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HUMAN NATURE IS UTTERLY PERVERSE

In Genesis 1 we have the account of God, in the person of Jesus Christ, creating all physical life, including human beings. And after creating Adam and Eve on the sixth day, God surveyed everything He had created in those six days. And God's assessment was that "**every thing** that He had made ... **was very good**" (see Genesis 1:31).

God had not created anything that was "bad" or "evil". God had not created anything that was undesirable. Everything God had created served a good purpose, and everything was in harmony with the whole creation overall. God had provided the foundation for abundant, happy, joyful and interesting living.

When God had created Adam and Eve, God had also given them what we call "the spirit in man". The spirit in man empowered Adam and Eve to live and to function on the human level, as opposed to animals functioning on a far lower level. And giving human beings the spirit in man is included in the things God had done. Thus the spirit in man, as given by God to every human being at birth, is also something that is "very good".

God the Father and Jesus Christ have existed together for all past eternity. They have the same mind, the same outlook and standards, the same expectations and goals, and the same commitments to Each Other. Their outlook and perspective on life are defined by the word "love". They agree in everything. And in mind and attitude God the Father and Jesus Christ "are one" (John 10:30). In this relationship Jesus Christ is very willingly in submission to God the Father, and always has been.

At an earlier time They had created all the spirit beings, which we collectively refer to as "**angels**". In so doing They had created separate individual spirit beings who all had **totally free and independent minds**. That was something new for God at that point in time, creating other spirit beings with totally **unpredictable** (i.e. free and independent) **minds**.

When the angels were created, there was only one way of life in existence, and that was the way God the Father and Jesus Christ were living, the way expressed by the word "love". This way of life is selfless, and focused on being concerned for the good and the well-being of others.

There was no reason whatsoever for God to suppose that **another way of life**, one that would challenge God's philosophy, would ever come into existence. Neither God the Father nor Jesus Christ had ever experienced a single selfish thought. So **why** should any beings They would create ever entertain any selfish thoughts?

But where this way of using Their minds was intuitive for God the Father and Jesus Christ, because that is the only way Their minds have ever functioned, it was not intuitive or automatic for the angels. There was **an element of unpredictability**. The way God had created the angels, it required the angels to actively and voluntarily accept this way of thinking, by **rejecting any other way of using their minds**. Specifically, the angels had to choose to consciously reject using their minds in any selfish way.

God the Father and Jesus Christ very likely anticipated that all the angels would readily and willingly do this, inculcate God's way of thinking into their own free minds. That is the only way of life that produces peace and joy and happiness and contentment. Godly logic dictated that the angels would understand

this, and that therefore they would all eagerly embrace God's way of thinking with their own free minds.

To ensure that the angels would indeed freely accept God's way of life, **they were all tested** by God. How God tested the minds of the angels is not revealed, and is not really important for us to know. What is important for us to understand is that **two thirds of all the angels did indeed freely accept God's way of using their minds**, to the point where their minds are now permanently set in that way of thinking. They are known as "the holy angels" of God (Matthew 25:31; Revelation 14:10; etc.).

However, God had not anticipated that one third of all the angels, under the leadership of the one we know as "Satan", would reject God's way of using their minds. Instead that one third accepted **a totally new way of thinking,** where self-interest always comes first, ahead of God and ahead of all other things.

Their choice to accept a different way of thinking (i.e. thinking from a selfish perspective) was very likely a shock and a serious unexpected setback for God! We should understand that whenever people argue with the truth and with sound logic, then **they are using their minds a different way** from other people who readily accept the truth and who eagerly accept sound logic. **Those who argue against the truth** are using their minds differently from the way God thinks and reasons. And when people use their minds in a different way from how other people use their minds, then these two groups can never reach agreement regarding what is right and what is wrong.

This is the principle of Amos 3:3. What this verse really means is: unless two people use their minds in the same way of thinking and reasoning, they cannot walk together. **A fleeting agreement** on something by two completely different ways of thinking and reasoning **is of no real value**, because on many other issues disagreement is inevitable between two different ways of using our minds.

Thus, for example, the human reasoning of "my enemy's enemy is my friend" isn't true at all, because the only thing we have in common with "my enemy's enemy" is that we share a common enemy. But that doesn't mean that we actually have any significant things in common with "my enemy's enemy". We may in fact also have major disagreements with "my enemy's enemy", because we happen to use our minds in a completely different way from the way those comprising "my enemy's enemy" use their minds.

Anyway, **God had not anticipated** that Satan would become totally selfish, and that **he would poison the minds** of all the angels under his leadership. Not a one of them held fast to God's outgoing way of thinking. To an angel that group all accepted Satan's selfish way of thinking, of focusing their minds on themselves, and putting self-interest ahead of everything else. This event with Satan's rebellion showed up the enormous importance of correct godly leadership.

Furthermore, I suspect that it was a staggering revelation for God to see **how quickly** a free mind will accept a selfish way of thinking, how quickly a free mind will **reject God's way of thinking** in favor of selfishness. The free mind must only be given the opportunity, in seemingly favorable circumstances, to think selfishly, and it will almost always succumb to that temptation. By "favorable circumstances" I mean an environment seemingly free from any kind of supervision.

That selfish way of thinking is totally foreign to the minds of God the Father and Jesus Christ. And from God's perspective that selfish way of thinking is **totally illogical**. It doesn't make sense. God's way of thinking is selfless! As Jesus Christ pointed out:

Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)

This is the ultimate expression of God's way of thinking. This is the ultimate in selfless thinking.

By contrast, the selfish way of thinking will always destroy the potential for peace and happiness and contentment. That selfish way of thinking will always produce a spirit of competition and strife and anger and resentment. That selfish way of thinking can never achieve what it really desires to achieve ... peace and satisfaction and happy, relaxed relationships with all others in existence. Such an achievement is not possible in a society motivated by a spirit of selfishness. We need to understand that **selfish thinking is destructive thinking**.

And above all, it was absolutely illogical for Satan to think that he could somehow defeat his own Creator! Anyone who thinks that with a huge army he can somehow defeat the Almighty Creator God is obviously not thinking logically. It is impossible for the creation to defeat its Creator. But **a selfish mind will attempt to do the impossible**, if that is required to achieve our selfish goals. We like to call attempting to do the impossible "taking great risks in the hope of achieving great gains". Satan's rebellion illustrates this matter of a selfish mind attempting to do the impossible.

Selfish thinking will always create an illogical mind.

After Satan had rebelled, God the Father and Jesus Christ undoubtedly made some modifications to the plan They had set in motion with the creation of all the angels. Some repairs to the damage Satan's rebellion had produced were made. And there would have been some modifications to the plan, to reflect that the plan would continue with **a willing workforce that had been reduced by one third** (i.e. the one third of the angels who had become demons). This meant increased responsibilities for the two thirds of the angels who had proved themselves to be faithful. Those repairs and modifications include the things that are recorded in Genesis 1.

But something bad, something evil had come into existence. It had not been created by God. That something evil had in fact been "created" by Satan. **What Satan had created was a new way of thinking**, a new way of using his free mind. Satan's selfish way of thinking will always produce destruction and pain and suffering, always. **It is an evil way of thinking**, but it is also a perfectly natural way for me to use my mind, and I believe that the same is true for you.

Here is something we need to understand:

A selfish way of thinking is a deceptive way of thinking!

A selfish way of thinking deceives others, yes. But even more so, a selfish way of thinking **deceives us ourselves**! The selfish person cannot understand that his way of thinking is wrong and destructive, and that it will cause pain and suffering. The selfish mind is blinded to these things.

Those who give lip-service to God's way of life, saying all the right things, while striving after their selfish goals and not actually practicing God's way of life, are deceiving themselves. That is what God points out in Ezekiel 33:30-32. And that is also what the Apostle James pointed out.

But be you doers of the word, and not hearers only, **deceiving your own selves**. (James 1:22)

When we are selfishly motivated, that selfish thinking will always deceive us ourselves. That is true for you just as much as it is for me. We convince ourselves that we are not really being selfish. And then we make **bad decisions** and bad choices. Selfish thinking results in bad decisions.

THE CREATION OF MAN

When Jesus Christ created Adam and Eve, He gave them the same type of free and independent mind which He had earlier given to all the angels at their creation.

Comparing angels and human beings: the type of beings is different, because one is composed of spirit, and the other is composed of physical matter. But the type of mind put within both types of beings is exactly the same. **God gave human beings the same type of mind that God had given to the angels**. God did not intend for the human mind with its capacity to think and to reason to be inferior to the angelic mind.

Oh yes, certainly, angels know far more facts and have far more knowledge than the knowledge to which we human beings have access. But **the reasoning power**, the ability to logically process all the information available to us, the processes for reaching decisions, those are the same for human beings and for angels.

God has not created different types of minds. There is only one type of mind that God has created, and that is **a mind that is free to choose** its own path. Human beings and angels have the same type of mind, which mind is patterned after the mind of God.

Where our minds (i.e. for both humans and angels) differ from the mind of God is that our minds have to constantly make choices between right and wrong. God's mind does not have to make such choices. God's mind does not have to choose between right and wrong, because **wrong is simply not an option for God**. It is impossible for God to sin in any way. Paul wrote that "it is impossible for God to lie" (see Hebrews 6:18); but the statement that "it is impossible for God to sin" is equally correct.

For the mind of a created being (i.e. both angels and human beings) to get to the point of being just like the mind of God requires that **the choice** between right and wrong **must be expunged**; that choice must be permanently eliminated. There must ultimately only be one option, and that one option is to do what is right.

That is the purpose of all testing, getting a mind that starts out with two choices to the point where, over a period of testing, the choice to do wrong has been completely removed from that mind.

Once the holy angels had passed their testing, **their minds became set** on the godly way of thinking. So for all the holy angels the wrong selfish way of thinking is no longer an option. They have achieved the state where they also cannot sin.

For us human beings the end result of passing the tests that come our way will likewise be that **our minds will become set** on the godly way of thinking. And then we will not be able to sin anymore. Then we will also no longer have to deal with the effort to actively reject the selfish way of thinking. Our minds will be set on doing what is right before God. As the Apostle John explained:

Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him: and **he cannot sin**, because he is born of God. (1 John 3:9)

And when that potential choice to choose evil has been permanently removed, then we too can "become one" with God (see John 17:21-23). The wrong way of using our minds will from then onwards never be a choice. The godly way of using our minds will then always be our spontaneous only option.

That's the ultimate goal, to have minds that work exactly the same way as does the mind of God.

THE MOST EVIL THING IN EXISTENCE

We need to recognize that **the most evil and perverse thing that exists anywhere in this universe is human nature**! It is really the attitude and outlook that Satan created when he became selfish. It affected every single angel who was exposed to it ... all of the angels under Satan's leadership accepted that attitude, and they joined Satan in his rebellion against God. That, 100% of exposed individuals rejecting God's way of using their minds, is a staggering statistic that we should keep in mind. It should not be a surprise that to start with, 100% of human minds will also accept and employ that selfish way of thinking. It is our "natural" way of thinking.

Let's also understand that **the forbidden fruit they ate was not the real issue**! The real issue was that Adam and Eve had both accepted a selfish way of thinking, a selfish way of using their minds. Eating the forbidden fruit was simply a way of bringing out into the open that they would from then onwards process all their thoughts from a selfish foundation. Eating the forbidden fruit exposed the selfish way of thinking and reasoning they had accepted.

Now since with the angels that attitude affected every single angel who was exposed to it, **God determined that all of us human beings would also be exposed to that influence**, from soon after we are born. That is why God exposed Adam and Eve to that perverse attitude when they were only a few days old ... to see how they would deal with that attitude. Adam and Eve failed with Satan's very first assault, and they sinned. They had accepted Satan's selfish way of using their minds. Eve sinned because she wanted to "get something" for herself, an obviously selfish action.

When Adam and Eve accepted Satan's selfish way of using their minds **so spontaneously**, it showed God that human nature could not be trusted to make the right decisions, not without first being thoroughly tested. Until they sinned, God had not fully known the magnitude of this weakness of the human mind, that doing wrong by acting selfishly always has a greater appeal to the human mind than doing what is right.

Let me repeat that:

Doing what is wrong always has a greater appeal to the natural human mind than doing what is right.

Doing something that is wrong or forbidden is always far more exciting to the human mind than doing something that is right and good. That was very likely a revelation to God, because that is simply not the way in which the mind of God functions and operates. It is the opposite of how God thinks and reasons.

And so God requires us human beings to resist and to reject that selfish way of thinking. God wants to see that we actively and resolutely reject Satan's way of using our minds. But rather than waiting for "time and chance" to at some point expose us to that attitude, to see how we will then respond, God decided to expose us to that selfish attitude from quite soon after we are born.

Okay, at birth Satan's attitude cannot yet affect our thinking. Our brains first have to develop sufficiently for little children to be in a position to respond to unseen impulses, sent to a child's brain by "the prince of the power of the air" (see Ephesians 2:2). But Satan's influence can already be seen in children younger than two years old.

[As an aside, godly child-rearing involves a serious battle over who will control the mind of a small child: the parents or Satan? And if parents don't exercise that control, then Satan surely will, because **someone** surely will control the immature mind of a small child.]

When Adam and Eve both sinned, that was another setback for the plan God had set in motion. But God, in the person of Jesus Christ, decided to continue with the plan with only "relatively minor" modifications at that point in time, and to work with all those human beings who would be prepared to "walk with God".

A CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

At this point it might be helpful to clarify some of the expressions that come into this discussion. Specifically, we need to understand the distinction between the spirit in man and human nature.

The spirit in man is a spirit that God gives to every human being at birth, and it returns to God at death. The spirit in man is very good! The spirit in man empowers the human brain to function on the human level, and it provides the potential for that human brain to communicate with the Creator God. The spirit in man gives the human being a mind.

The holy spirit is a spirit that God gives to all those adult human beings who truly repent. The holy spirit empowers a mind that is controlled by the spirit in man to convert the potential for communication with God into reality. The holy spirit is obviously also very good. It greatly enhances the power of the human mind in the area of spiritual discernment and understanding.

Both these spirits are given by God. They are not and cannot be self-generated.

Human nature, on the other hand, is not something that is given by God. Human nature is not a spirit. In this present age it is only the product of a spirit, and that spirit is the selfish spirit of Satan. Human nature is not present in a baby at birth! Human nature is only produced at some point after the baby's brain has experienced phenomenal growth during the first few months of life outside of the womb. Human nature requires the active participation of the human brain.

So what is human nature?

Human nature is **the disposition of the human mind**. Human nature refers to **the tendencies of the human mind**. Human nature is **the result of** how the human mind has processed all the input it has received. Human nature refers to **the foundation a human mind has accepted** for how it will process all the input it will receive.

Now Satan is "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). This designation refers to Satan's ability to present thoughts directly to the human mind. It refers to Satan's ability to present his selfish way of thinking to human minds, **as soon as those minds have developed sufficiently to think and to reason for themselves**. And specifically, it refers to Satan's ability to present his selfish way of thinking to our human minds at a time **before we even have the ability to resist** that selfish way of thinking.

It is because at age 1-2 years old we do not yet have the ability to resist Satan's broadcast of a spirit of selfishness, that therefore that selfish spirit becomes the foundation for how our minds will think and reason ... and bingo, we now have "human nature"! We now have **the disposition** and **the tendency** to view everything in life from a selfish foundation.

And this is true for every human being.

However, we also need to understand that the disposition of the human mind (i.e. human nature) is

capable of accepting and developing a selfish way of thinking **even without any input from Satan's spirit**. It may just require more time to achieve this selfish spirit.

Satan's mind didn't have any outside input when Satan developed his selfish way of thinking. Satan developed that selfish spirit all on his own. And our human minds are likewise quite capable of developing a selfish foundation for all our thought processes all on our own, without needing any outside input. The proof for this is the rebellion during the millennium by the people of "Gog, Meshech and Tubal" (see Ezekiel 38). **Satan will be bound before the people in that rebellion are even born**.

Satan will not be able to influence a single human being for 1,000 years. That is the explicit purpose for which Satan is bound. And yet during that time some people will develop a totally selfish way of thinking. As God tells us about those rebels who will be born during the millennium:

Thus says the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, *that* **at the same time shall things come into your mind**, and you shall think **an evil thought**: (Ezekiel 38:10)

Yes, the people in that rebellion will develop a completely selfish way of thinking, and they will develop that way of thinking without any input from Satan. That will happen during the millennium.

The difference between those people and our age today is this:

For us exposure to Satan's selfish attitude has been from early childhood onwards. Before coming to repentance, we have never known a way of thinking that was not based on selfishness. We've been exposed to "evil thoughts" all our lives. That's because Satan has been broadcasting his spirit all our lives. And as Christians we need to learn to resist Satan's selfish attitudes.

For the people born during the millennium (i.e. the people in Ezekiel 38) they will never have been exposed to Satan's selfish spirit. So they grow into adulthood without such exposure. And then in adulthood they themselves develop a selfish foundation for their thought processes. They look at the wealth and the blessings that other people have. And, just as it was originally with Satan himself, seeing what others have will cause them to "think an evil thought". They generate a spirit of selfishness themselves ... and then that spirit of selfishness becomes contagious for others in their environment who are exposed to it. They will have generated their own "human nature".

Anyway, when I speak about human nature, I am not speaking about the spirit in man. Rather, I am speaking about the selfish disposition and tendencies that all of us have acquired since early childhood, the disposition that is "natural" for us, even though we were not born with it.

So let's get back to our discussion of human nature.

THE TIME BEFORE THE FLOOD

We all know the story about Adam and Eve's first two children, Cain and Abel. When Cain got into a bad attitude, God explained something to Cain. Jesus Christ talked to Cain directly, face-to-face, and said:

If you do well, shall you not be accepted? and if you do not well, sin lies at the door. And **unto you *shall be* its desire**, and **you must rule over it**. (Genesis 4:7)

Every action starts with a thought. Thus **"doing well" means that we are "thinking well"**. And "not doing well" means that we are "not thinking well". So it is equally correct to say:

"If you think the right way, then you will be accepted by God."

We easily forget that when God made this statement to Cain's face, then **God hoped that Cain would change** his selfish way of thinking. That hope is a major part of the reason why **God protected Cain's life** after Cain had killed Abel (see Genesis 4:15). Even at that point God still hoped that Cain would change his selfish way of thinking. That is like us parents confronting our children when they have done something that is clearly wrong ... **we hope** that our children will change, away from the wrong type of conduct. We give them the benefit of the doubt.

Notice also God's statement to Cain that "**unto you shall be sin's desire**". God here identified the fundamental problem in the lives of all human beings. God was saying: **your mind is always going to be drawn to want to sin**. And that is the pull that you must learn to control. You must rule over that pull. Don't let that pull control your mind.

Genesis 4:7 identifies **the greatest problem** that you and I and all human beings throughout history have to deal with! It is the human mind that is always drawn towards sinning, and that desire is what we must learn to "rule over".

Now for 1,536 years after creating Adam and Eve God worked with human beings, trying to get human beings to rule over the satanic selfish way of thinking. But during that whole period only a very tiny handful of people actually did learn to control and to resist that selfish way of using their minds. All the rest of human beings during that period never did learn to control their "natural" desire to sin; they never did reject the wrong way of using their minds.

And so it was overwhelmingly a futile effort on God's part. Eventually God acknowledged that **the plan**, as it existed, **was simply not going to work**. At that point God presented His assessment of that 1,536-year period.

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* **every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually**. (Genesis 6:5)

This is **something that God had not understood** at the time when He created Adam and Eve. And if God had understood this at the time of Adam's creation, **then God would not have created human beings**! That's what God tells us in the next verse.

And **it repented the LORD that He had made man** on the earth, and **it grieved Him** at His heart. (Genesis 6:6)

The expression "it repented the Eternal" means: God changed His mind! And the expression "it grieved God at His heart" means that this was a huge shock for God! This means that **God had not known** that this would be the case ... that human nature would be so perversely and intently focused on doing evil. The next statement shows even more forcefully that God had not known what human nature would be like.

And the LORD said, **I will destroy man whom I have created** from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for **it repents Me that I have made them**. (Genesis 6:7)

God destroyed the human beings He had created, because the total perversity of human nature was a

shock for God. The repeated statement "it repents Me that I have made human beings" says "**I wish I had not created human beings**"!

As expressed in God's statement to Cain before Cain killed Abel, God understood that the human mind will always be attracted by things that are sinful. But it seems that God believed that a good percentage of human beings would learn to "rule over" that attraction. That attraction we call "temptation". What God apparently had not understood was just how powerful the attraction of sin actually is for the human mind.

You and I view a selfish spirit as normal. Spontaneously we always think first of self-interest. And so Satan's selfish way of thinking has an extremely powerful pull on our minds. It seems that God had not yet recognized the magnitude of that pull on human minds.

When during His ministry Jesus Christ said:

You are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do ... (John 8:44)

... Christ was pointing out that the spirit and attitude which those Pharisees had (and this is also true for all other unconverted people) was an attitude that Satan had been able to instill in them very soon after they were born. **That selfish spirit is Satan's "seed"!** In other words, whenever we act selfishly we are responding to Satan's influence.

Now let's consider the following things.

GOD'S PLAN BEFORE THE FLOOD

What do the following five statements from verses 5-7 tell us?

1) It **repented** the Eternal that He had made man.

2) It **grieved** Him at His heart.

3) It **repents** Me that I have made them.

4) I will **destroy** man whom I have created from the face of the earth.

5) Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* **only evil continually**.

With these statements God is telling us that God had not understood how spontaneously evil and perverse human nature actually is. That was a revelation to God.

Here is my point:

I don't believe that the concept of repentance was a part of God's plan in the period before the flood!

For decades I have been trying to help people to understand that "to repent" means: to change the way we think, to change our mind-set away from the mind-set that is "natural" for the human mind. True repentance does not focus on what we do! True repentance does not focus on Sabbath-keeping, and the observance of the annual Feasts and Holy Days, and on things like tithing, etc.! This is not at all to imply that all these things are somehow not important; they are important. But **true repentance is focused on**

how our minds work! True repentance requires that we change the way our minds work, even if we have grown up in the Church of God! True repentance requires us to **reject the spontaneous selfish way of thinking**, and to accept God's way of using our minds!

To the **unrepentant** mind God says "**My thoughts are not your thoughts**" (see Isaiah 55:8). But the truly **repentant** mind says: "Father, please help me to begin to think the same way You do. Help me to begin to see everything in life from Your point of view. Help me to inculcate Your laws into my mind in such a way, that I will be able to evaluate every situation in my life the same way that You, Lord, view all of those situations. Please give me the ability to correctly discern what is the right thing to do in every situation that will come up in my life."

A truly repentant person has a mind that has been renewed!

That's what Paul tells us.

And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed **by the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:2)

Now why is it that at repentance it is the mind that must be renewed? It is the mind that must be renewed because **it is the mind that is the real problem**.

And that is something that God had learned thoroughly after human beings had existed for 1,536 years (i.e. 1.5×2^{10}). In Genesis 6:5 God tells us that the human mind (i.e. **human nature**) **is the real problem that God has to deal with** in His efforts to lead us human beings to salvation.

But I think that is something that God had not fully understood when God created Adam. And something God had not fully understood could not possibly have been incorporated into the plan that went into effect after Adam and Eve had been driven out of the garden.

Repentance means changing human nature to think and to reason in a way that is not "natural" for the unconverted mind to think and reason.

It is somewhat like a right-handed person suddenly having to learn how to write with his left hand. It is not something that is easily achieved.

Repentance requires a conscious and determined effort to make that change in thinking. But when God created Adam, I suspect that God did not yet understand that **human nature would have to change**, in order to make it possible for human beings to freely accept God's way of thinking and God's view of everything that may affect us.

God didn't tell Cain: if you want to be accepted by Me, you really need to repent and to change your way of using your mind. No, God didn't say anything at all about repenting to Cain. What God said was: **you need to learn to control** the mind you have. And then you must "do well". But control isn't really enough. Those 1,536 years showed God that **the human mind must in fact be changed**!

Controlling the human mind doesn't go far enough! **The human mind must be changed, not just controlled**.

That is the key!

Before the flood God's plan was based on expecting human beings to learn to control their minds, i.e. to rule over their minds. And if they managed to do that, then they could "do well", i.e.

they could live according to God's laws and instructions. That apparently was the plan.

After the flood God's plan has been based on expecting human beings to change their minds. Such a change in mind requires a cooperative effort. We human beings have to express a willingness and a desire to want to change our minds, and then God will provide the key component to make such a change possible. That "key component" is the holy spirit. But even then it is still our responsibility to actually make that change; the holy spirit doesn't do it for us. We are the ones who have to make use of the holy spirit, which God has made available to us, to achieve such a change in our minds.

We need to recognize that unrepentant people can "do well", i.e. they can keep God's laws in the letter even though they are unrepentant. People can live by all of God's laws and instructions without ever changing their under-the-surface selfish attitude, and before the flood God would seemingly have accepted the obedience of such people and worked with them, in the hope of **eventually** eliminating their selfish attitude.

For example, it apparently was **God's hope that Cain would eventually change**, which hope seems to have been the reason why God set **a mark of protection** on Cain, **to protect him** from anyone who might want to kill him. After the flood Cain would have received the death penalty (see Genesis 9:5-6), but before the flood God's plan did not yet include the death penalty for murder.

It was those 1,536 years after the creation of Adam (that was still 120 years before the flood started) that made absolutely clear to God that the requirement for human beings to only "control their minds" would not produce the results that God desires to achieve. It was those 1,536 years that led to the understanding for God that it is the nature of man that must be changed first, before any outward obedience can become meaningful before God.

This understanding, that **human nature must be changed and not just controlled**, became the foundation for the revised plan that went into effect after the flood.

THE REVISED PLAN AFTER THE FLOOD

Oh yes, in hindsight we can all have 20/20 vision. In hindsight we can all say: it should have been obvious to God that we human beings are inherently just as selfish and evil as is Satan! But that understanding wasn't obvious at all to God. Why not?

It wasn't obvious to God because **a full two-thirds of all the angels had turned out well**, by being tested in a far more positive environment than the environment Satan had created for the angels under his authority. So a different environment for the testing period for human beings might perhaps also lead to a more positive result. After all, God had given human beings the same type of mind that he had given all the angels.

In the years before the flood God in fact tried to create for human beings such a "far more positive environment", by **always being present**, and being willing to "walk with" anyone who showed an interest in wanting to walk with God. But human beings at that time weren't even willing to "walk with God" (except for a very small handful of people). Human beings very quickly became totally perverse and depraved. And as humanity multiplied things only kept getting worse.

[Comment: In the millennium God will once again provide "a far more positive environment" for the testing of human beings.]

That showed God that **human nature is the real problem** that needs to be dealt with. It is human nature that needs to be changed and not just controlled.

Back in November 2011 in my 90-page article entitled "THE PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION AND HOW THE LAST GREAT DAY CAME TO BE A PART OF IT" I discussed the changes that God made to His plan after the flood. I don't want to repeat that material here. But I do want to add something to the greater picture, something I did not yet understand 10 years ago.

It was because God had come to clearly understand that human nature is the real problem, that God focused the revised plan on **how to deal with human nature**.

And in order to make it possible for human nature to be changed, therefore God decided **to make the holy spirit available** to people, on certain conditions. The holy spirit given to a human mind will, to some degree, enable that human mind to counter the pulls of the natural unconverted mind.

But before God's holy spirit can be "installed" in a natural human mind, **there must be some kind of transition**. There must be a transition because the two spirits (i.e. the natural human mind and God's holy spirit) are not really compatible; they can't really work together. That "transition" we call "repentance".

Repentance is a changing of the mind, really **an exchange** of ways to use our minds. We ourselves must be motivated to desire to put out of our minds the influence of human nature (i.e. the natural human mind's selfish way of thinking), and to desire to have the way our minds work renewed by receiving God's holy spirit.

So God's revised plan after the flood is focused very pointedly on eliminating the natural human mind's selfish way of thinking, and instead accepting the way the mind of God thinks. And repentance is **the first step** on the road to achieve that change.

Repentance marks **the point of transition** in the human mind's way of thinking.

So:

At the time of Adam's creation God had expected human beings to control their minds. And at that time God apparently did not yet know that the human mind (human nature) would have to be changed rather than just controlled, in order to lead human beings to salvation. God didn't yet perceive that "**every** imagination of the thoughts of his heart was **only evil** continually". Initially God always has a very positive approach to everything. It is the things that happen subsequently that may cause God to change His initial positive approach.

Therefore **repentance** (i.e. to change the selfish natural mind into a godly mind that gladly accepts God's ways of thinking) **had not been the focus in the plan set in motion** at Adam's creation. God had not required human beings to repent. God had only required human beings to control their minds and to "do well". And God had expected human beings to "do well" without any help from the holy spirit.

I suspect that once human beings had made a move in the right direction (e.g. Abel and Enoch and Noah), by seeking to walk with God, **then** God also made help available to those very few individuals who walked with Him.

In this regard we might think of something Jesus Christ said to His apostles **before** they received God's holy spirit.

Even **the spirit of truth**; which the world cannot receive, because it sees it not, neither knows it: but you know it; for **it dwells with you**, **and shall be in you**. (John 14:17)

"The spirit of truth" is a reference to the holy spirit, which those apostles would receive about 7 weeks later, on the day of Pentecost (see the account in Acts 2). At the time of John 14:17 the apostles were not yet converted, because conversion takes place when God's holy spirit enters our minds. So at the time of John 14:17 "the world" was unconverted, and these apostles were also unconverted. But even though these men did not yet have the holy spirit, **they nevertheless already had a far greater understanding of God's way of life** than all the other unconverted people around them. This greater understanding is expressed by the words "you know it", and the world doesn't know it.

The key here is that God's holy spirit was already "**dwelling with them**". God's spirit was "dwelling with them" because they were **in daily contact with Jesus Christ** throughout His entire ministry. And as long as they were in daily contact with Jesus Christ, so long they did not really need to have the holy spirit within their own minds. That daily contact with Jesus Christ served the same purpose as a person today having God's spirit in his mind.

That is the whole point of Jesus Christ telling them: I am going away, but the Father will send you "**another comforter**" (see John 14:16, 26; etc.), that the holy spirit they would receive would fulfill the same role that Jesus Christ's physical presence had fulfilled in their lives up till then.

So here is the point we need to understand:

Before the flood "walking with God" provided the same spiritual help and guidance to resist the natural selfish human nature, as is the help provided to a repentant person today who has received God's holy spirit.

When we repent, we are saying that we want to "walk with God". And for all those who "walk with God" God's spirit "dwells with them". For those who "walked with God" before the flood, and also for those who "walked with God" during Jesus Christ's ministry there was no need to have the holy spirit dwelling in them. Walking with God represents access to the power of God to help us to change away from hostility to God.

Put another way, John 14:17 presents to us the differences in God's plan. The expression "the spirit of truth dwells **with you**" describes God's plan **before the flood**. The expression "the spirit of truth shall be **in you**" describes God's plan **after the flood**.

Anyway, let's continue.

At the end of 1,536 years God had clearly identified the key problem area in His dealings with human beings. That key problem area was human nature and how it spontaneously functions. And God pinpointed that problem area in Genesis 6:5. **The thoughts and the imaginations of the natural human heart** (i.e. human nature) **are the problem which must be confronted and dealt with**.

So:

Changing that natural human mind became the focus of **the plan that went into effect after the flood**. The word that refers to this focus is "repentance", exchanging the selfish operating system of the natural mind with a way of thinking that always puts God first. **Repentance became the focus in the revised plan**.

In due time God was also going to make His holy spirit available to all those people who accepted a

positive and humble approach towards God and God's whole way of life.

And the forgiveness of past sins was also introduced into the revised plan. **A requirement for the forgiveness of all past sins** and transgressions is a changing of the way we use our minds. So God introduced an incentive to man as follows:

If you are willing to change the selfish way your mind functions, and you freely acknowledge your sins and shortcomings, and you accept the sacrifice Jesus Christ brought to cover all the guilt you have incurred in your life up to this point in time, and you commit to living by all of My laws, then I will forgive and blot out all your past guilt. And then you can make a fresh start. And I will give you My holy spirit to help you to change the way your mind works spontaneously.

Forgiveness is not the end. Forgiveness is only the beginning of the process of salvation.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ to cover the sins of all human beings, who will repent and stay faithful to God for the rest of their lives, was **the most profound addition** to the revised plan that went into effect after the flood. I suspect that one of the things underlying God's decision that Jesus Christ would live a human life, and then give His life to pay for our sins was the following thinking on the part of Jesus Christ.

My speculation is that it goes more or less as follows:

"When I created Adam and Eve, I did not understand just how powerfully human nature is drawn to Satan's selfish way of thinking. It is staggering that all their thoughts always gravitate towards evil. Therefore **I will live a human life to experience that natural human spirit Myself**, to learn from personal experience just what it is like to live life as a human being."

As the Apostle Paul explained about Jesus Christ:

For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but **was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin**. (Hebrews 4:15)

His life as a human being enabled Jesus Christ to become personally familiar with human nature, to experience firsthand the effect of His mind being bombarded by selfish thoughts and to unfailingly resist them, to experience life from the human perspective. And Christ always, without fail, stayed faithful to God the Father.

Now let's take a closer look at the natural human mind, at what we call "human nature".

A CLOSER LOOK AT HUMAN NATURE

Let's start with the things Paul explained to the Christians in Rome. In chapter 1 Paul presents the problem with human nature, namely is that it is hostile towards God!

One way that hostility expressed itself was that human beings began to make idols to be their "gods". And then God responded as follows:

Wherefore **God also gave them up to uncleanness** through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: (Romans 1:24)

Once people rejected the true God and replaced God with idols, God then allowed them to descend into all manner of perversions and depravity. That is one expression of the wretchedness of human nature ... human nature is readily drawn to all manner of "uncleanness".

In the next few verses Paul mentions that people with such a carnal nature then got involved in "vile affections" like homosexuality, etc. (see verses 26-27). Now notice what Paul explained in the following verse.

And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to **a reprobate mind**, to do those things which are not convenient; (Romans 1:28)

This is the problem that God had identified back in Genesis 6:5!

The meaning of "a reprobate mind" here is: **a mind that is rejected**, a mind that is unreliable, a mind that has not been tested. "A reprobate mind" is an apt description for "human nature".

Notice the "couldn't-care-less" attitude of human nature.

Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are **worthy of death**, not only do the same, but **have pleasure in them that do them**. (Romans 1:32)

Perverts are always seeking converts to their perversions. That's human nature!

In chapter 3 Paul presents a scathing description of human nature, a description of the carnal human mind. As you read these verses, keep in mind that this is a description of human nature.

As it is written, **There is none righteous**, no, not one: There is none that understands, there is **none that seeks after God**. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is **none that does good**, no, not one. Their throat *is* an open grave (sepulcher); with their tongues they have used deceit; **the poison of snakes (asps) *is* under their lips**: Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: And **the way of peace have they not known**: There is **no fear of God** before their eyes. (Romans 3:10-18)

That is human nature!

In Romans 8:7 Paul condensed all these aspects of human nature into one short sentence.

Because **the carnal mind *is* enmity against God**: for it is **not subject to the law of God**, **neither indeed can be**. (Romans 8:7)

When it says that human nature is "not subject to the law of God", it means that the law of God cannot reason with the natural human mind. The Greek word here translated as "enmity" refers to **a strong hatred**. Human nature actually hates God in an active way! It might be good to also recognize that **human nature does not hate Satan**! It only hates God!

Next, human nature is **not willing to submit to the laws of God**. Human nature is not prepared to be bound by the laws of God. Human nature is self-willed and demands to decide for itself what laws it will accept, and what laws it will reject. Human nature does not acknowledge a higher authority, except when that "higher authority" happens to be Satan. Human nature is quite willing to recognize Satan's (supposed) authority, but it rejects God's authority.

Thirdly, human nature is **not even capable of submitting to God's laws**. That's what "neither indeed

can be" means. Now **why** is the natural unconverted mind not capable of submitting itself to God's laws? It is not capable of submitting itself to God and His way of thinking because human nature had been **"begotten" by Satan**. Human nature is Satan's offspring. Human nature is the selfish way of thinking that entered our minds in early childhood; it is an expression of Satan's spirit. In its considerations the natural human mind can no more put God first than Satan can put God first.

It is this last statement in Romans 8:7 that is the most revealing. The statement "neither indeed can be" shows why it is the natural mind that must be changed, if we human beings are to have any relationship with God. This statement explains why **repentance is all about changing the thought processes in the human mind**. If those thought processes are not changed, then no relationship with God is possible. And then it is impossible to please God (see Romans 8:8).

Consider also that a mind that is willing to be persuaded by hatred is typically not willing to be persuaded by the truth. Lies of defamation, etc. are readily accepted by the natural mind, whereas the truth regarding a person's integrity is frequently treated with skepticism and outright rejection. We readily believe bad news about other people and we treat good news about other people with suspicion. That's human nature.

And as far as repentance is concerned:

Hopefully we can understand that there is a huge difference between real repentance on the one hand, and keeping the Sabbath and the Feasts and tithing, etc. on the other hand. It is the way the mind works that must change for all those people who truly repent. [And yes, those who truly repent will most certainly also keep the Sabbath and the Feasts and God's laws regarding tithing and unclean meats, etc.. If they don't, it means that they are not really repentant.]

The focus of real repentance is the mind, not the outward actions.

THE NATURAL MIND IS PERVERSE

The natural mind is totally perverse! That hatred for God was also directed against Jesus Christ personally. When the Pharisees wanted Pontius Pilate to crucify Jesus Christ, Pilate asked a very simple and totally logical question.

And the governor said, **Why, what evil has He done?** But they cried out the more, saying, **Let Him be crucified**. (Matthew 27:23)

Notice that those priests and Pharisees didn't have any rational reason for putting Jesus Christ to death. And they didn't care! They just wanted Jesus Christ to be killed. This reveals that **the natural mind knows that it is in the wrong**, but it doesn't care. The natural mind doesn't even pretend to act logically or rationally. **The natural mind always seeks to act from a position of power** (real or imagined or asserted), to force its will on others ... just like Satan!

It's not a case of "do this because that is the right and logical thing to do". It is always a case of "do this because **I have the power to force you to do this**". This contrast is something we see over and over in human history: one protagonist says "we need to do the right thing", and the other protagonist says "we have the power to force you to do what we want you to do". And the latter protagonist almost always wins.

A simple example we are experiencing in **many different countries** around the world right now involves

vaccinations against the COVID sickness.

The calm logical side says: "show us the proof that these vaccines are safe and effective in preventing the disease. Explain to us why over 10,000 people in the USA, and over 5,000 people in Europe, and who knows how many more in the rest of the world have been killed by these COVID vaccines, when they are supposedly so safe. Openly acknowledge all the other serious side effects like heart disease that come along with those vaccinations. Explain to us why unvaccinated people are supposedly a health threat to those who are vaccinated."

And the other side in various countries right now says: "It's got nothing to do with having any proof that the vaccines are safe and effective. We have decided that they are effective, and we have the power to force you to have the vaccinations. We also have the power to punish you if you don't agree to be vaccinated."

That's the satanic human nature in action ... threatening people to achieve compliance. That's the nature that needs to be rooted out, the nature of forcing its will on other people. Asking for clear answers to serious questions about the vaccines is no different from Pontius Pilate asking the simple question: why, what evil has He done?

It is almost like the covid vaccinations are **a dress-rehearsal** for the mark of the beast. I don't believe that they are the mark of the beast. But they surely look like a trial run for that mark ... threatening people with unemployment and potentially the ability to buy and sell, etc. We've had many different vaccinations in the past, but we've never had all the threats that are attached to the covid vaccinations. These threats are something totally new.

We should also understand that **the response** by those who want to force these vaccinations on all their people in various different countries shows that **they know that they are in the wrong**! They know that because **they don't attempt to answer** the valid questions that are put to them. They just want to force people to comply with their decisions. That's human nature in action!

Here is a general principle we should keep in mind:

Whenever people are not prepared to answer genuine and sincere questions, it means that **they know that their own position is wrong** and indefensible, but they just don't care.

This illustrates the **deviousness** of human nature, arguing to support something we know is wrong, and arguing against something we know is right. **It happens all the time** and in all kinds of contexts. Lawyers do this all the time! People do this in their families, in business, in religion, in elected public offices, in education, in social interactions with others, etc. ... argue against what they know is right, and argue for what they know is wrong.

That is the mind that is responsible for all the problems we human beings have in our relationship with the Creator God. And that is the mind that must be rooted out.

The heart *is* deceitful above all *(things)*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

The human mind is deceitful above all! Above anything and everything else, it is the human mind that is the most perverse and depraved thing that exists in this universe. It is identical to the mind of Satan. And it is the natural human mind that must be destroyed.

Here is how the Apostle James put it:

Do you think that the Scripture says in vain, **The spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy**? (James 4:5)

This is what we need to recognize about our own minds. It takes no effort for us to lust and to envy those who are better off than we are. We do it spontaneously. And it once again goes back to Satan. It was Satan who envied God! The created being envied his Creator. And **whenever we are envious, we are showing that we are Satan's offspring**. Envy is a very destructive emotion. But it is a significant part of human nature.

In 2 Timothy 3 Paul is speaking about false religious leaders in the Church, men who "have a form of godliness", but who themselves don't actually believe the things they teach others.

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (2 Timothy 3:5)

Paul continued to say about these false religious leaders:

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: **men of corrupt minds**, **reprobate concerning the faith**. (2 Timothy 3:8)

Once again it is the perverse, defiled human mind that is the real problem in this situation. It's the mind we've had since early childhood. Anyone and everyone who actively "resists the truth" has such a "corrupt mind". And the men Paul was referring to in this verse had managed to get into the ministry. But their minds were carnal, perverse and corrupt, and most certainly "reprobate" (i.e. not approved).

We've seen that the natural human mind is "enmity against God". And that hostility also extends towards all those people who sincerely seek to live by all of God's laws. That's something Jesus Christ pointed out to His apostles.

If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore **the world hates you**. (John 15:19)

Why would the natural human mind (i.e. "the world") hate people who do them no harm, people who quietly keep God's Sabbath and God's Holy Days, people who follow certain dietary laws and who don't participate in certain activities? Why? What have the people of God done to people in the world, that would perhaps justify such hatred? Why does the world hate model citizens?

This spontaneous hatred is due entirely to human nature being a copy of Satan's nature. This hatred is proof of Satan's involvement in human lives. It is Satan who spontaneously hates everything that is good.

OUR WORLD TODAY

When we look around our world today, what do we see? We see a world that is totally under Satan's control. It is the spirit of Satan that controls virtually every aspect of life in every society around the world. That does indeed make Satan "the god of this age", as the Apostle Paul already told us over 1,900 years ago.

In the Middle East we see people of one religion seeking to kill people of other religions. Vicious wars are being waged. We see aggressors intent on killing unarmed harmless civilians. Suicide bombers are commonplace. There is a total disregard for who may "get caught in the crossfire", i.e. who may end up being killed, without having been a target.

In Africa we see not only wars, but also droughts and famines. Many people are starving to death. And there is human trafficking, selling people into slavery, and women are being forced into a life of prostitution. The level of lawlessness in a number of African countries is horrific.

Here in the US (and probably just as much in many other countries as well) we see intense hatred and aggression towards people who hold different views and opinions. We see concerted efforts at trying to control the entire population by means of things like "a lock-down" and "compulsory COVID vaccinations". We see a disregard for law and order by those who occupy the top leadership positions in the various states, and in the nation. And we see threats, lots of threats, if we don't comply with the unlawful demands imposed on us.

Everywhere it seems we see a spirit of competition. It is a spirit of competition that drives so many facets of the national economies of various countries. The threat of international terrorism is ever with us. And the production of narcotic drugs, and their distribution around the world, is becoming an ever-greater threat in many countries.

Immorality and perversions are commonplace, and laws are passed that try to give those perversions legitimacy. Jesus Christ said that before His second coming conditions in the world would be like they were in the days of Noah just before the flood (see Matthew 24:37). We have already looked at God's comments regarding the world at Noah's time. It was a sick, perverse world that was filled with violence. I suspect that in our age we have now reached the stage where God's comments about the world at Noah's time apply equally to us today.

And it is all due to human nature! It is all due to our human minds operating exactly like Satan's mind ... motivated by greed, covetousness, a lust for power, a hatred for anything that stands for Almighty God, and total contempt for what is "the right thing to do". Human nature is vicious because Satan is vicious.

That's the world we live in right now. And it is getting worse with every month that passes. As the Apostle Paul put it:

But **evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse**, deceiving, and being deceived. (2 Timothy 3:13)

We are living in dangerous times. In this context we need to follow Jesus Christ's advice to the Church in Philadelphia:

Behold, I come quickly: **hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown**. (Revelation 3:11)

Frank W Nelte