius was wrong if he believed that any man could be saved in the gospel sense apart from being in a living cognisant relationship with Jesus Christ

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

1Cor9:24-27(NASB): *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, **but only one receives the prize?** Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. So, they do it to obtain a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore, I run in such a way as not to run aimlessly; I box in such a way, as to avoid hitting air; but **I strictly discipline my body** and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, **I myself will not be disqualified.***

Rev3:21 (NASB) *The one who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.*

1Thes5:23 (NASB) *May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be kept complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

COMMENTS

Pelagius (CE354-418) was a British-born theologian and monk who migrated to Rome around 380AD. Though not a priest, he became a highly regarded spiritual teacher for both clergy and laity. He was greatly distressed by the moral standards of the church and people of Rome and blamed their laxity on the doctrines of grace, especially as they had been fashioned by his contemporary (born the same year), Augustine of Hippo. That bishop in turn became the fiercest critic of Pelagius.

Both these men feature in my theses, for the dispute between the two was pivotal in the development of Christian theology thereafter, more particularly in the West. That cannot be examined in any detail here, merely a few comments on the three related theses stated above, with pointers to some earlier posts that deal with related issues.

What Pelagius got right

The first of the related theses (#49) affirms Pelagius to be broadly correct and Augustine profoundly in error regarding the underlying goodness of human nature. That is partly because Augustine unlike most of the earlier Fathers rejected

anthropological trichotomy – i.e., that a human being consisted of body, soul **and spirit** (1Thes5:23). The British theologian was right to affirm that man by nature is perfectly capable of performing that which is good and pleasing to God.

Such is supported by Jesus' teaching on final judgement in Mt25 and by Paul's statement that pagans who do not possess the Law can instinctively perform that which fulfils its requirements (Rom2:14NASB). This all pertains to "natural law", covered in an earlier post. Augustine's teaching in this area is more akin to that of mankind's Adversary than any reasonably minded human being. For He considered that man by nature could do "*absolutely no good thing, whether in thought or will, affection or in action*" ["On Rebuke and Grace – chapter 3].

That would be total depravity, a doctrine moderated to an extent within his Church's teaching but embraced and reinforced by the Protestant Reformers. For as Luther asserted in his introduction to the Heidelberg theses, he believed his former monastic patriarch Augustine to be "the Apostle Paul's most trustworthy interpreter".

What Pelagius got wrong

It needs to be said that little is known about what Pelagius actually believed and taught, for most of his writing was destroyed by the Catholic Church once they had denounced him as a heretic. But he certainly went too far if he taught that man is capable by his own efforts of avoiding sin or attaining what the New Testament means by salvation (Heb7:25). Such requires a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and access to the sacraments of grace. That, writes Paul, commences with "*the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*" (Tit3:5). It is followed up by regular participation in what the early Fathers, including Augustine himself, regarded as the central rite of the Church: the eucharistic sacrifice with its sacred species: the bread of Life and cup of salvation. Self-determination, discipline, even the most stringent asceticism apart from such means of grace will not raise a man to eternal life or enable him to attain the first resurrection.

What Pelagius **would** have recognized and emphasized is that such spiritual advancement is not through grace alone but requires personal effort and self-discipline. Observe carefully what Paul wrote in 1Cor9 (quoted above under “Biblical Reference”). If, as was the case for the first 28 years of my Christian life, it appears at odds with your understanding of gospel salvation, then scorned Pelagius was closer to the Kingdom than you currently are. For truly, such self-determined discipline **is** required along with the means of grace to attain “*the prize of the high calling of God*” (Phi3:14). That refers to co-heirship with Jesus Christ, no less; and the scarcely imaginable glories that attend it (Rev3:21).

Pelagius, if his views have been rightly represented, also failed to recognize that the Fall resulted in a radical disruption in the relationship between mankind and his Maker. In addition, that a vital part of human nature has indeed been corrupted – the temporary intellectual vessel the soul currently inhabits. A **part** of human nature I say, for as Paul declared but few appear to have understood him, “*Whilst I joyfully agree with the law of God in the inner person, I am aware of a different law in the parts of my body waging war against the law of my (spiritual) mind, making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my body's parts. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*” (Rom7:22-24).

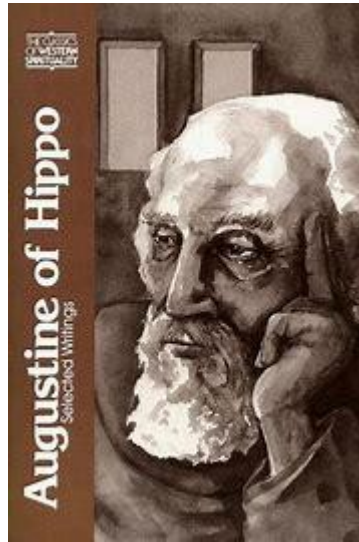
That cannot be Paul speaking of himself as a Christian, for in no way was the Apostle enslaved to the sins of the flesh; he was victorious through his association with Christ, the empowerment of the Spirit and determined self-discipline.

The solution

Many of the biblical tensions that arise from both Augustine's and Pelagius's polarized positions regarding the economy of grace, human nature and the freedom/bondage of the will can be resolved. But only once the mystery concerning the conflicting laws of flesh and spirit that Paul was outlining in Rom7 has been rightly interpreted. That subject was considered in more detail in my earlier post covering theses #29-#32. That in turn had to be reconciled with the rest of Scripture. Through

God's help I believe that such has been achieved – set out in the Little Book of Providence, available to all as a free PDF.

THESES 52 AND 53



Thesis #52 of 95 - Augustine's assertion that Adam's disobedience resulted in God degrading human nature to the extent that man could do "absolutely no good thing, whether in thought or will, affection or in action" is unbiblical, an observable falsehood, an affront to God's gracious magnanimity and the dignity of the human person

Thesis #53 of 95 - On the contrary, acts of compassion, kindness and courage delight God's heart and will be rewarded by Christ

COMMENTS

The doctrinal aspects of this subject were covered in the previous post on Pelagius. These two related theses focus

on that British theologian's arch-enemy Augustine. In the following extract from my book, I suggest that it was the widely esteemed Bishop of Hippo rather than scorned Pelagius who deviated further from earlier (2nd century) Church Fathers' teaching on human nature, the economy of grace, free will and natural law.

THE EXTRACT

"For much of the Church's history the understanding has been that God's benign providence is restricted to faithful Jews and those subsequently elected to Christian salvation; the prospects for the rest of humanity being worse than oblivion. That is in stark contrast to what I understand the Holy Spirit to have shown me, set out in the Little Book of Providence, namely that God's elect people are, under Christ, the agents of restoring and reconciling the world back to God, not the sole beneficiaries. Humanly speaking it was the Roman African Aurelius Augustinus (AD354-430) and his especially forthright and uncompromising manner in defending the catholic faith against potential heresies together with the extraordinary regard with which he has been held in the Western Church that has resulted in doctrinal errors being incorporated in their understanding of God's intentions for wider creation and the nature of the human condition.

Pelagius, a contemporary of Augustine, was understood to have taught [note#1] that human nature had not been profoundly wounded by Adam's sin, so humans were able to fulfil the law without divine aid.

Augustine, still more perversely came to affirm that fallen man could not so much as do, think or desire any good at all apart from the grace of the gospel. The heretic Manes had propounded a dualistic view of the cosmos impacting upon human anthropology, leading Augustine to insist that Paul could not possibly have been saying that human nature comprised opposing moral influences from flesh and spirit. The millenarians (chiliasts) of his day were carnally minded so the whole system should be repudiated, and man's future destiny be understood as fulfilled within the spiritual sphere.

Though sainted by the Roman Church, Augustine's insistence that God intended to damn the bulk of humanity was undermined fifty years ago by the Vatican Council's pronouncements on God's broader providence regarding His dealings with those outside the Church. Yet the foundational biblical theology underpinning the earlier narrower conceptions has largely remained intact. One has only to contrast Augustine's grim eschatological montage as depicted in his "City of God" with the relative inclusivity of Vatican II's "Lumen Gentium" to see how the Spirit has enlightened the Catholic Church through the centuries. But to attain coherence one cannot avoid revisiting many of the theological assumptions that led to Augustine's treatise, culminating as it does in a cosmic horror story of breath-taking proportions, albeit one which many

Evangelical Christians have come to take for granted.

THE WITNESS OF THE EARLIEST FATHERS

Augustine placed fidelity to Scripture as he interpreted it above regard for the more philanthropic and open-minded reflections of earlier Fathers who had perceived more than a vestige of God's image being retained in fallen man's nature and perceived a role for natural law within a multifaceted economy of grace. "Let us reflect how free from wrath God is toward all His creation... He does good to all but most abundantly to us who have fled for refuge to His compassions through Jesus Christ". So wrote Clement^[citation#1], fellow worker with Paul; whilst his namesake Clement of Alexandria (2nd century) enquired "What is loveable that is not loved by God; and man has been proved to be loveable, consequently man is loved by God"^{#2}. Justin Martyr (2nd century) spoke of God's benevolence towards those who walk uprightly and in accordance with right reason^{#3}; a God who accepts those who imitate His own qualities of temperance, fairness and philanthropy and who exercise their free will in choosing what is pleasing to Him^{#4}. Irenaeus, also 2nd century, recognized that God in His providence is present with all "who attend to moral discipline"^{#5} paying heed to the natural precepts of the law by which man can be justified^{#6}.

[Quote from The Little Book of Providence chapter one]

NOTE

#1 Because Pelagius came to be denounced as a heretic, little of his work remains. We are largely reliant on Augustine's account of his teaching and manner of life, the latter of which even Augustine acknowledged to be saintly. As Wikipedia affirms, more scholars are coming to the view that this British theologian had been more faithful to the teaching of the earliest fathers than had previously been asserted.

CITATIONS

#1 Letter to Corinthians of Clement (c. AD30-AD100) chaps. 19 & 20 [Clement, fellow worker with Paul]

#2 "The Instructor" Book 1 chap. 3 [Clement of Alexandria – 2nd century]

#3 The first apology of Justin chaps. 43 & 46 #4 ibid. chap. 10 [Justin Martyr 2nd century]

#5 Irenaeus against heresies Book III chap. 25 (para 1) #6 Ibid. Book IV chap. 13 para 1 [2nd century]

THESIS 54

*Thesis #54 OF 95 - The mature Christian has a sense of what pleases God for he/she already possesses the mind of Christ whom **EVEN DURING HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY** had the mind of His Father.*

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Prov11:20 *The perverse in heart are an abomination to the Lord, but those who are blameless in their ways **are His delight**.*

1Sam13:14 *The Lord has sought for Himself a man **after His own heart**, and the Lord has appointed him ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.*

Jn14:9 *Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

1Cor2:16 – *For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But **we have the mind of Christ**.*

Col1:15 *(Christ) is the **image** of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*

Heb1:3a *(Christ) is the radiance of God's glory and the **exact representation** of His nature.*

COMMENTS

Many Christians including myself in the past, have understood that God is such that whatever we may do or whatever our manner of life, we are incapable of pleasing Him. The writer of Prov11:20 thought otherwise: "*The perverse in heart are an abomination to the Lord, but those who are blameless in their ways **are His delight***". The misconception

in turn relates to the notion that God's nature is alien in nature and incomprehensible to man. That is to misunderstand both Paul and Christ Himself as I will now demonstrate. But for starters it contradicts what the bible declares human beings **to be**: made in the image/likeness of God. And that still applies, even after the Fall (Gen9:6). Given that God is invisible, that likeness cannot pertain to appearance **but to nature**.

And at the individual level there are men and women whom God regards as instinctively being "after His own heart". One such was the shepherd boy David whom He appointed King over His people, Israel. And God is preparing **another** people, no longer restricted to the Jews, who are being fashioned to be after His own heart. For the Father has foreordained that some are to become **conformed to the image of His Son** (Rom8:29), and He has provided the means of grace by which that might be accomplished. The apostle Paul was such a one, who declared that he and such like him, already "**have the mind of Christ**" (1Cor2:16).

Having the mind of Christ is one thing, but apprehending God's own nature surely is another matter? Is it really? Not according to Jesus:

*"If you know Me, you will have known My Father also; from now on you do know Him and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus *said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'"? [Jn14:7-9]*

Think through the implications in the context of this thesis. What pleased Jesus during His earthly ministry must please His Father also. Yet Jesus was a Man, indeed the Proper Man, as Luther aptly referred to Him. So, do you think that acts of kindness, generosity, courage and the like would not please our loving gracious Saviour? And that would be the case regardless of their imperfections as, classically, we see in the Mt25 sheep/goats passage.

That of course is the definitive New Testament passage on final judgement, the most important assessment of all. It frankly turns the theology I was brought up with on its head, but so does Jesus' comments to Philip in Jn14 quoted above. For even during His earthly ministry, Jesus perfectly reflected the nature of His Father – AND YET HE WAS A MAN. Of course, when He returns in glory to judge the world, this King of kings and Lord of Lords will be a scarier prospect, but it will be the same Jesus. Oh, blessed words: "***Have I been with you so long, Philip – if you have seen Me, you've seen the Father***". For man ***has*** been made in God's image, and it was perfectly reflected in Jesus, ***even during His earthly ministry***. For our sakes He laid aside His glory but nothing of His nature.

When the implications of this are grasped, then so much traditional theology is thrown into question. Not least, that of the Protestant Reformers that I adhered to for the first 28 years of my Christian life. For that more than any other is predicated on a Creator incomprehensible to human reason. Within such theology, God's defining quality of LOVE (1Jn4:8) appears to mean something quite different from how Paul defines it in 1Cor13 (next thesis). For sure, God's ways and methods are extraordinary and sometimes incomprehensible, not so His Nature. It was revealed to Philip, his fellow disciples and many others privileged to witness the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, being "***the radiance of (God's) glory and the exact representation of His nature***" (Heb1:3NASB). That is my good news, and it was Paul's also: "***According to my gospel, the day is coming when God shall judge the secrets of mankind through Christ Jesus*** (Rom2:16; cf. Jn5:22).

THESIS 55

Thesis #55 of 95 - GOD IS LOVE, and any theology that requires for its intrinsic coherence the notion that divine love is different in nature and outworking to that quality as it is defined in Scripture should be rejected, however revered its formulator may have been

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

1Jn4:8 *Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love [Greek: θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν]*

1Cor13:4-5 *Love is patient, love is kind, it is not jealous; love does not brag, it is not arrogant. It does not act disgracefully, it does not seek its own benefit; it is not provoked, does not keep an account of a wrong suffered*

COMMENTS

These theses are intended to follow on from one another and the assertion that God is love is a corollary to what was asserted in the previous thesis: the fact that Jesus precisely represented His father's nature (Heb1:3). But the apostle John was not merely saying in his first epistle that God **possessed** love or even that He is loving by nature, but that He **is** love personified [θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν]; ἀγάπη (love) being a noun, not an adjective. This is astonishing in itself; all the more so when one tries to reconcile that with the God of the bible, or rather what many understand it to be saying concerning the Creator's providential purposes and intentions towards humanity. As I am in the process of demonstrating, that is because so many are under a misconception. They believe that only the relative few who have had a faithful account of the

Gospel and have positively responded to it are to avoid perdition. Most of the remaining theses directly or indirectly point to why such is not the case.

Another reason John's statement will appear barely credible to many pertains to what I also referred to in the previous thesis. That is that whilst God's nature is humanly comprehensible and was reflected in life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the Creator's **ways** are often incomprehensible and extraordinary. That will be evident in any consideration of history [which is ultimately "His story"]. Not least, the career of the churches, but especially the **global** suffering, distress and confusion we continue to observe today. My theses and especially The Little Book of Providence's theodicy explain why this is the case. It pertains to God's plans for humanity, starting with His elect – the children of promise (Gal4:28) who in some measure must share in the sufferings of Christ (Rom8:17).

Any loving deity of **human devising** might be expected to ensure that those he/she/it created had opportunity to enjoy a peaceful, happy life, ideally extending through eternity. Truly, **the God who is love, revealed in the bible, has done far, far better than this**. He has not only created beings in His own image, but by the very *suffering* and trials they experience whilst in mortal flesh, He is preparing them to be united Himself and ultimately share His domain. But it is not just **our** suffering that He knows is necessary for such elevation (even in the case of His Son: Heb2:10), it involves His own suffering also. Quoting from my book:

"God had been perfectly entitled to enjoy unbroken felicity but for mankind's sake He was prepared to endure the agony of observing His only begotten Son's humiliation and death. If Satan had been barred from planet earth or Adam and Eve had been erased for their disobedience and replaced, Christ need not have died. But He permitted His enemy what appeared to be an extraordinary victory for the sake of what He knew would be the ideal preparation for the beings created in His image to be raised from dust to glory. This is the third reason apart from Satan's treachery and our first parents' disobedience that things

have been as they have been in the world and in the Church. Suffering partnered with essential spiritual healing and progressive enlightenment are how God is drawing man toward his ultimate destiny as exemplified by His Son's own experience (cf. Heb2:10)".

[Excerpt from chapter 7 (theodicy) – Little Book of Providence]

In accordance with the **progressive** enlightenment just outlined, much traditional Western theology simply does not do justice to such Love as this. There has inevitably been bemusement regarding the continuance of evil and suffering, falling as it does under the auspices of a **sovereign** God, at the same time described in the bible as Love personified. And for many traditions, such as the Reformed Evangelicalism I grew up with, the matter is exacerbated by the dire eternal prospects awaiting the bulk of humanity. If this were the reality, divine love would need to be defined very differently from "love" as humans understand it or indeed the bible defines it for believers in 1Cor13.

That is why this thesis concludes that such paradoxical theology is to be rejected, however revered its formulator may have been. Especially so, now that a workable solution has been provided regarding the mystery of evil and the outworking of divine love, integrated at it has been within a synopsis of the whole bible. Still more so once it has been grasped that such a disclosure was foretold in ex-canonical Scripture that had not been intended (or even made available) for the Church through most of her history but for the final generation of believers [note #1]

*NOTE #1 "The words of the blessing of Enoch, wherewith he blessed the elect and the righteous **who will be living in the day of tribulation** when all the wicked and godless are to be removed [opening verse of the Book of Enoch]]*

*The relevant prophecies: Enoch93:10 and
104:11-
13 [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Book
_of_Enoch_\(Charles\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Book_of_Enoch_(Charles))*

THESIS 56

Thesis #56 of 95 - God's qualities such as love, holiness, compassion and kindness are superior in degree but the same in nature to those of man's, for every good quality man possesses originates from Him

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Heb1:3a (*Christ*) is the radiance of God's glory and the **EXACT REPRESENTATION** of His nature.

1Jn4:7: *Beloved, let's love one another; for **love is from God**, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.*

COMMENTS

*"I AM who I am: the **God of tenderness and compassion**, slow to anger, rich in faithful love and constancy, maintaining his faithful love to thousands, forgiving fault crime and sin, yet letting nothing go unchecked, punishing the parent's fault in the children and in the grandchildren unto the third and fourth generation [Ex34:6-7].*

That is God's nature; these are His judgements which are evidently right and just and in accordance with human reason. That is, they are exactly how one would **expect** a loving and just God to behave in judgement. There surely can be no better theologian than God Himself, so if anyone has presented a markedly different picture, he is no theologian at all however revered he may have become. We may be mystified by God's **ways** at times, but this is a Being that we as human beings can truly love and adore as well as fear. Not just for His grace and mercy **towards us**, but because He is genuinely good from the perspective of those created after His own likeness.

YHWH is forgiving, tender and compassionate just as a saintly human is consistently tender and compassionate, only more so. Like a good parent He will have a special affection for His own (or His Son's) immediate family but will show magnanimity towards all, for ***that is His nature***. As such He makes full allowance for the human weakness unavoidably inherited at birth; ***toleration being a vital ingredient of love*** as any parent will know. At the same time, He will take vengeance on behalf of His people (2Thes1:6), being all who fear Him and seek to do justice in accordance with the revelation they have received from Him. And in John's words, ***everyone who loves*** is born of God and knows God – but not all do (1Jn3:12; Mt15:13).

Truly, we shall praise God with uprightness of heart when we have learnt of His righteous judgements.

THESIS 57

Thesis #57 of 95 - For much of their history the churches especially in the West have been under the misapprehension that their institution and the practice of the Christian faith primarily exists to enable people to go to heaven when they die

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Mt25:34-35 *Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink etc, etc.*

Mt16:27 *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man **according** to his **works**.*

Rom2:9-11 *There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of mankind **who does evil**, for the Jew first, also for the Greek, but glory, honour and peace to everyone who **does what is good**, to the Jew first, also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with GoHowever:*

Rom8:29 *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to **become conformed to the image of His Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers.*

On the other hand -

1Pet2:9 *You are a CHOSEN PEOPLE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR GOD'S OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.*

Rev19:7 *The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His **bride has prepared herself.**"*

Rev3:21 *He who overcomes, I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.*

Rev5:9-10 *And with Your blood you bought people for God of every race, language, people and nation and made them a line of kings and priests for God, **to rule the World.***

COMMENTS

A collection of prooftexts such as the above cannot do justice to a thesis as radical as this. What is needed is a complete re-synopsis of the bible, and this (I am clear with the Spirit's help) I have already provided. What the first four texts point to is the fact that ultimately, we are to be judged by what we do, not what we claim or understand ourselves to believe. Yet what we do and our manner of life is GOVERNED by what we believe, or more precisely whether or not we possess "faith". Note that Paul writes "**AS IT IS WRITTEN**, 'the righteous shall live by faith'" But WHERE was it written? In Habakkuk2:4. The apostle was not introducing a new-fangled concept of justification by faith – it had always been the case. What WAS new in terms of Paul's revelation concerned the annulment of Torah (Col2:14).

Hence Gal5:6 – "*In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but **FAITH WORKING THROUGH LOVE.*** As 2nd century Clement of Alexandria rightly asserted "*faith is that which **OF ITSELF AND FROM ITS OWN RESOURCES** chooses at once what is best*". That is why the Mt25 sheep acted as they did – because they possessed and utilized the God-given quality of faith. Likewise, those who "do what is good" in the Romans 2 passage quoted. This is not how I in the past and no doubt many Christians today understand "faith". But interpreted in this way, it resolves many tensions or seeming contradictions of scripture – not least the moral and juridical teaching of Paul vis-à-vis Jesus, James and John.

The latter five bible references, which to some may seem to be saying something different again (suheaded "on the other hand"), pertain to the fact that whilst God cares for the

wellbeing of all people of good will, He has chosen a particular people **for Himself** who are to be permanently associated with His Son. Only these are what the bible refers to as “saved” in the present age. Only these currently possess the Life God intends for those he has made in His own image.

Some recent theses dealt with what the bible means by “death” in the spiritual context. In a sentence it is a disruption in the soul’s communion with its Maker resulting from a defilement of the conscience (cf. Heb9:14). It is a result of the Fall.

The immediate cause of such is what Paul describes as “the body of this death” and the solution is a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ (Rom7:24,25). THAT is what Christianity is for. It is for those Peter goes on to describe as a “*royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for GOD’S PERSONAL POSSESSION*”. In terms of what happens at the end of physical life, Christians are being prepared for something that others cannot be. True disciples are being **refashioned into the image of their Master** (Rom8:29). They already partake of the divine nature (2Pet1:4) – a clue to their ultimate destiny, as are the quotes above from Revelation.

Eternal life

Expressed another way, becoming a Christian enables one to be **raised to eternal life**. That in turn relates to being re-united to God in Christ:

*“And **this** is eternal life, that they might know You the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (Jn17:3)*

And:

*“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood **has** (present tense) eternal life, and I will **raise him up at the last day**” (Jn6:54)*

And:

*“No murderer has eternal life **abiding in him**” (1Jn3:15)*

Eternal life (literally age-life) is something **to be experienced now**; a higher form and quality of life than that which one can naturally know as fallen human beings. It should be noted that even the sinless Saviour asserted that He “**lived by the Father**”

(Jn6:57a). In the same way *“those who eat Me shall live by Me* (Jn6:57b). It affirms that “life” as Jesus, Paul and others speak of it does not refer to avoiding perdition or “going to heaven when you die” for that was hardly an issue for Jesus, yet even He *“lived* by the Father”. It relates rather to a present empowering relationship with the divine; “death” being the deprivation of such.

Love actually

So much for the Christian – what of everyone else? The definitive New Testament passage on final judgement (Mt25) should make it clear enough that whether or not one gains admittance to God’s eternal Kingdom is not determined by religious faith or practice. That is not so much as mentioned, merely the exercise of compassionate LOVE towards those in need – with whom Christ as Son of Man personally identifies. That in turn pertains to natural law – whether one has a positive response to the innate spiritual faculties with which everyone is provided, functioning through the conscience. For everyone who is truly humane shows themselves to be of God (1Jn4:7).

The saved

But only those who have a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ can be *saved* from what Paul described as the body of this death (Rom7:24,25). Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they follow the inclinations of their spirit rather than succumbing to the flesh – so that they might Live (Rom8:13 Textus Receptus Greek). Partaking of the Lord’s body and blood, their *“consciences are purged from dead works to serve the living God”* (Heb9:14; cf. 1Jn1:7). Such are to be raised on the last day (Jn6:54; Rev20:6). Those of the faithful still alive at the Parousia shall be joined to Christ (1Thes4:17). Whether alive or resurrected, the souls of such will have been made ready for the unspeakable glories destined for them in the age to come.

Such is the context of the Church and Christian salvation within broader benign providence. God’s declared wish is that every soul that CAN be healed is ultimately restored and brought to a realization of the truth (1Tim2:4). It is perhaps not that surprising that God does not intend that all humanity

become betrothed to His Son and come to share His throne (Rev3:21 &9:7). But many more shall one day *“comprehend WITH the saints what is the width and length and height and depth of the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge”*. Each to be filled, according to their varying capacities, with the fullness of God.

THESIS 58

Thesis #58 of 95 - The more liberal churches are in error in believing that anyone other than a Christian can be saved in the gospel sense

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Acts4:12 *There is **salvation in no Other**; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we can be saved.*

Rom1:16 *For I am **not ashamed** of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, also to the Greek.*

Mt24:14 *This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, **and then the end will come.***

Dan7:27a *Then shall sovereignty, dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven be **given to the saints of the Most High.***

Acts20:32 *I entrust you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the **inheritance among all those who are sanctified.***

Rom8:17 *WE are children of God, **heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ**, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*

COMMENTS

Many Christians, labelled as liberals, are understandably resistant to the derisory, narrow depictions of God's providential care for humanity that is the outworking of the prevailing Augustinian-derived biblical theology. Such people have a sense of God's goodness and intelligible justice and

anticipate that providential outcomes will be consistent with His self-declared loving nature. And so they shall be.

But what tends to be lacking on the part of such liberal, open-minded Christians is a substantive delineation of their convictions **from Scripture**. They are “liberal” with respect to their interpretation of the bible, believing they have to be, given how it is usually interpreted. Not so yours truly – I would sooner be labelled a literalist 😊. For humanly speaking, such is how the seemingly radical synopsis I have set out in the Little Book of Providence came about – by applying a rigorous and highly literal interpretation to the Word of God

And surely, a trustworthy approach to Scripture **is** needed to provide at the personal level the peace and assurance that comes from a hope for eternity that is **solidly grounded**. Whilst at the global level, a unified interpretation of the essential teachings of Scripture are necessary to present a clear and coherent Good News message to the world. And such is to be provided in these last days if the gospel and its Hero are to be believed (Mt24:14).

As recent theses have sought to delineate – whilst the Creator desires that all true humanity (cf. 1Jn3:12) are ultimately soul-healed (“saved”) and brought to an understanding of the truth (1Tim2:4), only those who know Jesus Christ in a personal way during their earthly lifetimes can be fitted to share an inheritance with Christ, His saints and angels. As the above references indicate, such an inheritance (co-heirship with Christ, no less 😊) is restricted to those **who are being sanctified** (Acts20:32; Rom8:17)

THESES 59, 60 AND 61

Thesis #59 of 95 - All people of good will shall go to heaven when they die regardless of their religious beliefs

Thesis #60 of 95 - The notion implicit in some Roman Catholic teaching that people of good will are “saved” in the same sense as a Christian undermines the role of the gospel, Church and sacraments

Thesis #61 of 95 - For the incarnated soul cannot be healed (saved) unless Christ had first been admitted to the vessel and united with the spirit.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Mt5:9 *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God”*

Mt25:40 *And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of Mine, you did it for Me.’*

Mt10:41 *The one who receives a righteous person in the name of a righteous person shall receive a righteous person’s reward.*

Jn18:37 *“For this purpose I have been born, and for this I have come into the world: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is **of the truth** listens to My voice.”*

1Cor6:17 *The one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

Jn6:53 *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life **in yourselves**.*

Rom7:24-25 *Wretched man that I am! Who will **set me free from the body of this death?** Thanks be to God; it is through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I with my mind serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin.*

COMMENTS

In many Christian minds, especially those of my former (Evangelical) ilk, people are either "saved" or "reprobate". Since Vatican II (1960s), the Catholic Church has formally acknowledged a third soteriological category, namely "people of good will". More dogmatically, *"Divine providence shall not deny the assistance necessary for salvation to those who without any fault of theirs have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and who, not without grace, strive to lead a good life"* (Vatican II – *Lumen Gentium* 16).

What has been lacking for the last fifty years from the Catholic side is a substantive **biblical underpinning** for such a proposition. For that cannot be provided without substantial doctrinal deconstruction resulting in contradicting earlier conciliar pronouncements that the Church deems to be immutable. But the main problem with Vatican II's pronouncement as it stands is stated in thesis #60. It undermines the role of the Church and sacraments, which are indispensable for what the bible actually means by "salvation".

To whom such "people of good will" refers is defined from Scripture in The Little Book of Providence. As is the case for the Christian, their eventual deliverance from the bondage of sin so as to be united to God will have been made possible by divine grace and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, for these are the **core elements of all human salvation**.

What is more, whether they realize it or not, such people are contributing even now to the building of God's Kingdom on earth. For, as Jesus Himself indicated, anyone who seeks to reconcile and bring peace between nations, families or

individuals is acting like a child of God (Mt5:9). Anyone who contributes to alleviating the plight of the poor and needy will be judged as having succoured Christ Himself (Mt25:40). Any who accept and acknowledge a righteous person **as** righteous is himself regarded as righteous (Mt10:41). Those who pursue truth and justice for its own sake show themselves to be of the Truth (Jn18:37b). Indeed, anyone who desires from the heart to do anything good and acts upon it is demonstrating they will one day adore Jesus Christ, the summit and perfection of all that is good.

Yet by no means are all these good people “saved” in the gospel sense, as the next thesis/post shall explain. In the meantime, Rom7:24-25 summarizes what “salvation” really is about. And it is far removed from most Christians’ understanding that gospel salvation determines whether or not one goes to heaven when one dies.

THESIS 62

Thesis #62 of 95 - Biblical salvation is the restoration of divine communion whilst still incarnate through spiritual regeneration and devotion to Christ and His teaching. This is what is meant by being raised to eternal life. It is for fallen man to become re-acquainted with God, His Son and Spirit before physical death (or Christ's return) so that the called chosen and faithful may be fitted for future glory as the corporate Bride of Christ

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Jn17:3 **THIS is eternal life**, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Jn6:53 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life **in yourselves**.

Rom7:24-25 Wretched man that I am! Who will **SET ME FREE FROM THE BODY OF THIS DEATH?** Thanks be to God; it is through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I with my mind serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin.

Rom8:29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined **to become conformed to the image of His Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

Rev19:7 Let's rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His **bride** has prepared herself.

1Thes4:4- That each of you know how to **POSSESS HIS OWN VESSEL** in sanctification and honour.

Rom8:23 *Also we who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for adoption as sons, namely **THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY!!!***

COMMENTS

The last few theses have identified what gospel salvation is **not**, i.e., the means by which a soul can enter heaven. This thesis defines what salvation in Christ really is. The selected texts indicate what such salvation is **from**, what it is **for**, and why proportionally few shall attain it. Also, how such a limitation is to be reconciled with Paul's assertion that God desires that **all** people are ultimately soul-healed and come to a knowledge of the truth. And let's face it, such broader benevolence is what one would expect to be the intention of the One whom the apostle John defines as Love personified.

Salvation from what?

In terms of what people are to be saved **from**, as just stated it is not "eternal damnation". That in part is in view of the temporal nature of the problem from which we need to be delivered in order to fulfil our eternal destiny. In the case of the elect that is co-heirship with Jesus Christ, no less – to be His corporate bride in the ages to come (Rom8:17; Rev19:7). It should be evident from that statement and its supporting texts why this is likely to be the preserve of the proportional few.

More precisely, what the elect, in fact all of us at some point, need to be delivered **from** is the physical transience and moral ineptitude of the procreated intellectual vessel every soul enters at birth. By "procreated intellectual vessel" I simply refer to the body and brain – the part of us that ceases to function when we die. The Apostle Paul refers to that same entity quite literally as "the flesh", distinguishing it from our eternal **spiritual** essence that returns to God at brain death to await re-embodiment. The apostle also employs the term "body of this death" (Rom7:24) and "vessel" (2Cor4:7; 1Thes4:4). Approaching **his** death, the apostle Peter refers to the same as the "tent" or "tabernacle" that he must shortly set aside

(2Pet1:13+14). The key point being it is a **temporary feature** of our never-ending existence that is the **source** of our problem with sin, as Paul's usually misunderstood passage in Rom7 makes clear (vv14-25).

One reason that passage **is** so often misunderstood is because the human spirit to which Paul refers (which he is simply and literally distinguishing from the fleshly body and brain) is often deemed by translators and interpreters to be referring to the Holy Spirit. This is a matter I have worked through at some length in earlier posts, attaining support for the case from the *Textus Receptus* Greek [note 1].

Salvation's purpose

In terms of the **purpose** of gospel salvation, only those who have a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ can be saved from Paul's "body of this death" **whilst still inhabiting it** (Rom7:24,25). The rest will not escape its moral/spiritual and physical incumbrances (being the consequence of the Fall) until physical death. However, the problem **post-mortem** for those who fail to apprehend the gospel is that unless they die in infancy their vessel/tent that their souls inhabit is, through its innate concupiscence, likely to tarnish the spiritual essence it houses (1Pet2:11). Such a soul will be in no position to be *"presented faultless before the presence of God's glory with exceeding joy"* (Jude1:24). Indeed, in some cases it will require a measure of salting/purging if it is to take any positive role in *"a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells"* (2Pet3:13).

God's elect on the other hand, being the called, chosen and faithful, having been empowered by the Holy Spirit and informed by divine teaching, should have disciplined themselves to follow the inclinations of their spirit rather than succumbing to the flesh so that they might be raised to eternal Life (Rom8:13). Partaking sacramentally in the Lord's body and blood, their *"consciences are purged from dead works to serve the living God"* (Heb9:14; cf. 1Jn1:7). The generations of saints who have died shall be raised on the last day (Jn6:54; Rev20:6). They, together with faithful disciples who live to see the

Parousia shall “meet Christ in the air” (1Thes4:17). Whether alive or resurrected, **their** souls will have been ready prepared for the unspeakable glories destined for the elect in the ages to come.

The fruit of Christ’s Passion

As the previous post/thesis affirmed, divine grace and the *redemptive work of Jesus Christ* are the *core elements of **all** human salvation*. Yet the benefits of Christ’s Passion function at two levels: forensic and participatory. The former relates to God’s pardon of and propitiation for human sin throughout the world (1Jn2:2); the latter to the sanctification and imparting of spiritual vitality to the proportionally few who sacramentally partake of Christ’s body and blood (Jn6:53).

This is merely the bare bones of what I have been shown on this subject. Such a thesis pertaining to the very nature and purpose of gospel salvation needs to be supported by a workable synopsis of the whole bible. Thanks be to God, it has been.

NOTE #1 – For example, Rom8:4 – “The requirement of the law is fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit”. The early scribes who penned the Textus Receptus knew Paul to be referring to the human spirit not the Holy Spirit, hence they wrote πνεῦμα rather than Πνεύμα [Rom8:4 Greek – ignore the translation, observe the Greek text; Likewise Rom8:1]. When Paul is clearly referring to the Holy Spirit, the scribes have penned Πνεύμα [e.g. 1Cor12:3].

It should be pointed out that the original New Testament text was written entirely in capital letters with no spaces or

punctuation. So, whether the Greek word for "spirit" was a capital or lowercase Pi is a scribe-based rather than genuinely textually based issue. But the point is that my interpretation is in line with that of the early scribes with regard to whether Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit or the human spirit, a matter critical to a right understanding of Paul's teaching on salvation and the believers' participation within it.

THESES 63, 64, 65 AND 66



Thesis # 63 of 95 – The vital means for communicating spiritual renewal and ongoing sanctification is through the sacraments of the Church

Thesis #64 of 95 - An essential component of the Christian life is participation in the Divine Eucharist

Thesis #65 of 95 - The Lord has ensured throughout the Church's history that faithful assemblies in East and West are gathered to Himself, so that from the rising of the sun until its setting a pure sacrifice may be offered to His name

Thesis #66 of 95 - In some meaningful albeit mystical sense Christ's body must be eaten and His blood drunk by the Christian for "whoever eats Me will draw life from me" and "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person"

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Rom8:29 *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined **to become conformed to the image of his Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers.*

Jn6:53-56 *Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life **in yourselves**. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood possesses eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him.*

COMMENTS

Through what I have been shown (by the Spirit I believe) even the true Church has propagated substantial doctrinal error through the centuries. Such I also believe was foretold in the Book of Enoch’s Apocalypse of Weeks, as my linked post explains. Despite such fallibility, both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches (divided since the 1054 schism) and those episcopal churches affiliated to them have been enabled to fulfil their **primary** salvific obligations. For the Lord “*has never ceased to gather a people to Himself so that from the rising of the sun until its setting a pure sacrifice is offered to His name*”. As universal sacrament for the world, the Apostolic Church, East and West has ensured that the fullness of sacramental provision necessary for gospel salvation (sometimes with more besides) has been provided in each century for every generation of the Christian era, such that those appointed to eternal life (Acts13:48) might be supplied for divine service now and in the ages to come.

The 95 theses taken as a whole affirm that everyone who responds positively to conscience demonstrate themselves to be “of God” as opposed to being like Cain “of the Wicked One” (1Jn3:11-12). **However**, atheists, agnostics and those of other faiths cannot be presented “*faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy*” (Jud1:24). That requires one to

become a disciple of Jesus Christ and a partaker of Jesus Christ in order to become **conformed to His image** (Rom8:29). To do so one must draw on His spiritual life-force by (in some meaningful sense) eating His flesh and drinking His blood, for *“whoever eats Me will draw life from Me (Jn6:57).*

The eucharist – our sanctification

Receiving this Sacrament might be likened to the body’s blood flowing through the heart and being renewed and cleansed by it: spiritual life is renewed and refreshed by participation in the Eucharist. Yet it is no mechanical process even for those regularly attending this means of grace. Faith is required just as it was when Jesus was physically present on earth by those who would be healed by Him. The pupil of the apostle John (Ignatius) affirmed this Sacrament to be the medicine of immortality. Yet it is more than a salve it is a Saviour (i.e. a Person). The Eucharistic meal **possesses** the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ, not through the magic of a priest but by the Holy Spirit imprecated by him. One must have faith to regard it as such if one is fully to benefit from its transforming power for one is not merely receiving medicine for the soul but a Person to relate to it.

Of course, many sincere believers in Christ will not accept such teaching regarding the Eucharist/Mass/Divine Liturgy/Lord’s Supper. For the first 28 years of my Christian life, I did not either. Key to the change in my understanding was a study of the Early Church Fathers, i.e. the teaching and observations of those who had been tutored by the apostles themselves or the likes of Timothy, Jude, Philemon or the men **they** personally tutored (which takes us into the early to middle second century). I reviewed their writings on the subject in an earlier post. This is reinforced by the witness of Irenaeus and Church historian Eusebius, the former theologian in particular witnessing to the **unity of liturgy** within the churches of the second century.

Although I cannot be certain how the Lord will at last deal with those who have sought to be faithful to Him but are genuinely ignorant of these matters, these four related theses

testify to the assertion there is no salvation outside the Apostolic Church (as defined above). But as the previous post/thesis delineated, by “salvation” I mean SALVATION: those to whom Paul refers as heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, who suffer with Him that they might be also glorified with Him (Rom8:17); those who are seeking to attain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phi3:14). That does not equate to who does or does not go to heaven when they die, which has more to do with the final judgement parable in Mt25.

However, the issue under consideration **does** determine whether or not one can attain an inheritance reserved for those who are sanctified (Acts20:32).

THESIS 67



Thesis #67 of 95 - Luther's revolt was triggered by deformed practice and doctrine within the Roman Catholic Church; but the Eastern Orthodox Church was relatively unaffected by the sixteenth century upheavals and continues to affirm the historically understood sacerdotal and sacrificial nature of the Holy Eucharist

COMMENTS

As the wording of this thesis is intended to imply, the sixteenth century ecclesiological hiatus euphemistically termed “the Reformation” was triggered by corrupt practices and deformed doctrines within the medieval Church of Rome. The issue of “indulgencies” was the focal point of Augustinian monk Brother Martin Ludher’s condemnation [note#1]. *“As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs”* – a saying attributed to Johann Tetzel, papal seller of indulgences to raise money to rebuild St Peter’s Basilica in Rome who plied his trade in the vicinity of Luther’s hometown. On reflection, what Christian would **not** support the Reformers in sixteenth century Europe? Seemingly spiritually insightful men pleading scriptural truths against the deformed doctrines and practices of the monolith that was the medieval Roman Catholic Church.

However, Luther merely set the ball rolling; a still more marked dissent from Catholic doctrine and teaching followed

through the likes of Zwingli and Calvin which distressed the former monk greatly for he was a reluctant schismatic. To the surprise of many, he had recently said this about the Catholic Church:

“With the papacy there is a correct Holy Scripture, a correct baptism, a correct sacrament of the altar, a correct key to the forgiveness of sin, a correct preaching office, a correct catechism, Lord’s Prayer, Ten Commandments and articles of faith” [note #2]

And Luther will have hoped that once Scripture had been translated into the vernacular and more widely distributed, dissenters from Rome would come to a unified view on the key doctrines such as the Eucharist, baptism and essential church polity. But it was not to be. What is more, through the movement Luther initiated, the vernacular Protestant Bible would soon come to replace the sacrifice of the altar as the focal object of veneration in most of the breakaway churches. That has desolating consequences from the perspective of those who understand that sacrament to be central to the Faith – the means by which one experiences interior sacred communion and sanctifying grace [previous thesis]. Desolating also in view of the way that Paul’s teaching would come to be further misunderstood by many. Augustine’s one-dimensional grace analysis with its dire **providential** implications was built upon and reinforced by the Reformers’ doctrine of total depravity and sovereign grace theology.

Luther’s legacy

In terms of Luther’s immediate legacy, the ecclesiological fragmentation and exacerbated national and global conflict challenges his claim to be prophetic. For if a prophet (and anyone who dares challenge the established ecclesiological order in such a way had better be one) can be shown by the outcome of his predictions to have spoken presumptuously, he is no longer to be feared or listened to (cf. the testing of prophets and prophecy – Deut18:18-22). What Luther had believed and expected would happen did not happen; that is that Christians in the West, liberated from the papacy and with

Bibles in hand would come to a united understanding of the essentials of the gospel. ML was personally distraught at the breakaway movement's sub-divisions even in his own day; let alone what he would have made of the bewildering plethora of denominations that exist today.

There is a good reason for such a disastrous miscalculation: the decidedly non-perspicuous nature of Holy Scripture. For he regarded ALL the earliest Church fathers with the possible exception of Augustine to be in darkness concerning the nature of saving faith. So the Reformer provided his own solution regarding justification, law and faith, which I spent a number of posts deconstructing .

The elephant in the room

As this thesis also alludes to, the proverbial elephant in the room within the usual Reformation debate has been the **perennial Eastern Orthodox Church** whose priority has always been to remain faithful to the deposit of faith. For she was a relatively stable element in the sixteenth century debacle, yet her sacerdotal practice has been much the same as Rome's. Like her they accept the real presence of Christ at the altar, regarding the Eucharist as *"the awesome **sacrifice** entrusted to the Church to be **re-enacted** and given to the faithful for the nourishment of their faith and **forgiveness of their sins**".* For God has ensured that that the Bread of Life and Cup of Salvation has been available to the faithful in East and West and for every generation of the Christian era – within the Apostolic churches, that is. And so for the purpose of the Re-formation, it is necessary to show that the Reformation was no reformation, rather an ecclesiastical hiatus and fragmentation. It is something from which we must recover if *"the body of Christ is to be built up until we all reach unity in the Faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man, attaining the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"* (Eph4:13).

*NOTE #1 The birthname by which
Augustinian monk Brother Martin would*

*have been known at the time. He changed his surname to “Luther” to allude to “**Eleuthérios**” from the Greek Ελευθέριος, meaning free or liberated. Also, no doubt in view of what his family name “Luder” actually meant in his native language.*

NOTE #2 – citation: Luthers Werke 26: 147 – Weimar: Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolge

THESIS 68

Thesis #68 of 95 - Partaking of the Eucharistic species is at best ineffectual if unaccompanied by the obedience of faith

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

1Cor11:26-30 *As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy way, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a person must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For the one who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not discern the body. For this reason **many among you are weak and sick, and a number are deceased.***

COMMENTS

The previous few posts have examined the centrality of the Eucharist within the life of the Church and for individual Christians. In the passage quoted above, Paul is primarily concerned with how the Corinthian Christians were **conducting themselves** at the Lord's Supper – disgracefully in some cases. In the wording of my thesis, their participation was not accompanied by the obedience of faith; or indeed faith itself, “*failing to discern the body*” (v29). But many Christians today should perhaps ask themselves, **why are the penalties for partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily so drastic?** “*For this reason, many among you are weak and sick, and a number are deceased*” (v30). Such would hardly be the penalty for half-hearted hymn singing or insincere praying – No, Paul is intimating here that partaking in the Lord's Supper is quite different from any other act of worship.

A few chapters back Paul described the chalice as “the cup of blessing that we bless, being the communion of the blood of Christ” (10:16). For the first 28 years of my Christian life, I understood the bread and wine to be merely symbolic of the body and blood of Christ. My understanding has changed, particularly since the spiritual encounter that led to my book and these posts. That is especially in view of Jesus’ teaching in John 6, not least where He states:

*“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. **This is the bread that has come down from heaven**, so that anyone may eat from it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats from this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I will give for the life of the world also is My flesh.” Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, “**How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?**” (Jn6:49-52)*

This harks back to the previous chapter of Paul’s epistle (1Cor10) in which he warned the Corinthian Church that they were no more spiritually secure than their Jewish forefathers who were as much “the people of God” as they were. However, there is a difference, for as the text from Jn6 indicates, until Jesus was incarnated, lived, died and was resurrected, the Bread of Life and Cup of Salvation were not available. Yet if the latter were merely symbolic, why would that have mattered? But it **did** matter: *“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. **I am the living bread that has (only now) come down from heaven**” (Jn6:49).* Likewise, the symbolic “drinking from the rock that represented Christ” (1Cor10) did not result in the spiritual life to which Jesus referred.

Neither did the animal sacrifices: *“For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the form of those things itself, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually every year, **make those who approach perfect**” (Heb10:1).* The blood of Christ on the other hand provides both pardon **and sanctification** to the participant. Again, if the bread and wine were merely symbolic why would the animal’s blood and sacrifice that **symbolically prefigured**

Christ's atoning death not have been equally efficacious? But then there is the witness of the earliest Christian writers, and that is what ratified the issue for me.

THESIS 69

Thesis #69 of 95 - What Christians are being saved from is the malign influence of the mortal intellectual vessel which the soul/spirit currently inhabits

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Rom7:23-24 *I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my (spiritual) mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the **body of this death**? I thank God it is **through Jesus Christ our Lord**.*

1Pet4:6 *For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as people, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.*

Mk9:49-50 *For everyone will be salted with fire, **salt being good**; but if the salt becomes unsaltable, how can it be made salty again?*

Mt 15:13 *But (Jesus) answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant will be uprooted.*

1Jn3:12a *Be not as Cain, who was **of the Evil One** and murdered his brother.*

COMMENTS

I have been explaining that a human being's spirit is created in God's image before being planted into a morally disordered procreated intellectual vessel at the commencement of life. Whilst that earthen vessel's control centre or brain is procreated, the faculties pertaining to man's spiritual component **being the part of us that survives physical death** are from God. As Paul explained, that results in opposing

laws governing flesh and spirit within the human psyche (cf. Rom7:23; Eccles12:7). Rejecting such a hypothesis implies **either** that human reproductive organs are capable of producing what is spiritual and eternal **or** that God through Christ directly creates and plants within man a spiritual entity polluted by sin, hateful towards its Creator and deserving of eternal torment from its conception. Neither is acceptable: the one opposes reason; the other opposes the notion of a God described In Scripture as love personified. Paul's "body of this death" resolves the matter, indicating man's moral and spiritual predicament to be temporal [note#1], as more explicitly does Peter (1Pet4:6).

A sinful nature cannot and does not derive from what God has directly provided to man but from the intellectual vessel procreated ultimately from our first parents that the God-given soul/spirit currently inhabits. Whilst the devil's desire is to darken man's mind, the Creator's wish has always been to enlighten man. That is for the benefit of human society, the creative order set under man and the wellbeing of his own soul. Such He does through the Christ-enlightened human spirit (Jn1:9KJV) that all possess but not all reference. For not all soul were planted by God (Mt15:13; 1Jn3:12 – a recent post elucidates). Of those that are, many do not benefit from salvation in Christ whilst in mortal flesh. The post I have just highlighted delineates these distinctions.

NOTE #1 – By which I mean that the body and brain, unlike the soul, pertains to a temporary feature of a person's journey through eternity. But especially in the unsaved, that vessel's corrosive impact upon the soul can have more enduring consequences, requiring what Jesus describes as salting. But some souls will be beyond redemption, being unsaltable. (Mk9:49-50).

THESIS 70

Thesis #70 of 95 - By attending to the means of grace and persevering in the faith the Christian is enabled to “possess his vessel in sanctification and honour”. Such is the immediate purpose of Christian salvation as well as a preparation for future glory as the corporate Bride of Christ

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

1Thes4:4 *That every one of you should know how to **possess his vessel** in sanctification and honour (KJV.)*

1Thes5:23 – *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your **SPIRIT AND SOUL AND BODY** be kept complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Rom8:16 – *The **Spirit** Himself testifies with **our spirit** that **we** are children of God/*

Gal6:18 – *The **grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ be with **your spirit**, brothers and sisters. Amen.*

COMMENTS

This thesis pertains to the human soul: its origins and nature, which I described in the Little Book of Providence as follows:

A creationist understanding of the soul’s origin^[1] maintains that each person’s soul/spirit, i.e. that which is separated from the body at death, is created immediately by God and planted into the embryo procreated by the parents. Such has been the prevalent view within Eastern Orthodoxy and is also the official teaching of the Roman

Church^[2] albeit Augustine had wavered from it. Through original sin, the divinely created spirit finds itself within a morally sickly environment, or expressed another way is required to operate through an impure medium – the procreated body of death. Physiologically the physical and spiritual entities (body and soul/spirit) are in union, yet they have opposing moral impulses. Augustine, considered to be the first Christian anthropologist had started well, aptly applying the analogy “your body is your wife”: the couple were once in perfect harmony but following the Fall are in combat with one another. Paul however goes further: these two entities are influenced by separate and distinct laws or engrained principles; the body, being the corrupted medium through which the soul/spirit (Paul’s “inner man”) functions, has impulses of its own:

“For I am gratified by the law of God in my inner man, but I perceive a different law in my bodily members warring with the law in my mind and bringing me into captivity to the sinful law that is in my bodily members”^[3]

The “law in one’s members” refers to the senses perceived through the members of the body processed by the brain, an organ that, it must be remembered, is part of the procreated vessel through which the divinely planted soul/spirit must operate. Like the rest of the body it ultimately derives from fallen Adam’s loins and is heading for the

grave. The human psyche, emotions and motivations cannot be contained within that vital organ or entirely derived from it, for when the soul leaves the body it is conscious and memory-retaining as Scripture affirms; the rich man wondering why he must experience suffering in Hades was told by Abraham to “remember that in your lifetime you received good things and likewise Lazarus evil things, so now he is comforted and you are tormented”^[4]. Paul’s reference in this context to the “law of God” is referring to a moral sense of right and wrong, in particular the need to exercise love and consideration for others, which the apostle confirms was always the law’s (and the Torah’s) heart and purpose^[5]. It is intuitive, being the outworking of the human conscience^[6] which is clear or “clean” when one obeys that principle, guilty when one does not.

[Extract from “The Little Book of Providence” chapter two.]

[1] Explanation and historical background: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creationism_%28soul%29

[2] Catechism of the Catholic Church #366 http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P1B.HTM

[3] Rom7:23

[4] Lk16:25

[5] Rom13:9-10

[6] Rom2:15

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The seemingly obvious yet often eluded point to grasp is that the soul and the vessel (body and brain) it inhabits during mortal life are ***both intellectual entities***. That results in the ***mental conflict*** Paul is referring to in Romans chapter seven. It is usually translated and interpreted as pertaining to the Holy Spirit versus sinful human nature as a whole. In fact the apostle is referring to the ***contrasting laws*** (i.e. governing principles) of the universal God-given spirit (“inner man” incorporating the conscience) versus the thinking and processing of the human brain. Hence, Paul’s summation of salvation in Christ – what it is from and what it is for – Rom7:23-25.

THESES 71, 72 AND 73

Thesis #71 of 95 - The Abrahamic covenant superseded by the Covenant of Christ's blood are exclusive covenants

Thesis #72 of 95 - Ishmael was blessed by God and his father Abraham but not elected to the exclusive covenant designated for Isaac and his seed

Thesis #73 of 95 - The Church, like Isaac, are the children of promise

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Gen4:7 (Masoretic) *If you (Cain) do what is right will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, Sin is crouching at the portal and desired to have you – you must master him.*

Gen4:13-14 *Cain replied to the Lord, my punishment is too much for me to bear; THIS DAY you are driving me from the land and I WILL BE HIDDEN FROM YOUR PRESENCE.*

Gen17:20-21 (KJV) *As for Ishmael I have heard thee: behold I have blessed him and will make him fruitful... **but my covenant I will establish with Isaac.***

Gal4:28 *And you, brothers (and sisters), **like Isaac**, are the children of promise.*

Eph1:4-5 *God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love. He predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.*

Jam1:18 *Through His own predetermined will He gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would be a **kind of first fruits** among His creatures.*

COMMENTS

This pertains to a crucial aspect of divine providence, being the main topic of the second chapter of The Little Book of Providence. Such needs to be consulted to provide an adequate explanation for these three related theses. For that chapter equally concerns a related **overarching** covenant in which Cain and Abel were the players (Gen4:7-14).

Unlike the Abrahamic and Christian covenants referred to in these theses, that was a universal and **inclusive** covenant. And seemingly it has been universally eluded by theologians. Christians therefore usually understood there to be **one** soteriological covenant for each testament period. And regardless of whether they discern or acknowledge the matter, it is exclusive in nature.

These theses challenge that notion, firstly by observing that Abel and many others were declared righteous before the Abrahamic Covenant was established. Secondly, by the narrative concerning Ishmael. He had been circumcised, **blessed by God** and by his father Abraham and sent on his way in peace. Yet he was excluded from the covenant initiated through his father. For the seed of his union with Sarah were to be the children of promise. And in view of the indisputably biblical principle of election/predestination featuring in recent posts, such is the Church in the current epoch.

As Paul affirmed, it is the church who **like Isaac** are the children of promise (Gal4:28). And baptized Christians are in the elective covenant that replaced Abraham's and they are there by grace alone. Others like Ishmael are loved by God but not elected to that exclusive family predestined before the foundation of the world to form the community in which the education and spiritual resources are provided for individuals to become holy and faultless in love before God through Jesus Christ (Eph1:4-5). Such is the Church, priesthood for the world,

brought forth by God's will to be the first fruit of a restored universe (Jam1:18).

THESIS 74

*Thesis #74 of 95 - Like Isaac, those within
the Covenants of Promise are elected
through unmerited grace*

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Gen17:18-20 Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before You!” But God said, “No, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and **you shall name him Isaac**; and I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. **As for Ishmael**, I have heard you; behold, **I will bless him**, and make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly.

Gal4:28 And you, brothers and sisters, **like Isaac**, are the children of promise.

Phil3:13-14 Brothers, **I do not regard myself as possessing it as yet**, but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for **the prize of the high calling of God** in Christ Jesus.

COMMENTS

This follows on from the previous thesis’s assertion that the Church **like Isaac** are the children of promise. Yet through Abraham, all nations were to be blessed yet not necessarily through incorporation into that exclusive covenant.

Covenantal election

The point of the thesis is that Isaac had been **elected** to the Abrahamic covenant, and Paul mentions Isaac by name as effectively he is its patriarchal head, Abraham’s other son Ishmael having been excluded. It therefore hardly needs to be said that Isaac’s election was entirely a matter of grace. He was chosen simply because he was the child **promised** to Sarah and Abraham in their old age.

The same is effectively the case for those who are called out from the world and into the Church [Greek ἐκκλησία = the called-out ones]. Such all-of-grace ***election*** and the staggering rewards that go with it (Rev3:21 🤩) may appear to challenge God's loving and equitable nature. Not so once the self-sacrificial demands and conditionality of attaining such a goal has been grasped (Phi3:13-14 above) together with an understanding of biblical salvation's ***context within broader benign providence*** that I have been outlining.

THESIS 75

Thesis #75 of 95 - Christ as personal Saviour may only be apprehended by those the Father chooses for Him

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

John6:44 *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and **I will raise him up on the last day.***

John1:12-13 *As many as received (Christ), to them God gave the capacity to become children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, **nor of the will of a man, but of God.***

Rom7:24-25a *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from **the body of this death?** Thanks be to God (it is) through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

Rom8:29 *For those He foreknew, He also predestined **to become conformed to the image of His Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers.*

Heb1:3 *(Jesus) is the radiance of God's glory and the **exact representation** of His nature, who upholds all things by the word of His power, and who when He had **provided a purification** of sins (καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος), sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

Jn14:9 *Jesus said to him, "Have I been such a **long time with you** and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father; so why say 'Show us the Father'?"*

COMMENTS

Jesus is later joined by Paul, John and Luke (in Acts) in affirming that fallen man is incapable of coming to gospel salvation unless fore ordained and divinely enabled to do so

(e.g., Jn1:13 & 6:44; Rom8:29; Acts13:48). This is a profoundly difficult concept for many bible-believing Christians to get their heads round – evangelistically, theologically and philosophically. At least that is the case for those who ***think the matter through***. In reality, many do not, or possibly dare not.

The theologian's dilemma

So, should one “go liberal” and reject the bible’s teaching on the matter altogether? Or, like myself in the past, one could adopt the Protestant Reformers’ maxim, “*Let God be God*”, i.e. He may appear incomprehensibly unjust and harsh to us but that is His prerogative. Such might be a feasible supposition ***if*** the One who “*exactly represents His Father’s nature*” (Heb1:3) ***even during His earthly ministry*** (Jn14:9) had not demonstrated that that simply cannot be the case. Like Jesus, our Heavenly Father is comprehensively and comprehensibly adorable. He is compassionate, loving and equitable from an enlightened human perspective. Satan (gleefully) and many Western theologians (reluctantly) would have us believe otherwise.

As I have been explaining, such mystifying and unintentional maligning of the divine nature arises from a misunderstanding of the ***context*** of election/predestination within broader providence. That in turn results from a failure to understand what the elect are being saved ***from*** and for what purpose. The verses from Rom 7&8 (above) supply clues for each aspect, the solution is set out in full in the Little Book of Providence.

THESIS 76

*Thesis #76 of 95 - Covenantal admission
is by grace alone; faithfulness is required to
continue benefitting from its privileges.*

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Jn15:2 “Every branch **in Me** that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

Gen4:7(Masoretic) If you (Cain) do well, shall you not be accepted? But if you do not do well, Sin lies at the portal. And **his** desire shall be for you, but you must rule over him.

1Jn3:12 Be not as Cain, who was **of the evil one** and murdered his brother. And for what reason did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil, but his brother’s were righteous.

1Jn4:7-8 “Beloved, let’s love one another; for love is from God, and **everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God**. The one who does not love does not know God, because **God is love**”.

Rom8:29 For those He foreknew, He also **predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers.

Rev3:21 He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.

Rev5:9-10 You (Christ) purchased people for God with Your blood from every tribe, language, people, and nation. You have made them into a kingdom of priests to our God, and **they will reign upon the earth**.

Mk8:34-35 “If anyone wants to come after Me, he must **deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me**. For whoever wants to

save his life will lose it, **but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it**".

1Cor9:27 I (Paul) **strictly discipline my body** and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, **I myself will not be disqualified!**

Rom8:17 Being heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **if in fact we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him**

COMMENTS

This thesis is affirming that everyone who **enters** a covenant with God does so on the basis of grace alone, i.e. divine favour and generosity not dependant on merit. Unmerited grace clearly applied to a Jewish baby born within the Abrahamic Covenant; equally to the Christian baby baptized by the Church and incorporated within the Covenant of Christ's blood. Likewise, to the adult convert **given** faith to apprehend Christ (Eph2:8) and receive Christian baptism. And the human baby, starting with Cain as the world's first infant, freely incorporated within the theologically eluded Universal Covenant of life through the two-way age-enduring merits of Christ's righteous act that universally nullifies Adam's act of disobedience (Rom5:18).

The issue then becomes how one **retains** the benefits of that covenant as opposed to defaulting. The answer is faith or faithfulness [same word in biblical Greek] evidenced by fruit. The Jew who turned from JHWE to idolatry defaults his covenantal privileges. Those in Christ who fail to produce fruit may remain in the Church but will not participate in the marriage of the Lamb, for every branch **in Christ** that fails to bear fruit will be removed (Jn15:2). Members of humanity who fail to produce any fruit in the form of compassionate love (*agape*) like Cain and the Matthew 25 "goats" remain on earth but become alienated from God's loving care. They have a new master to look after their interests, and at least as far ahead as Scripture permits us to foresee will not be incorporated within

God's eternal Kingdom but will receive post-mortem punishment (Mt25:45-46).

The above is almost diametrically opposed to what so many Christians believe today. They understand men and women to have an **innate ability** to come to a saving relationship with Christ. And for those who do it is "all of grace" thereafter; perseverance being guaranteed. Hard-line Calvinists such as myself in the past rightly understand covenantal election to be unconditional. But in view of their binary soteriology, they cannot avoid impugning God's equitable and loving nature. For the logical implication is that those excluded, being the bulk of humanity, have been destined for eternal misery **at the Creator's behest**. Not only is this an odious distortion of divine providence, but it is clearly at odds with the Christmas angels' message of "*Good News of great joy for all people*". Thankfully, such a denigration of Christ's saving work cannot be squared with Scripture as a whole.

GOD IS FAIR TO ALL

In the starkest contrast to the Reformed theology that I grew up with, the covenantal arrangements outlined in para one are **entirely equitable**; the economy of a Creator who is comprehensively and comprehensibly adorable. That is, at least once it is understood that the vast majority who are excluded from the **covenants of promise** (non-Jews in the OT, non-Christians in the current age) are not all "bound for hell". The destiny of the soul after death, as Jesus indicated in the definitive final judgement passage of the New Testament (Mt25:31-46) and as I have been delineating in my writing has little if anything to do with religious faith or practice. It pertains rather to whether one is "of God" or from the Evil One [Greek: *ek tou ponerou*" 1Jn3:12; cf. Mt13:25-28 (see note#1); Mt15:13]. As Mt25 affirms, such a categorization is not determined by religious faith or practice but whether one has shown in life the capacity to exercise "*agape*" (compassionate love), of which our Creator is the personification (1Jn4:7-8 vis-a-vis 1Jn3:12).

In terms of God's justice, God's "elect" enjoy privileges now and shall do so immeasurably more in the ages to come compared to the rest. But their glorious inheritance is something that the majority have simply not been prepared for, in this life at least (Rom8:29; Rev3:21; Rev5:9-10). And as related in this thesis, their rewards are dependent on continued faithfulness. "Rewards" indeed, for as Jesus and Paul in particular make clear, to "*attain to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ*" involves personal sacrifice, self-discipline, even suffering in the present (Mk8:34-35; 1Cor9:27; Rom8:17).

Truly, we shall praise God with uprightness of heart when we have learnt of His righteous judgements (Ps119:7).

NOTE#1 *The parable of the wheat and darnel is often portrayed by commentators as relating to the church whereas Jesus makes clear the satanic seed has been planted in **the world** (Mt13:38). The related parable for the Church is provided by Paul (2Tim2:19-21).*

THESIS 77

Thesis #77 of 95 - Everyone is to be judged and rewarded according to their life and legacy; not for the gifts they were privileged to receive but how they have been utilized

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Rom2:6-11 (God) will repay each person **according to his works**: to those who by perseverance **in doing good** seek after glory, honor, and immortality He will give eternal life. But to those who are self-serving and do not obey truth but unrighteousness He will give wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of mankind who does evil, for the Jew first and for the Greek, but glory, honor, and peace **to everyone who does what is good**, to the Jew first and to the Greek. For **there is no partiality with God**.

Titus2:11-15 The grace of God has appeared **for the salvation of the human race** teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts to live **sensibly, righteously and devoutly** in the current age, anticipating the blessed hope and shekinah of our great God and the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sake so that we should be **delivered from lawlessness** and be purified as a **specially chosen people for himself** burning with **zeal to do good works!!!**

1Jn4:16b-17 GOD IS LOVE, and **anyone who abides in love abides in God**, and God abides in them. Thereby love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because **just as God is, so are we in this world**.

Mt16:27(KJV) The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with his angels; and then He shall **reward every man according to his works**.

Mt5:45-47 **Prove yourselves to be sons of your Father who is in heaven!** For He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. So if you only love those who love you, **what reward do you have?** Even the tax collectors, do they not do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, **what more are you doing than others?** Even the Gentiles, do they not do the same?

COMMENTS

The two Pauline texts included above are regarded by many as anomalous, i.e., contrary to what they understand to be at the heart of the rest of Paul's teaching. As I am in the process of demonstrating, that is because in the footsteps of Augustine they are misunderstanding the apostle's teaching concerning faith, justification, law and the economy of grace. My earlier post summarizes the juridical aspects, whilst the above texts from Romans chapter two and Titus summarize **Paul's** understanding of what God is like and how He will judge the world. And it is in line with every other author and teacher of the New Testament including Jesus Himself.

God is a rewarding God, fair and just towards all; utterly impartial. His judgements will be on the basis of our works and legacy – whether or not the world is a better place for us having been a part of it. And as Jesus and James tend to emphasize, that judgement will also be **redistributive and compensatory**. As another earlier post explains, it will take account of circumstances and opportunities (disabled beggar Lazarus had little of either whilst the rich man had plenty).

The Creator's **ways** may be extraordinary but in the starkest contrast to the god of Luther and the Reformers, Paul's God and mine is thoroughly comprehensible and reasonable in terms of His justice and judgements. And that is just as well, for as John astonishingly affirms (above), Christians are to be **like** God in the world. God is love personified; everyone who loves is of God whilst the Christian is being perfected in love such that God abides in him and he in God.

Volumes more could be written concerning the subject of this thesis, and they have been. The above biblical references summarize the situation regarding God's nature, justice and judgements. And I have capitalized the passage from Titus where Paul summarizes the pivotal role Jesus Christ **and His elect people** play within God's saving purposes for this fallen, broken world. [Note who the Christian elect are and **what they are for**, according to Paul: "a **specialty chosen people for God**, purified and burning with zeal to perform good works"].

All this has to be (and now has been) reconciled with the rest of Scripture to provide a **cohesive account** of God's wondrous providential purposes for humanity and the Good News of His coming kingdom. According to One who should know, such **is** to be proclaimed to the nations before the current arrangements on Earth are concluded (Mt24:14).

THESES 78, 79 AND 80



Thesis #78 of 95 - Hell is as much a reality as Heaven and can potentially involve sensual pain for its inhabitants

Thesis #79 of 95 - As in life, post-mortem punishment can be for the purpose of healing as well as destruction

Thesis #80 of 95 - God has intimated that every soul that can be healed and restored shall ultimately be so, for He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Luk16:24 *Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.*

Mk9:45-50 *If your foot should be your downfall, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye should be your downfall, tear it out; it is better for you to enter into the Kingdom of God*

*with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, in which their worm will never dies nor their fire be put out. For **everyone will be salted with fire – salt being a good thing** but if salt has become insipid, how can you make it salty again. Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.*

*1Cor3:14-15If anyone's work which he has built on it remains, he will **receive a reward**. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet only **so as through fire**.*

COMMENTS

This is undoubtedly a perplexing area of biblical study and not surprisingly has been a catalyst for distortions in both the practice of the Christian faith and the presentation of the Gospel. These three related theses affirm that such a place as hell exists, but also that judgemental fire can be for the purpose of purification as much as for punishment.

The featured photo is the township of Hell in Michigan, USA. Likewise, Gehenna (the hell of the bible) was named after a place on earth – the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem. That had been used as a waste dump for the city, constantly smouldering and smoking. Heinous deeds were also associated with this valley during the time when Jerusalem was ruled by pagans, including the sacrifice of children.

As Jesus makes clear in his parable, the hell of the bible is a place of punishment and is best avoided. But for most attendees it is likely to be a place of learning (the hard way), self-enlightenment, purging and preparation. For there is no distinction between the fires of hell and “purgatory” either in the bible or the writings of those who had received the Faith directly from the apostle.

And whilst we have a merciful and pardoning God, pardon *per se* is not sufficient for **souls** that have been poisoned and corrupted. Pardon is one thing; fittedness to play a part in the Apostle Peter's longed-for “*new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells*” is another. Purging and salting will be necessary for some; neither can such be guaranteed to be devoid of suffering – sensual and mental.

In terms of longevity, if punishment is to be **proportional** – the principle applied to God’s peoples’ offences against Old Testament Law – it arithmetically cannot be eternal. The New Testament speaks of post-mortem punishment enduring for an age (Greek: αἰώνιος which tends to be **translated** as “eternal”). The notion that punishment in hell can be temporary should be evident from Jesus’ teaching **regarding name calling**. Note the **gradations**: *“I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be answerable to the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be answerable to the Sanhedrin, whilst whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to experience hell fire”* (Mt5:22). Think about it.

Think also about what was scripturally established in the previous few theses – that God is equitable and reasonable, even from a human perspective. What is more, He is rich in mercy. The Creator’s **predisposition** is as follows: *“As I live!’ declares the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live”* (Ezek33:11). He desires that all who can be redeemed **are** redeemed and knows that that process will not be completed for many in this life (Jn6:44; Mt7:14).

An earlier post citing Paul’s reference to those who are saved “as through fire” covers the subject of post-mortem judgement in a bit more detail, including what Jesus meant by the need for souls **to be salted**. That is the key to unravelling this more fearsome dimension to the God-who-is-love’s providential plans for humanity (Rev10:7).

THESIS 81

Thesis #81 of 95 - There are verses in the bible that hint of absolute universalism. Given that the wicked shall undoubtedly receive post-mortem punishment, the matter should have no impact on one's conduct or life choices

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

1Tim4:10 [NASB] – *We have set our hope on the living God, who is the Saviour of all mankind, **especially** of believers.*

Rom7:23-25 *I see **another law** in my (bodily) members, warring against the law of my (spiritual) mind bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from **the body of THIS death**? Thanks be to God, (it is) through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand **I in my mind** am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.*

Rom8:20-21 *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but **because of Him who subjected it**, in hope that the **creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption** into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

1Pet4:6 [KJV] *For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but **live according to God in the spirit**.*

COMMENTS

Many Christians, not least those of my former ilk, have problems with the verses I have quoted, particularly the one from Paul's letter to Timothy concerning God being the Saviour of all mankind ESPECIALLY of those who believe. It appears to undermine their *raison d'être*, indeed the very purpose of the gospel as they understand it. As a former Evangelical myself I

remember questioning my pastor about the verse. I was assured that theologians were working on the matter; the matter being the meaning of “*μάλιστα*” rightly translated as I have quoted from the NASB as “*especially*”. Presumably, these theologians are **still** working on it for “*μάλιστα*” is “*μάλιστα*” – it can only be translated as “*especially*” or some very similar synonym/phrase such as “*chiefly*” or “*most of all*”. It **cannot** be translated as “*specifically*”, “*exclusively*” or “*that is*” which is what most would have expected Paul to have written in this context. The Greek word’s usage can be verified by examining every occurrence of *μάλιστα* in the New Testament on bible hub and noting that in all cases it can only sensibly mean what has just been stated.

Other attempts to explain this verse in the context of traditional binary soteriology include the notion that Paul is referring on the one hand to human life and on the other to a soul’s eternal destiny. The problem is that whilst God certainly sustains all life, He does not in any sense **save everybody** from the disasters of life, even from an early grave. A significant proportion historically have through no fault of their own or their parents failed to survive infancy. Paul must therefore be referring to people’s eternal estate. For, after all, why did God create man in His own image in the first place? It was surely that as the pinnacle of His creation along with the angels, we should come to know Him, worship Him and enjoy Him – if not in this life, then in that which follows.

Others argue that Paul meant that God is the **only** One who can save anyone. But read the verse through again – “*μάλιστα*” (=especially) simply cannot be made to fit that meaning. Others again (*μάλιστα* 😊 Arminian Evangelicals) say Paul is making the point that Christ’s atonement was unlimited – He died for all. He did, but, as they would agree, only those who come to know Him as their personal Saviour are saved in the gospel sense. So again, *μάλιστα*” cannot be made to fit the bill.

No, either Paul is being dangerously clumsy with his wording, or he is theologically unsound (in which case we cannot really

trust his teaching at all) **OR** he means exactly what he writes. That is effectively that there is salvation and there is SALVATION – which is precisely the case I have been making throughout. My other quotation from Romans 7 indicates how this comes about, but only when that passage is taken literally (e.g., “flesh”= bodily flesh, not “sinful nature”). As I have been explaining, the central soteriological problem he identifies in that chapter is “the body of this death”. That is, the procreated intellectual vessel in which (from a soul-creationist perspective) the God-given spirit temporarily resides.

The result is that whilst our “inner man”/“heart”/spiritual essence/conscience inclines us to do what Paul affirms elsewhere ***fulfils both the spirit and summation of God’s Law*** (treating others as we would ourselves – Rom13:9), we tend ***to act*** more selfishly in view of the “*different law in the bodily members*” (Rom7:23), i.e. the opposing impulses of the bodily senses as they are processed through the brain. So, asks Paul, who alone can deliver us from the body of this death such that we are consistently enabled to overcome our fleshly instincts? It is our Saviour God through Jesus Christ (v25).

Thus, only the Christian can be saved from the corrupting influence of the procreated intellectual vessel whilst the soul and spirit inhabit it. In Paul’s language, only the Christian “*can possess his own vessel in sanctity and honour*” (1Thes4:4). The remedy for the rest is more drastic – physical death when body and brain are buried or incinerated. But except they die in infancy, their souls will have been tainted, potentially poisoned and corrupted by the lives they have lived in mortal flesh. As covered in the previous thesis, that could require what Jesus described as “salting in fire” before the soul can rest in heaven prior to bodily resurrection within “*the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells*” (2Pet3:13).

As should also be evident from the previous thesis, my endeavour has been to outline a vastly broader benign providence than traditional bible-based Christianity has previously envisaged, ***not*** to make the case for absolute universalism. Paul on the other hand could be, ***if*** he had been

given insights concerning what is to happen in future epochs (cf. Eph2:7). Unlike him, I have not been “*caught up into paradise to hear unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter*” (2Cor12:4). I have to rely on what has been at least implicated in Scripture. So going back to Jesus’s teaching, He indicates that some people are **beyond** salting or purging (Mk9:50). That implies they could never repent or change from what they have become – whatever enlightening or processing they might receive. They **refuse** to be saved.

Yet even if that is the case, God can still be regarded as the Saviour of all humanity. For, if given further opportunity to repent and having been **enlightened with gospel truth** (which is assuredly not the case for the majority in this life – cf. 1Pet4:6), a soul still refuses to acquiesce, God, however loving, would not force anyone against their will to **act** and **be** what they are incapable of doing and being – most especially to love and serve Christ. But then such a soul might no longer be regarded as fully human – if there is not so much as a flicker of resemblance to the divine image, at the heart of which is love. And so, it could be said, **for all true humanity**, God **is** their Saviour, but more immediately and gloriously so for those who having believed (and also shared in Christ’s suffering), become the heirs of God and co-heirs with His Son (Rom8:17).

THESES 82 AND 83

Thesis #82 of 95 - The Christian's ultimate destiny is bodily resurrection as Joint-Consort to the King of Kings, not "Requiem Eternam"

Thesis #83 of 95 - There is to be a new Heaven AND a new earth where righteousness dwells

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

1Cor11:30 *For this reason (disrespecting the Eucharist) many among you are weak and sick, and a number even **asleep**.*

1Cor15:51-52 *I tell you a mystery; **we will not all sleep**, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised!*

Rom8:23 *Also we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons and daughters, i.e., **the redemption of our body!***

2Cor5:2 *In this **tent** we are groaning, longing to be clothed with our dwelling which is **FROM** heaven [Greek: ἐξ οὐρανοῦ].*

2Pet3:13 *According to His promise we are looking for new heavens **and a new earth**, in which righteousness has been established.*

COMMENTS

The essentials of these two related theses are summarized in the verses above. Firstly, that physical death, as depicted by Paul and others, is described as falling asleep and those who have died are regarded in Scripture as **being** asleep. It follows therefore that what departed souls are currently experiencing in

the afterlife **is a temporary situation**. Just as in life, sleep is a transitory and confined state of being.

The Good News is there is to be life **after** life-after-death, and it shall be physical in nature – both in terms of individuals' state of being and their environment. That is not speculation but the indisputable teaching of the bible. It was demonstrated by Christ Himself after His resurrection when he met and breakfasted with His disciples. And Paul describes Jesus in this context as the first fruit of all who sleep (1Cor15:20).

The source of mankind's problem with sin

As I have been explaining, mankind's problem resulting from the Fall is what Paul variously describes as our "vessel" (1Thes4:4), "tent" (2Cor5:2) "body of sin" (Rom6:6), or "body of this death" (Rom7:24). I tend to refer to this entity as our "procreated intellectual vessel". "Procreated" to indicate its immediate and material origins and "intellectual" in that it **incorporates the brain**. As an earlier thesis explains, Paul's teaching here is at the heart of what gospel salvation is **for** and seemingly has been misunderstood by virtually everyone. It is evident from the verse quoted from Rom8 that what Paul understands the Christian awaits so as to be adopted into God's immediate family is the **redemption of the body** (v23).

Christians have traditionally understood the **source** of fallen mankind's problem to be his "heart" and soul. In terms of the spiritual component's origins, soul-creationists rightly understand that God implants our spiritual essence (that which survives physical death) within the embryo at or prior to birth. This accords with Paul and Peter's vessel/tent language – the spiritual essence is the real us, the body and brain make up the vessel in which our eternal souls temporarily reside. That, no doubt is why Augustine came to reject soul-creationism. The implication in the context of **his** theology (largely adopted by the Western Church), is that man had been divinely provided with what is sin-ridden and then punished for possessing it. The alternative perspective (traducianism) is the extraordinary idea that the spiritual and eternal essence of man is derived from that which is material and temporal (sperm and ovaries). Soul-

creationism (in the context of Western theology) is unavoidably God-maligning whilst traducianism is quite irrational. Both will have delighted Satan's ears, for in the first case it depicts the Creator as perverse or hateful, and in both cases depicts man as rotten **at his core**.

Not so, writes Paul in Rom7:14-25 – at least, that will be seen to be the case once it is accepted that the apostle affirms man to be comprised of body, soul **and spirit** (cf. 1Thes5:23). Also, that his references to “flesh” literally mean flesh, not “sinful nature”. Likewise, his references to “mind” in that passage pertain not to the brain but to the moral outworking of the spirit or “inner man” (v22). The latter, Paul affirms in v20 is his true self – not his temporary vessel, but the eternal essence it houses which departs the body at death. That is itself an intellectual, memory-retraining entity (cf. Lk16:25). This contextualizes the inner mental conflict he is describing in Rom7 that results in two opposing laws or governing principles within his psyche (v23). And when the apostle speaks of “the law in my members” he is of course referring to the bodily senses as they are processed through the brain. That organ, wondrous as it is, is the ultimate, albeit temporal source of man's problem with sin.

Location and environment

2Cor5:2 when rightly translated affirms that the soul's eternal dwelling is not “our heavenly home”, as in many bible versions, but that which is **from** heaven (ἐξ οὐρανοῦ), namely our resurrection body (the NASB rightly affirms this in its annotation). And as the apostle Peter (2Pet3:13) writes, the current earth is to be either renewed or replaced by **another earth** in which righteousness **has been established** [Greek: κατοικεῖ]. It should be evident by now, even to non-premillennialists, that such cannot happen on this earth until Christ has returned.

This, like much else I have set out, will be alien to many. But unlike any theological system I am aware of, these interpretations are integrated within a cohesive synopsis of the whole bible in The Little Book of Providence. It is that intrinsic

cohesion that, apart from the extraordinary experiences I have encountered, is the greatest evidence of the Holy Spirit's enabling in this undertaking. For I know it to be far beyond anything I could possibly devise unaided.

THESIS 84

Thesis #84 of 95 - The precise function and destiny of God's elect people has yet to be disclosed - but it in view of their designated status it must align with that of their Spouse, whose universal governance and reign of peace shall continue for ever

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Is9:6,7 *A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. **There will be no end to the increase of His government** of of peace.*

Mt19:28-30 *At the **regeneration** [παλιγγενεσία], when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you (the 12) also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms on account of My name, **will receive many times as much**, and will inherit eternal life.* ³⁰ *But **many who are first will be last**; and the last, first.*

1Cor6:3 *Do you not know that we will **judge angels**? How much more matters of this life?*

Rev5:9-10 *You (O Christ) purchased people for God with Your blood from every tribe, language, people, and nation. You have made them to be **kings and priests** to our God, and **they will reign upon the earth.**"*

Rev19:7 *Let's rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, because the **marriage of the Lamb** has come, and **His bride** has prepared herself."*

Gen15:5 *He took (Abram) outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens and count the stars, if indeed you are able*

to count them.” And He said to him, “**So shall your descendants be.** 🙄

COMMENTS

Given that God’s elect are designated to be the future corporate-Spouse of Jesus Christ, one would expect they would **share in His activities**, which must pertain to sovereignty, rule, judgement and the like. As Isaiah foretold concerning the Church’s Bridegroom-to-be: *“Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His Kingdom, to order and establish it with judgement and justice from that time forward, even for ever”**.*

The concept that the Jesus people are to judge, rule and enlighten others is not restricted to Old Testament prophecies, it is evident in the gospels, epistles and Revelation, some verses from which have been quoted above. However, the qualities required for those who have already been reconciled to God as His children are faithfulness, humility and self-discipline. That is why Jesus taught that it is next to impossible for the rich and powerful of **this** age to enter the Kingdom of God (Mk10:25) – they lack the humility. And ironically in view of what I am disclosing here, they believe they have too much to lose in following Christ.

That in part is because, as considered in my previous thesis, many Christians have an over-spiritualized view of the afterlife: harps, clouds, beatific visions and the like, which naturally is reflected in the churches’ evangelism. For sure, such a scenario may indeed apply to what is currently experienced in heaven, and no doubt it is more blissful than anything that could be experienced whilst in mortal flesh. But the souls of the departed are depicted in Scripture as **being asleep** whereas I am referring to the soul’s **ultimate** destiny – when it shall be re-embodied and very much awake.

What Jesus indicates in that context is a perfected and perpetual version of what we have experienced on earth (e.g., Mt19:28-30). And given the indisputable physicality, the new age of necessity must be at least as hierarchical as the current one (cf. Mk10:40), albeit that the order shall have radically changed. For as Paul affirmed (1Cor1:26), relatively few from the higher ranks of human society have come to gospel salvation. The weak and foolish of this world are to shame the wise and mighty (1Cor1:26-27) so that no one may boast in God's presence. [As Jesus affirmed, His disciples are necessarily "losers" in the worldly sense Mt16:25].

And ***there will be no boasting***, for personal priorities and aspirations will be so very different. Many who seek power and privilege in the current age do so out of greed or hubris. But having ***in life*** been conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), that will not be the case for the elect of God. The apotheosis of ***their*** joy will be to see Jesus Christ and ***Him glorified***; their greatest privilege to be that they of all people will be the most closely associated with Him. And the thrill of their hearts will be that the new earth "***WILL be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea***"(Hab2:14). As to yet more distant aeons, speculators might look to the skies and extrapolate.

THESIS 85

Thesis #85 of 95 - The elect are not the totality of God's children but their firstborn, the first fruits of all true humanity

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Heb12:23 *To the general assembly and church of the firstborn ones who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.*

James1:18 *In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a **kind of first fruits** among His creatures.*

Rom8:23 *We who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, that is, **the redemption of our body!***

Rom8:29 *Those whom He foreknew, He **also predestined** to become conformed to the image of his Son, so that **He would be the Firstborn among many brothers.***

Rom13:9 *For this, "You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet," and if there is **any other commandment**, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."*

COMMENTS

Firstly, a word about the terminology. "Firstborn" in the bible **can** mean in the literal sense the first person out of a mother's womb, for example Jesus being the firstborn of Mary. In the Old Testament the firstborn son is the one who inherits his father's estate. It brings responsibilities as well as privilege and honour, which is why Esau incurred divine condemnation for disowning his birth right as firstborn son for the sake of a tasty meal. However, first-from-the-womb is not what is being

referred to in the verses quoted above, either in the case of Jesus or His elect people. The title infers a superiority in privilege and authority over others, who nevertheless have a familial connection with that firstborn.

The clear and incontrovertible case is that of Jesus with respect to His faithful followers, *aka* the elect [Rom8:29 (above) which also indicates **why** they are referred to as “the elect”]. The amazing thing is not that Jesus is superior to His disciples but that He regards the latter as His own family. For as Paul affirms, the Christian is to be adopted into the bosom of God’s family, at least **once his body has been redeemed** (Rom8:23). [If you have been following my recent posts, you should know why **that** is.]

But the point of this thesis is that the elect (whose Firstborn is Christ – Rom8:29) themselves act as the firstborn of the whole human race. James also describes Christ’s people as “*the first fruits of all creation*” (James1:18). The writer to the Hebrews depicts the elect of God as the “church of the firstborn” (Heb12:23), the key point being that “firstborn” [Greek: πρωτοτόκων] is plural. It is not referring to Christ but His people.

Of whom are they the firstborn? It is of all who are “of God”, most of whom are not “the elect”. For as the New Testament also affirms, **everyone who loves** is born of God and knows God (1Jn4:7); everyone who loves his neighbour as himself fulfils the spirit and heart of God’s law (Rom13:9); everyone who possess “*agape*” such that they show compassion to the needy (with whom the Son of Man personally identifies) shall be accepted into God’s Kingdom (Mt25:40).

Yet by no means are all the above “saved” in the gospel sense. For that pertains to being delivered from “the body of this death” (Rom7:24-25) through a relationship with Christ and the enabling of the Holy Spirit. It enables God’s chosen ones to “*put to death the deeds of the body*” and have their “*consciences cleansed from dead works to serve the living God*” (Heb9:14). Paul also refers to God’s elect as having the “*first fruits of the Spirit*” (Rom8:23). In all the above

cases, “**first** fruit” is indicative that more shall follow. Likewise, the church being “the firstborn ones” infers that they have (or are to have) an overseeing/ruling/representational role within a much larger family.

THESES 86 AND 87

Thesis #86 of 95 - The current age is not the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies in a spiritualized form but in terms of salvation history is a dispensation established to recruit Gentiles to the Messianic community

Thesis #87 of 95 - The Gentile's unexpected, and according to Paul "unnatural" incorporation into the messianic community was to create "the fellowship pertaining to the secret (plan) hidden in God" . Although fore-ordained by the Father, this augmentation resulted from the refusal of God's first-choice nation to acknowledge their Messiah even after His resurrection and ascension to glory

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Eph3:9-10 (Paul), shedding light on the administration (or fellowship) of the secret (plan) that in previous ages had been **hidden in God**; so that the multifaceted nature of His wisdom might become known **through** the church **to** the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

Acts18:6 But when (the Jewish leaders) resisted and blasphemed, (Paul) shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! **I am clean, so from now on I will go to the Gentiles.**"

Rom11:11 (The Jews) did not stumble so as to fall, did they? Far from it! For **as a result of their rejection salvation has come to the Gentiles**, to provoke them to jealousy!

Rom11:16-17a If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are as well. But if some

*of the branches were broken off, and you (Gentiles), **being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches.***

COMMENTS

The mysteries set out in these two related theses were the focal point of my first book “Fellowship of the Secret”. It resulted from what I am clear was a revelation from the Holy Spirit. But it was the Apostle Paul who first disclosed such mysteries. All, humanly speaking that I did was to take Paul at his word, more particularly in two of the passages quoted above – Eph3:9-12 and Romans11:11 (and related verses 12,15 and 30). Namely, that what we understand as gospel salvation had never been envisaged (in Old Testament prophecy) for non-Jews in the current age. And it only became available to Gentiles in view of Jewish failure and unbelief.

That is unquestionably what Paul wrote, but he is hardly ever taken literally, largely in view of what the churches understand the New Testament to mean by “salvation” – i.e., that it is referring to the means by which human souls are to avoid perdition. As I have been explaining in the earlier theses that is simply not the case.

So firstly, note Paul’s rebuke to the Jewish leaders in Acts18:6 (above). Why should Paul **not** have been clean (i.e. have a clear conscience) if he brought such a message of salvation to the Gentiles and the Jews had **not** rejected it? Was not such salvation envisaged for all? Clearly not: “**For as a result of the Jews’ rejection, salvation has come to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy**” (Rom11:11).

Much as exegetes might seek to dissemble, the Greek wording cannot be made to mean that Paul was speaking of protocol or order (i.e. preach to the Jews first then move on to the Gentiles), the transition occurred **because of** the Jew’s rejection of Christ and the message concerning Him. This only makes sense once it is has been understood that there is salvation and there is SALVATION. The latter was earmarked for

the Jews alone in Old Testament prophecy but was to be made available to the nations through Paul's revelation concerning the Gentile's unexpected spiritual inheritance.

"Salvation" as foretold for the Gentile nations meant they would be enlightened by the Jews and pardoned in the name of Jesus if they acknowledged the Jewish Messiah as their Lord and Saviour. They would thereby receive absolution, for *"all who call on the name of the Lord shall be spared"*.

"SALVATION" on the other hand meant to be ***born again*** by water and Spirit, delivered from corruption by means of sanctification in the blood of sprinkling (Heb12:24) resulting in eternal life, being an interior communion with Christ and the Spirit, participation in God's royal priesthood and a joint inheritance with the Lord of Glory. This privilege had been intended for Israel, chosen of God to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex19:6). But the Church was now to have that role (1Pet2:9). This transfer (or more strictly augmentation) of privilege was a disclosure Paul would sometimes describe as ***"my Good News"*** – Paul being God's chosen vessel through whom *"He willed to make known the riches of the glory of **this mystery among the Gentiles** – being Christ in you, the hope of glory!"* (Col1:27)

The purpose of the current age

So as stated in thesis #86, in terms of ***salvation history***, the current age exists to recruit Gentiles (Paul's "wild olive plant") into the Kingdom of God. In more secular terms this period has clearly been the age of discovery for the whole human race, ***hence its longevity***. It is the time in which the world has engaged in the ***pursuit of knowledge***, gained an understanding of science and the universe, discovered new medicines and developed ever more sophisticated means of transport and communication. This is knowledge and innovation that has progressed exponentially in the last century.

It has all been working towards an end, which is not to prepare for global annihilation and a spiritualized eternity but for global renaissance and resurrection. Jesus is to be the Initiator of that renaissance or regeneration

(Greek: *παλινγενεσία*), the birth pangs for which we may well now be experiencing (Mt19:28; Mt24:8). And so the Saviour of the world has become the “long expected Jesus”.

Referring back to Old Testament expectations, His shed blood was not **exclusively** to avail “*as a fountain for sin and defilement for the **house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem***” as Zechariah had foretold (13:1) – but for “the elect from every nation”. What is more:

*“He is able to **save to the uttermost** those who come to God **through Him**, because He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens” (Heb7:25-26).*

THESES 88 AND 89

Thesis #88 of 95 - Through Israel's failure, fullness of salvation, "an inheritance with the sanctified" and the "gift of eternal life" initially understood to be exclusively for the Jews has been extended to people chosen from every nation and succeeding generation

Thesis #89 of 95 - Such a mystery was known by God (i.e. the Father) but not communicated to any other being until revealed by the apostle Paul who described the mystery pertaining to the Gentiles' unexpected inheritance as "to euaggelion mou" - MY gospel

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Acts 26:18 *I send you (Paul) to the Gentiles to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the delegated authority (ἐξουσία) of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an **inheritance with the sanctified** by faith in Me.*

Acts 11:17,18 *Therefore if God gave the Gentiles **the same gift** as He gave to us (Jews) after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I (Peter) that I should stand in God's way?" When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, **God appears to have granted to the Gentiles also** the repentance that leads to life."*

Rom 16:25 *Now to him that has power to establish you (Gentiles) **according to my gospel** and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to **the disclosure of the mystery which has been kept secret since the world began.***

COMMENTS

This continues the theme developed in the previous two theses concerning Paul's unheeded teaching regarding the fact that gospel salvation was only provided to the Gentile nations as a result of the Jews' rejection of their Messiah – a secret unknown to pre-Apostolic generations (Rom16:25). The reason Paul has not been taken literally in Rom11 vv11,12,15 &30 or comprehended with respect to the **providential implications** in Eph3:2-10 is that much of Christendom has misunderstood what Jesus, the apostles and Holy Scripture as a whole actually mean by "salvation" in the gospel context. I have been demonstrating that it is not "deliverance from perdition" but in Jesus' words pertains to "an **inheritance with the sanctified**" and in Peter's words involves "*repentance that results in Life*". As the Lord also affirmed in His commission to Paul (Acts26:18), it was so that the Gentiles' eyes **might be opened** so that they might turn from darkness to light. They could be delivered from the auspices of Satan into the realm of God's Kingdom. For as a result of the Fall and the influence of "ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου" (Jn16:11), mankind is blind to gospel truth and cannot ascertain it unless divinely aided (Jn6:44).

So, contrary to the prevailing teaching of the churches, God does not condemn mankind for that blindness, for it is innate. Observe the teaching of Christ and His late-appointed apostle. "*Jesus said to (the Pharisees) **If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains***" (Jn9:41). Likewise, Paul – "*Where there is no law, sin is not imputed*" (Rom5:13). These are fundamental principles of divine law, justice and above all, LOVE. They again have been misconstrued by the many in view of their misunderstanding gospel salvation (summarized by Paul in Rom7:24-25). They therefore believe God is bound to condemn to Hell all who are ignorant of the true gospel. Yet in view of Jn6:44, not to mention historical ecclesiological fragmentation, that would be the bulk of humanity, including many who have understood themselves to be Christian.

The previous 80 or so theses have been outlining why that narrow and frankly barbaric perspective is a travesty of the “*Good News of great joy that shall be to all people*” – the principal culprit having been Augustine of Hippo. For he was the prime mover in ensuring the Church came to reject any effectual role for natural law, which Eusebius’ and Irenaeus’ testimonies affirm was broadly accepted by earlier church fathers.

Yet the mystery revealed by the risen Lord to Paul was not apprehended even by Peter until he received a vision of the sheet of unclean animals that he was told to kill and eat (Acts11:1-18). Paul had to rebuke Peter for his reluctance even to fellowship with Gentile Christians (Gal2:11-14), affirming that the mystery Paul was disclosing was not something that Jesus had made clear to the twelve.

For at least up to and including the point of Jesus’ sermon at the Mount of Olives, it is evident that even He as Prophet was not *au fait* with the Father’s plans for the Gentiles or indeed the nature of the age to come (Mt5:18 *vis-à-vis* Col2:14; **Mt10:23**; Mt24:34; Lk13:26 Mk13:32). Such a Christological observation will be problematical to many – it shouldn’t be (Lk2:52; Acts1:6-7; 1Cor11:3). Nor would it have been such an issue to those earliest Christian writers, virtually all of whom were deemed by the post-Nicene Church to have “tended to subordinationism”. Yet these were men, many of whom will have received the gospel directly from the apostles themselves, the likes of Timothy, Titus and Philemon or **their** immediate appointees. They had not been dependant on biblical interpretation alone.

They affirmed the monarchical status of the Father within the Godhead and Christ’s consequential (and self-acknowledged) subordination of rank – without in any way denying His absolute divinity and consubstantiality with His Father. So with Paul, I believe “*There is one God, the Father, **from** Whom are all things and **for** Whom we exist, and one Lord/Master, Jesus Christ, **through** whom are all things and **by** whom we exist*” (1Cor8:6). As for the Lord Jesus Christ’s relationship with elect human beings: “*Both He who sanctifies*

*and those who are being sanctified are all **of one** [ἐξ ἑνὸς], for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren"*
(Heb2:11NKJV)

I have had to raise this thorny issue, for a failure to acknowledge the Father's monarchical status within the Godhead is likely to have been a contributing factor in the churches failing to comprehend Paul's teaching on "*the fellowship of the mystery **hidden in God who created all things by Jesus Christ***" (Eph3:9KJV); especially the fact that even after LJC's ascension and glorification, timings and epoch remain under the auspices of God the Father (Acts1:6-7; Mk13:32)

Although featuring towards the end of my 95 theses, the subject of the Gentiles' unforeseen access to fulness of salvation in the current age is the **fount** from which the vastly broader benign providence I have been outlining has stemmed. How it coalesces with the rest of Scripture is outlined in The Little Book of Providence.

THESIS 90

Thesis #90 of 95 - When Ephesians 3:9-10 and especially Romans 11:11-15 are taken as read and integrated within a cohesive biblical synopsis it will be appreciated that God's benign providence extends well beyond those elected to the exclusive covenants of promise. For if Paul is taken at his word, biblical salvation as we know it would not have been offered to the Gentile nations in the current age, yet the Old Testament is clear enough that people from every nation would ultimately be reconciled to God, for all the world is His and He loved it enough to send his Son to save it

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Eph 3:9-10 (Paul) to enlighten all people regarding the administration* of **the secret plan which for ages has been hidden in God** (the Father) who created all things (by Jesus Christ)*; so that the multifaceted wisdom of God might now be made known **by** the church **to** the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. * [see Note#1 re: textual variants]

Rom 11:11,12,15 I say then, (the Jews) did not stumble in order to fall, did they? By no means! But **by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles**, to make (the Jews) jealous. Now if **their transgression is riches for the world** and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfilment be! ... For if **their rejection is the reconciliation of the world**, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

Jn3:16 For God **so loved the world**, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Rom13:9 (NASB) For this, “You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,” **and if there is any other commandment**, it is summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

COMMENTS

Concluding this series of theses concerning what I have referred to as “the dispensational mystery”, I repeat, this does not concern my disclosure but the Apostle Paul’s. What I am doing that virtually no one else appears to have done is to take Paul at his word concerning what is recorded in Romans chapter 11, particularly verses 11,12,15 and 30. That pertains to God’s secret plan which he outlines, albeit cryptically in Ephesians chapter 3. “But surely (you say), Paul could not mean that if the Jews had not rejected their Messiah, ‘salvation’ would not have been offered to the Gentile nations in the current age?” “Yes”, say I, “that is exactly what Paul meant”, albeit he is referring to Salvation rather than salvation. [By ‘salvation’ I mean final absolution/pardon/divine acceptance; by ‘Salvation’ I mean being born again, raised to eternal Life resulting in “*an inheritance with those who have been sanctified*” (Acts26:18 cf. Rev3:21). Such a soteriological distinction has been delineated in earlier theses.

In terms of how Paul is to be interpreted in Romans 11, there would seem to be three options: a) Paul is being very clumsy in the wording he utilizes [*very unlikely given he effectually repeats the same assertion three times in different ways – highlighted in the biblical reference above*]; b) the apostle is a degenerate liar [*I think not*] or c) what he has written he has written, and he means every word of it. The problem with c) for Christians who take the bible seriously is stated in my thesis – such an assertion must be able to be “*integrated within a cohesive biblical synopsis*”. [I trust I have done so; I am not currently aware of any other such attempts within cyberspace].

Either the Apostle Paul is profoundly in error concerning a matter that could hardly be more important – or biblical theologians since around the time of Augustine have substantially misunderstood what the bible means by “salvation” in the gospel context. For the Old Testament makes it clear enough that God never intended to restrict His redemptive purposes to the Jews. But what He did indicate through His prophets is that Israel and the seed of Isaac were expected to form His holy nation of enlighteners for the world. As for what the New Testament actually means by salvation (what it is *from* and what it is *for*), I have been demonstrating that this likewise has been misunderstood by the churches. Relatedly, there has been a misreading of what Paul means by “death”, especially in Rom7 and 8, and what Jesus means by “life”, for example in Jn6:53 & 10:10 & 20:31.

Taking Paul at his word in Rom 11 could only mean what is stated in this thesis – that fulness of salvation would not have been offered to the Gentile nations in the current age if the Jews had *not* rejected their Messiah. Or rather, (for that was indeed foretold to happen), it was because they went on to reject the apostolic teaching concerning Jesus *after* His ascension and glorification. For what Paul is referring to in His various evangelistic admonitions of his fellow countrymen is not a result of their involvement in Christ’s crucifixion but their response to the apostolic message concerning His Lordship and Saviourhood – witnessed by the miracles the apostles were carrying out in Jesus’ name. This is evident in a number of passages in Acts:

Paul to certain Jews at Antioch: *“Be careful! – or what the prophets say will (future tense) happen to you: “Cast your eyes around you mockers; be amazed and perish! For I am doing something in your own days that you would never believe if you were told of it” [Acts13:40-41]*

Shortly afterwards at Corinth, preaching in the synagogue, more Jewish leaders turned against Paul and started to insult him. Paul took his cloak and shook it out in front of them, saying:

“Your blood be on your own heads; I am clean; from now on I will go to the Gentiles” [Acts18:6]

But why should Paul **not** have been clean (i.e. have a clear conscience) if he brought such a message of salvation to the Gentiles and the Jews had **not** first rejected it? Was not such salvation envisaged for all? Clearly not: ***“For as a result of the Jews’ rejection, salvation has come to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy”*** (Rom11:11). It was **not** a matter of protocol or order (as the wording throughout Rom11 makes clear) – it was a transfer of privilege with respect to who in the current age were to be God’s chosen people – ***“a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession”*** (1Pet2:9 vis-à-vis Ex19:6). This is not about “who shall go to heaven when they die”. I have hopefully demonstrated that in earlier theses, applying what has been set out (and just as significantly, omitted) in the New Testament. It is not a matter of religious faith but the absence or presence of ***“ἀγάπη”***, noting also that Paul has re-envisaged the summation and summary of God’s Law as love for neighbour (Rom13:9) – see note #2.

If you have just stumbled on this post/thesis, being #90 of a series of 95, you may find it all too incredible for words. But as intimated in the text of the thesis it is just one aspect of what I am clear is a cohesive package of biblical interpretations – the result (I believe) of a prophetic insight rather than pure academic study – set out in its entirety in The Little Book of Providence.

—

NOTE #1 Textual variants in Eph3:9 - a) "by Jesus Christ" missing from some manuscripts b) Either "fellowship" (Greek: κοινωνία) Or "administration" (Greek: οἰκονομία) – textual variant no doubt arising from similarity of the Greek word

NOTE #2 This should help explain why love **for God** and religious faith are not so much as mentioned within the definitive New Testament passage on final judgement (Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats). Nor in what is effectively the only teaching we have of an individual's post-mortem experience in heaven/hell/hades. Note why Abraham said that Lazarus was experiencing heavenly comfort and the rich man wasn't (Lk16:25). Likewise, in Paul's pronouncements on the requirements of God's law, it is expressed, indeed, **summarized** in terms of love for neighbour (Rom13:9). But then as the apostle John would later affirm, claiming to love God is no guarantee that one loves one's fellow man (1Jn4:20); whereas loving one's fellow man, particularly the act of showing compassion towards him or her is regarded as **loving and serving** the Son of Man Himself (Mt25:40) – who happens to be the One appointed to judge all people.]

THESIS 91

Thesis #91 of 95 - God's strategy has always been to redeem and heal the world through a Spirit-led messianic community; the latter were never intended to be the exclusive beneficiaries

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Ex19:6 'You shall be to Me **a kingdom of priests** and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to **the sons of Israel.**"

1Pet2:5 You (the Church), as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1Pet2:9 You are a chosen people, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Rom8:19-23 (NASB) For the **eagerly awaiting creation** waits for the revealing of the sons and daughters of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, **not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it**, in hope that the **creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption** into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only that, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons and daughters, **the redemption of our body.**

COMMENTS

The subject of this thesis is a cornerstone within the broader benign providence being outlined. I have quoted three related

verses from Exodus and 1Peter as their reference to Israel and the Church **as a priesthood** is perhaps the clearest evidence of God's wider saving purposes for the whole planet. It places the Church and gospel in their providential context: whilst all the world is God's, those within the covenants of promise become God's **own possession** (1Pet2:9).

A few verses earlier, Peter affirmed the Church to be "*a spiritual house and a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*" (v5). Yet if the Church be a priesthood, it cannot be offering sacrifices exclusively **for itself**. It also exists for the benefit of those "*who are ignorant and have gone astray*" (Heb5:1-2). The Church shares in the sacrificial offering with her Head, which is Christ. Those outside her therefore **must potentially benefit**, not just from the "body of Christ's" spiritual enlightenment and charitable works within wider society but also through her priestly intercession and sacrifice. As well as pointing to God's broader saving intentions for this world (which Paul outlines in Rom8:19-23 above), such a perspective resolves numerous biblical tensions as, for those who can discern it, do these theses taken as a whole.

THESIS 92

Thesis #92 of 95 - In choosing to retain Adam and Eve as the procreative fountainhead of humanity after their rebellion, it must have been God's intention that evil and suffering enter the world

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Rom8:20-21[NASB] *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the **creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption** into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

Mt18:7 *Woe to the world in view of its stumbling blocks! Yet it is **necessary** [ἀνάγκη] that such stumbling blocks come; but woe to the person through whom the stumbling blocks come!*

Heb2:10 *For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, **to perfect the author of their salvation through suffering.***

1Jn4:8 *Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love.***

COMMENTS

Whether the Adam and Eve account in Genesis is taken symbolically or (as in my case) literally, it is to show that God had granted Satan permission **to test** humankind in her primeval infancy. And having failed that test, our loving but inscrutable God made the decision to utilize our disobedient first parents as the **sin-polluted procreative fountain source** for future humanity. For, as I have been demonstrating, the resultant suffering, division and ongoing struggle with Evil is no accident but a **providential necessity** (cf. Mt18:7).

Christ as human creation's firstborn, in the sense of her representative/leader, epitomized such suffering and He did so on the cross. His Father (being God) had been perfectly entitled to enjoy unbroken felicity. Yet for mankind's sake He was prepared to endure the agony of observing His only begotten Son's humiliation and death.

WHY GOD PERMITS EVIL

If Satan had been barred from planet Earth or Adam and Eve had been erased and replaced as a result of their disobedience, Christ need not have died. But God permitted His archenemy what appeared to be an extraordinary victory for the sake of what He knew would be the *ideal preparation* for the beings created in His image to be raised from dust and prepared for a glorious destiny.

This hints at the solution to what for most Christians is the ultimate mystery of the universe: Why would a God the bible describes as love personified (1Jn4:8), permit and perpetuate evil and suffering in this world? The matter will (I trust) be given fuller resolution in the next thesis (#93) and is explained in detail in The Little Book of Providence (chapters 6 and 7).

THESIS 93

Thesis #93 of 95 - The ultimate purpose of human suffering is indicated in Heb2:10. Even the sinless Saviour was perfected for His priestly office and future glory by suffering. How much more the need for such salting and grist to be provided for the mere mortals who will come to share His glorious inheritance – hence the perennial existence of evil in the world until Christ comes to restore all things

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Acts3:21 Christ, the One whom Heaven must receive **until the time of the restoration of all things** which God has spoken of through the mouths of His holy prophets since the world began.

Rev10:7 In the days when the voice of the seventh messenger is about to sound off, then the **mystery of God** shall have been completed, as He announced to His servants the prophets.

COMMENTS

As the thesis indicates, the solution to the mystery of human suffering is hinted at in an extraordinary verse in Hebrews: “It was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, **to perfect the originator of their salvation through suffering**” (2:10). So, even the sinless Saviour was perfected for future glory by suffering. How much more the need for such salting and grist to be provided for mere mortals, some of whom will have an immediate share in His inheritance.

This is why things have always been as they have been in the world and in the Church. Suffering partnered with essential

spiritual healing and progressive enlightenment are how God is drawing mankind toward its ultimate destiny as exemplified by His Son's own experience. The suffering Jesus had endured was principally (and most would have thought exclusively) to provide for man's redemption. Yet it also fulfilled another unexpected function as Heb2:10 shows – that is His perfection for His kingly, priestly office. Verse 17 affirms as much when it states: *"Therefore in all respects (Jesus) had to be made like His brothers so that He would become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God"*.

And as royal priesthood for the world, God's elect are expected to share in that suffering. For such are to be *"the heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him"* (Rom8:17NASB).

And, alluding to the previous thesis regarding Adam and Eve, none of this would have been possible if events had unfolded differently at Eden. If Satan had **not** been permitted his little triumph, there would have been no glorious victory for God and His Christ, for there would have been nothing to conquer. How then could God have demonstrated the staggering extent of His love and grace if He could have spared His only Son? If Adam had not sinned or the humanity project been rebooted, there would have been no Saviour. And what a Saviour: *O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere redemptorem!* [note 1].

Truly, it was **never God's intention merely to restore humanity to pre-Fall Adamic innocence**. Rather, the Creator wished to raise the sons of earth such that they would one day consort with the divine, partaking themselves of the divine nature (2Pet1:4). Such staggering elevation could not have been accomplished without the existence of evil and its inevitable consequence – **suffering, the grist for glory**. This taken with the vastly broader benign providence I have set out in my Little Book (link#1) surely resolves the providential mystery of God, affirming Him to be the personification of love.

*NOTE #1 – Catholic Easter hymn: “Oh
happy fault, which gained for us so great a
Redeemer!”*

THESIS 94

Thesis #94 of 95 - Certain important (but non-essential) mysteries have been hidden from the Church during much of her earthly pilgrimage

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Acts1:7 Jesus said to them, "It is **not for you (apostles) to know** times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority".

Eph3:9-10 (Paul) to enlighten all people regarding **the plan of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God**, who created all things; so that the multifaceted wisdom of God might NOW be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

1Tim2:6 (Christ) gave himself as a ransom **for all**, the evidence for which [μαρτύριον^{G3142}] is to be provided in due time.

Rom8:19-21 [NASB] For the eagerly awaiting creation waits for the revealing of the sons and daughters of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, **not willingly but because of Him who subjected it**, in hope that the **creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption** into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Rev10:2-4 (The angel) had in his hand **a little book**, which was open. He placed his **right foot on the sea and his left on the land**; and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices. When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, **I was about to write**; and I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken, **and DO NOT WRITE THEM.**"

Mal4:5-6 *Lo, I will send you the prophet 'Elijah' before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse.*

Mt24:14 *This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world **as a testimony to all the nations**, and **then the end will come**.*

EXTRA-BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Enoch1:1 [opening verse] *The words of Enoch to be a blessing to the elect and the righteous **who will be living in the day of tribulation** when all the wicked and godless are to be removed.*

Enoch93:10 *At the close (of the seventh 'week') shall be chosen the elect righteous (ones) of the eternal plant of righteousness **to receive a seven-part instruction concerning all of God's creation**.*

Enoch104:11-13 *When they write down truthfully all my words **in their languages**, and do not change or remove anything from my words but write them all down truthfully, then I know another mystery, that **books will be given to the righteous and the wise to become a cause of joy and uprightness and much wisdom**. And to them shall the books be given, and they shall believe in them and rejoice over them, and then shall all the righteous who have learnt from them the ways of uprightness be recompensed.*

COMMENTS

Note that this thesis affirms that certain important **but non-essential** mysteries have been hidden from the Church. By non-essential I mean non-fatal to the saving mission of the Church. As a former Evangelical, I (typically) hadn't really thought this matter through. For I effectively had worked on the premise that until Martin Luther came along, the churches for at least the previous 1000 years had universally failed to apprehend or teach the effectual means of deliverance from perdition.

According to Luther, even the earliest Fathers of the Church had been in darkness concerning justification and saving faith. I

now know this to be an irrational absurdity and a denigration of God's providential care for the world. It is also an affront to our Saviour's historical stewardship of the very people He regards as His own Body (Col1:24).

Nevertheless, there are issues that **have** been hidden from the Church that although not essential to her saving mission are important. And they become positively critical as the Day of Christ's return approaches. Some of these are identified in the verses above. I believe them to pertain to:

1. The mystery concerning the precise nature of the current and impending epochs vis-à-vis Old Testament prophecy (Acts1:7; Eph3:9-10)
2. the breadth of God's **benign** providence and the scope of Christ's atoning work (1Tim2:6; Rom8:19-21)
3. the mystery of the Little Book (Rev10:2-4)
4. the doctrinal rectification and eventual reconciliation of the churches enabling a coherent gospel to be preached to the world before Christ's coming [Mal4:5-6; Mt24:14]
5. the extraordinary means by which some of the above shall come about [Enoch references]

The few verses from ex-canonical Enoch have been included as they deal with some of these issues more explicitly than the intentionally veiled references within the bible. The Book of Enoch was rightly excluded from the canon, not least in view of its opening verse. That indicates it was written specifically for the generation of Christians that would live to see Christ's return. The Book was nevertheless regarded as inspired writing by many of the early Church Fathers and verses from it are to be found in the New Testament (Jude vv14-15).

LINKS

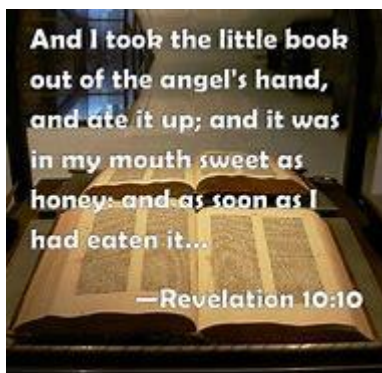
*Re: Acts1:7 Times and seasons a matter
for the*

Father <https://richard777.blog/2020/07/02/the-current-epochs-role-in-salvation-history/>

*Re: Prophecies of
Enoch <https://richard777.blog/2021/06/16/book-of-enoch-prophecy/>*

*Re: The final
prophet <https://richard777.blog/2020/04/27/elijah-yet-to-come/>*

THESIS 95



Thesis #95 of 95 - If the assertions of my theses are broadly correct, the final mystery John was told not to write about (concerning the little book - Rev10) is likely to pertain in nature to the broader providence I have been outlining

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Rev1:1 *The revelation of Jesus Christ, **which God gave Him** to show to His servants (the church) the **things which must soon take place**"*

Rev10:2-4 *(The angel) had in his hand **a little book** which was open. He placed his **right foot on the 'sea'** and his **left on the land**; and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices. When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, **I WAS ABOUT TO WRITE**; and I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken, **AND DO NOT WRITE THEM.***

Rev10:10 *I took the little book from the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as **honey**; and when I had eaten it, **my belly was embittered.***

COMMENTS

In its opening verse the Book of Revelation is announced as “the revelation **of Jesus Christ**, which God gave Him **to show to His servants (the church) the things which must soon take place**” (Rev1:1). For sure, it was a disclosure often presented in symbolic terms, but nevertheless John’s task was to write down **everything** he saw and heard as a testimony to the churches. Yet there was one unique exception: the contents of the little book referred to in chapter ten, the words concerning which he was instructed **not** to record. We are (literally) only given a **flavour** of what that might contain: sweet as honey to the taste buds but creating bitterness in the abdomen.

It may not be especially radical for my final thesis to be suggesting that the subject matter of Revelation’s “little book” is likely to pertain in some way to divine providence. However, the reference to sweetness and bitterness infers to me that what was revealed within this mystical booklet [Greek: βιβλαρίδιον] appeared delightful to the taste but had the effect of making that which had **previously been ingested** bitter and by implication ripe for excretion. (I take κοιλία to be referring to the abdomen, gut or belly, as per KJV, rather than stomach as in some translations).

What of course **is** radical is what I have set out in **my** little book on the subject. That at the personal level has a similar bitter-sweet impact in terms of my new as opposed to past understanding of God’s providential intentions towards humanity and the true nature of the gospel.

The need to deconstruct

The vastly broader benign providence I have been drawing out from scripture required a substantial deconstruction of the Augustinian derived theology that the Western Church (in particular) has long relied upon. Galling as that will be for many, it results in cosmic outcomes that are comparatively sublime – comprehensible, gracious and generous, yet fair to all. In the starkest contrast to the God of Augustine and Luther, I have portrayed a deity who is equitable, loving and compassionate in the sense that those terms are usually understood. That in turn

accords with the Creator who ***described Himself*** as “*the God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in faithful love and constancy*” (Ex34:6) and whose character was perfectly reflected in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

So ends these brief commentaries on each of my 95 theses, the listing of which I first published on Halloween 2017 – the 500th anniversary of a far more well-known version. That triggered events that turned the church and the world upside down. Given my personal intellectual limitations and present obscurity, these theses and the Little Book of Providence to which they relate will only gain traction if they are “owned of God”. If so, it can only have been the Holy Spirit who inspired and enabled me to put these things together. In view of the extraordinary spiritual encounters to which I have been testifying on my website, I dare to believe that to be the case.