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Commentary — From the Margins *A Received Nature*

Every student of the Bible is familiar with the story of King Nebuchadnezzar living as a beast, or as an ox for seven years. The story is standard fodder for children's Bible-based coloring books. Its familiarity, though, tends to cause it to be dismissed when adults examine the epistles of Paul, and New Testament theology.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that his wise men couldn't interpret, so he sent for Daniel whom he called Belteshazzar and whom he had made chief of the magicians. He told Daniel his vision, saying that a watcher of the Holy One had said, "Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given him" (Dan 4:16). Daniel interpreted the dream, and gave the king counsel: "Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity" (v. 27). But a year later when bragging about having built mighty Babylon, a voice from heaven pronounced the execution of the vision, confirming that "you shall be made to eat grass like an ox" (v. 32).

Nebuchadnezzar was made to eat grass like an ox by being given the mind of a beast. This story is prophetically significant for Nebuchadnezzar as king of Babylon typologically represents or is the shadow of Satan as the spiritual king of spiritual Babylon (Isa 14:4–20) when that old dragon is cast from heaven (Rev 12:9–10) and comes as the true antiChrist during the last half of seven years of tribulation (Rev 13:11); Satan will receive the mind of a man. But this story is additionally significant in understanding how Satan works as "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2:2). For Satan influences how humans think at a fundamental level; hence, he influences what psychologists identify as human nature.

Human nature is generally believed to be a constant that can be modeled or crafted but has consistent behavior characteristics that can be and have been described through scientific observation. Holy Writ is not generally considered a reliable guide in understanding the workings of the human mind. Holy Writ is usually consigned to being historically significant moralist literature, a polite way of labeling the Bible as a collection of myths. For Holy Writ claims that the nature of beasts—of the great predators—will be changed when the Breath of God is breathed or poured out upon all flesh. As Nebuchadnezzar received the mind of a beast which changed his nature, thereby causing him to eat grass like an ox, the behavior patterns of beasts will change when the Holy Spirit is poured out. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together, and a little child shall lead them" (Isa 11:6) when the Lord's day arrives. The prophet goes on to say, "The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (vv. 7–9). Thus, even animals will have their natures positively affected by the Breath of God. Their presently observed behavioral patterns and characteristics will cease.

By observation, scientists have determined that the natures or instincts of predators are as fixed as is the nature of humankind. The American Declaration of Independence declares that there are self-evident truths based upon human nature. Philosophers describe the affairs of humanity based upon the understanding each has of human nature—and Melville in *Moby Dick* writes, concerning folio Leviathans, that the Right Whale's head is Locke and the Sperm Whale's head is Kant, that we need to “throw all these thunderheads overboard, and then you will float light and right” (chptr 73). We, as Christians, need to reevaluate what philosophers and psychologists have observed and described as the fixed nature of humankind. We need to be less concerned about being *correct perceivers* and more concerned about what the narrative of Holy Writ reveals.

If God caused Nebuchadnezzar to eat grass like an ox and will cause lions to eat grass, then those aspects of nature that seem most natural have been received from God, have been placed inside living entities by their Creator. This includes humanity's natural inclination to reject God and His laws (Rom 8:7). This includes the willing acceptance of philosophies and scientific hypotheses that are labeled by the greater Christian Church as godless. This also includes individual self-identities. And herein lies the stickler: the gay man who insists that God created him gay, that he wouldn't wish being gay off on anyone, has justification in saying what he does. Except it wasn't God that made him gay—he received the nature of the prince of the power of the air; he received Satan's perverted asexual nature. He was, indeed, given the nature he has, along with all of its associated attractions and desires.

The immediate objection will be the implied assumption in the preceding paragraph that if a received nature is *good* (a subjective term), it is from God—and if *bad* (an equally subjective term), then it is from Satan. That is a far too simplistic reading of the text.

Psychologists will look for childhood traumas that have shaped personal identities. Many times they will find these traumas. Domineering mothers, weak fathers, sudden deaths—these and many more factors sculpt a person into who he or she is. But the nature that is so sculpted isn't a nature that eats grass like an ox. Nor is it a nature that will do no harm, nor cause any hurt because of having knowledge of God. Rather, it is a nature consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32), and with this consignment, individual natures become subject to traumas that determine how the prince of the power of the air's broadcasts are received. Therefore, the work that psychologists do has merit within the conscious mind, less merit when addressing the subconscious.

The Apostle Paul additionally writes, “For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin” (Rom 3:9). So human nature at a subconscious level is a nature of sin or lawlessness (1 John 3:4), a rebellious nature where none do good (Rom 3:12), a nature swift to shed blood (*v.* 15). And it is God who has consigned, as if our natural minds were merchandise, humankind to lawlessness. God has, in this age, placed human beings under the dominion of Satan through the old dragon, who deceives the whole world, being the prince of the power of the air. Satan reigns over, or reigned over the subconscious mental topography of all human beings—including you and me (Eph 2:3)—prior to the person being drawn from the world by God (John 6:44, 65).

The reality of Scripture is that God has the ability to change how human beings think and respond to stimuli (i.e., change human nature itself). He has, for an age, made those individuals who are His firstborn sons sin (or disobedient) so that he can have mercy on

them (Rom 11:32). Jesus as the first of the firstfruits was made sin. The Cross, or death had no valid claim to Jesus' life, for Jesus was without sin. Thus, He had to be made sin through Him taking on the sins of others [of all humanity] in order for Him to die. The remainder of the firstfruits (i.e., the Body of Christ) were, however, made sin by consigning them to disobedience. God then, by writing His laws on hearts and minds, starts a war within each disciple. This war creates the condition the Apostle Paul found within himself when he wrote the seventh chapter of Romans.

The law of sin that once dwelt in the mind of every person alive was placed there by God when He allowed the old dragon to reign as the prince of the power of the air. The law of sin and death that continues to dwell in the flesh of every person alive came when Adam was driven from Eden before he could eat of the Tree of Life. Therefore, the abuse of the flesh that poses as liberation from the laws of God doesn't surprise God. When this age ends, so will that abuse. The minds and natures of every living being will be affected by knowledge of the Lord, a euphemistic expression for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28) when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (Rev 11:15 & Dan 7:9–14). The day of the Lord begins halfway through seven years of tribulation, begins with the typological birth of a spiritual Seth, the third son of the last Adam and the last Eve.

Human beings have been consigned to disobedience—that is, made sin—to justify every born-from-above disciple crucifying the Apostle Paul's *old man*, the person all of us were through unbelief. A real character change occurs in genuine disciples. As the circumcised nation that left Egyptian bondage was replaced man-for-man by their uncircumcised children, with the children being born and maturing in the tents of their parents, the Apostle Paul's *new man* dwells in the same tabernacle of flesh as his *old man*. But this *new man* is an entirely different person than the crucified *old man*. This *new man* equates to the children that crossed the Jordan and entered the promised land.

Crucifixion doesn't kill instantly. Likewise, the human nature consigned to disobedience doesn't die instantly when a disciple has been born a second time. This old nature, which God made sin, hangs around as a father might most of the while that the Apostle Paul's *new man* develops. But the God and Father of this *new man* should be the Most High. When it isn't, the *new man* grows in the likeness of the *old man*. If this happens, the *new man* will experience the lake of fire when his judgment is revealed.

The early death or absence of a human father causes a son to model himself after other male (or female) role models. This is the domain of psychologists. The early death of the crucified *old man* should cause the *new man* to mature with Christ Jesus as his role model. A strong *old man* that, although imprisoned on the cross, lives on for decades influences the maturing *new man*. His disobedience into which *he* was consigned doesn't seem so bad to the *new child of God*. Such an *old man* needs his legs broken, which happens through trials and persecution. And because so many *old men* have figuratively lived too long, the hour of trial will come upon the whole world (Rev 3:10).

The Apostle Paul's *new man* has, through receipt of the Holy Spirit, a nature that will do no harm, a nature that if in a lion would cause the lion to eat grass. However, since this new man as a child lives in the same tabernacle as the crucified but still living old man, Grace covers the child's failures to do right, covers the many times when the child does do harm. But when this *new man* is [liberated](#) through empowerment by the Holy Spirit from

the law of sin and death that dwells in his flesh, all *old men* will be dead. The *new man* will be able to walk blameless before God if that is his (or her) nature. If it isn't this spiritual *new man's* nature, then sin still lurks at this *new man's* door. This new creature is of Cain.

Once born from above, every disciple can possess the nature of Christ Jesus. Every disciple should acquire the nature of Christ. But this will not happen unless the crucified old man dies relatively quickly.

As with Oedipus, the son must kill the father that dwells in the same tabernacle of flesh—this is the riddle of Christianity; this is the bitterness of the scroll that tastes like honey in one's mouth. The son must break his crucified father's legs so that his nature will not become that of the *old man*.

Sons of disobedience are truly now doing what comes natural to each of them. Some of them, though, live apparently moral lives. Many of them do good works. The *old men* of these sons of disobedience will not, when crucified, greatly hinder the maturing of the *new creatures* that will be born through receipt of the Holy Spirit. So there is a tangible benefit in doing what is right for even sons of disobedience that have been made sin by God.

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