



Chronicles of Diversity

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Thesis 1: No heavy lifting?

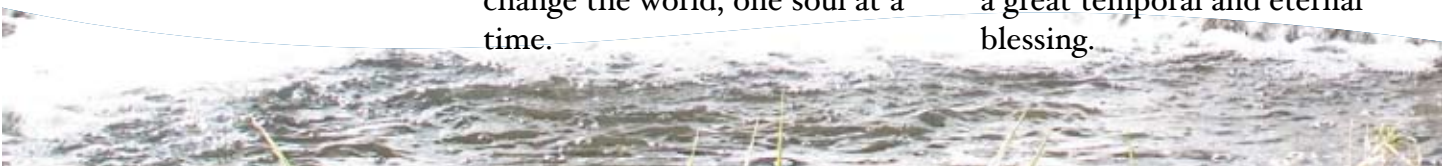
Just a tad bit under 490 years ago 1517 Martin Luther published his now famous “95 Theses” on the church door in Wittenberg. That work which changed the world as we know it was titled: “Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences.” Like most of you I have never read this work from top to bottom. I assume because we don’t think that it is relevant to us today.

We no longer have the recognized church selling indulgences, or ways for you to get you and yours into heaven, or do we?

Surely not, but if you just send in your love gift, large or small, to this ministry, we will send you this valuable piece of kitsch if you are lucky and a whole lot of information that you will never read, or listen to, or watch, please select the appropriate response on how Jesus is using this ministry to change the world, one soul at a time.

Of course the real church is not much better compared to our para church alternative. Come on in and sit yourself down, and be moderately entertained for a few hours each week, in return for your tithes and offerings totaling on average one to two percent of your after tax earnings . We promise not to make you feel uneasy, embarrass you in front of your really insecure brothers and sisters, or heaven forbid, ask you to change your arrogant, vain, lifestyle. That is not what the Jesus we know and loves us, would ask you to do.

When I broke my hand a little over two months ago, the first thing I needed to learn was that naturally speaking, I could do no heavy lifting. Little did I know that that physical handicap would allow me to do some much needed heavy lifting on where I was and what I should be doing with my life hence forth. However, it did take about half that time, to realize that my short term handicap, was really a great temporal and eternal blessing.



Just two weeks ago, when I finally got my hand out of the splint, I discovered however, that I had lost about 60 percent of the flexibility in all my fingers and my wrist. The doctor gave me a few exercises and a followup appointment in a month, and said be sure to exercise everything, because if I didn't I would probably lose that flexibility permanently.

I did my exercises faithfully, when I remembered, and have gotten back most of the flexibility, the pain of stretching those unused ligaments was gradually diminishing, and the slight swelling in my extremities was slowly going down. I shall soon be back to normal.

The doctor had also told me not to do anything really stupid. On New Year's Eve day I was asked to help move a washer and dryer, to replace a unit that I had moved three previous times last year. This making a total of four for the one set. Being careful to follow the doctor's orders I helped to the best of my ability. What I have discovered following that moderate heavy lifting, is that those couple of hours of exercise has been more beneficial to all my hand recovery than if I had just continued my previous exercises on my own.

Read your Bible, have your devotions, and go to church and sit on the multipurpose hooked together padded chairs and listen to some inspirational words, share a few, "looking goods," "hi buddy," "how's it going," and other socially acceptable exercises, have a cup of coffee and a few cookies, really can not be considered heavy lifting in the work of the church militant.

I guess, I suppose, I think, that we then are not part of that historic body of the communion of saints. We are militant if it only serves our own self interest. That is better defined as self indulgent, or lenient, soft and lax. When it comes to the church and ourselves, we are the church of the decadent and sedentary, aged well beyond our years.

The Reformation term "sola scriptura," has been redefined into "solo scriptura." In other words, the Bible means what we want it to mean. We do this by stripping God's word of its true historical context, or limiting that context to those portions that fit with what we want to

teach, or believe, or make us popular, or pay the bills, or I could go on and on. This I will do in more detail at some later date.

The fact of the matter is that indulgences are probably just as perverse, perhaps more so, than at the time of Luther's Reformation stand. We have just made them politically correct, to fit with our modern enlightened world view.

Speaking of world views, I recently heard a statement that said that the youth, or younger generation, in America are not really Christian, but moral deists. I would enlarge that definition to include virtually everyone. The religion of Thomas Jefferson is now definitely the religion of America.

Therefore, we don't have the majority of the church pushing for any type of Biblical creation account as real truth, we have this Intelligent Design refuse, designed not to offend anyone, but really not bringing anything to the table with any nutritive substance. In other words it makes a Wendy's double burger with cheese, extra pickle, and a side salad, and a diet soda, look like a gourmet feast. I have chosen to no longer participate at the golden arches fast food church.

When I broke my hand I was doing a series on Stupendous Change. Psychologically breaking this small bone for the first month was the most trying time in my life. I either write or do physical type stuff, ergo with a splinted hand I could do neither. Once I got over that trauma, which was much worse than anything I suffered with my aortic replacement, this time has become one of the biggest blessings in my life.

Not only have I had the time to look at my life personally but the world around. In the terms of stupendous change, it continues. We have tropical rain in California, fires in Texas and Oklahoma, some trapped miners in West Virginia. Except perhaps for the miners, these are all situations our enlightened world calls "Acts of God." Catastrophes is even a more negative term.

Now finding that only one of the miners is alive, after news reports earlier this morning had reported that 12 had survived, we again see that what we have assumed as sources of truth, can no longer be trusted for accuracy. Dare we say for sake of their perceived gain, they lied. Through these last few months we

see this in not only government and the media, but also into many aspects of the church that others have shared with me.

I have already mentioned the birth pangs of the Reformation 500 years ago. If you look back throughout history about every 500 years you see God doing something to transform at least western culture and the world dramatically. About 500 years before the Reformation was the church split between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches that brought about the Crusades. Five hundred years before that was the problem between Augustine and Pelagius and their divergent theologies. Half a millennia before that we have the birth of the church.

In the Old Testament you can follow a similar historic timeline back to Abraham when the history becomes muddled by natural, political, religious, and other paradigms trying to justify their particular world view. In short, for 4000 years, roughly every 500 years society has been shaken by stupendous change. In the intervening periods of those stupendous changes we see new cultural growth work its way through human civilization, setting the stage for other stupendous events. In the last month of my hand imposed quiet time, I have become more convinced that we are now living in such an era of those stupendous changes.

Philipp Melanchthon, Luther's compatriot, somewhere in a reference that I have had trouble finding again, contrasted the Reformation with the rise of humanism and the age of reason. Melanchthon was highly trained in the humanistic arts and chose to follow Luther rather than pursue his humanistic training. While the church and western culture was dramatically altered by the Reformation, over time we see the church more and more becoming not so much an agent of God, but the agent of a humanist reasonable worldview.

To paraphrase my Army Colonel while in Germany, "These may be lousy little Godly changes, but they are the only ones we have." However, we could be entering a time when God again reveals his mastery over His creation, and especially over the rebels He created in His own

image. In other words, man's natural reasonable explanations on how the world works according to man, have been weighed in the balance of time and found naturally deficient.

Praise the Lord, the Rapture is about to happen. But just a minute, if you truly look at the rise of the teaching of the rapture of the church as it is taught today, there is no evidence that it was taught significantly as doctrine until the middle of the 19th century. In other words. the Rapture is a fruit of our desire to understand, the beyond understanding less than 200 years old.

That does not necessarily make the teaching wrong, but it does make teaching the Rapture outside its true historical context a manifestation of the pre mentioned solo scriptura, not the Reformation's sola scriptura. Could it be a form of indulgence to try to revive the church according to our desires, or to grow the church according to man's desire for understanding in a world where we do not control our own destiny? Put in the context of the title of this message, it allows both the pastors and the sheep to do no heavy lifting in terms of true systematic theology and apologetics.

Now the purpose of this Rapture discussion is only to point out that we all need to examine our lives and our doctrines and see if they truly fit, or are needed, or really true, if pretty much everything we hold as reasonable is shaken to the core?

When we are forced by outside circumstances to live stupendously, things happen and our world is changed. Atheists pray, people change the directions of their life, a terrified German youth prayed to St. Anne in a lightning storm for his life, and as a consequence virtually the whole church of that era, including the Romanist papists were totally changed in a very short period of a few years. Stupendous change is a gift to us of God's grace individually, which may affect the whole world if that be part of God's will.

We do not live in the superstitious era of the Reformation however. Out of that age of reason and humanism we have developed what we now call science. But what modern apologists of atheistic religion forget to tell us is that following the Reformation, this inquiry into the nature of creation, was really a realm of philosophy seeking to understand the gifts God has given us in His

creation. From that desire, slowly we see the rise of the atheistic world view of naturalism. That defined as everything in this world has a natural explanation. If we just work hard enough someday, all on our natural own, as more and more highly evolved animals, we will know the true meaning of life. But just because we now have that atheistic nonsense, does not mean that there is not some value in certain areas of science that truly describe God's creation.

To convey what we do not know and cannot fully understand mankind has devised two descriptive methods. The one with the longest history is mysticism. All we have discussed, in the critique above, has come to us at least partially through mystic revelations. The problem with mystic developments however, is that their truth must be fashioned from intuitive reasonableness. But there is truly no way to validate the truth of the underlying assumptions other than abstracting them from your world view. In other words, to the extent your world view is based on absolute truth, will ultimately determine the magnitude your world will be shaken when faced with stupendous change.

In that regard the revelation that Christ's return is becoming more eminent and He will usher in a 1000 year reign on earth is significantly a superior eschatology, either pro or sans Rapture, if the world truly works through stupendous change, rather than a realized millennia, or a preterist view based upon a uniform historical time continuum.

Having said that, any true Christian world view, will ultimately provide the strength to overcome any natural change, because its strength is not based upon naturalism as defined above, but upon a God that exists both within and outside of His creation. Pity the person who's life does not accept the God of absolute truth.

Which brings us to our other way to communicate the revelations of God or those concepts beyond our understanding. That is allegory.

"The Lord of the Rings," literature changed into a movie trilogy communicates a truth of ultimate good contrasted with evil, played out

in man's world of the middle earth. "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," now begins another movie allegorical series based on C.S Lewis' "Chronicles of Narnia."

What separates allegory from mysticism is that allegory can use descriptive science instead of just inductive reasoning to substantiate the ultimate truth of its paradigms. What that means, is that there now exists an opportunity for the church to use descriptive science as a mechanism for evangelism. However, this method can not be incorporated into existing evangelistic venues based upon solely mystic and emotional encounters.

So where are we? If our understanding of reasonableness is being challenged by unprecedented change on all fronts, just being a moral deist isn't going to get you to the promised land. In fact, your promised land has been swept, burned, shaken away and you are left behind alone amidst the rubble of years, perhaps a lifetime of work. A church with the message, "Jesus loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." is going to be met with ridicule and scorn.

In trying to use my scientific analytical skills, I see the light lifting church is going to be swept away also, perhaps before things get really naturally much more severe. The Bible makes it quite clear that God will not share His Glory with mankind, especially religious mankind. That type of religion that promotes reasonable materialism will be left behind amid the destruction of stupendous change. But so will a lot of what we believed as truth, which was based solely on intuitive mystic revelations.

The church is being called to a time of real heavy lifting. Lifting that is impossible for man to do in his own strength. Even to communicate in his own strength, using his best intellectual arguments. But the church must again be the voice of God crying in the wilderness. That wilderness was created by the voice of God speaking that reality into existence. The descriptive science of that creation account, must be incorporated into the gospel of the life, death, and resurrection of that Creator, which justifies fallen man.

What I have come up with for my part of this required heavy lifting is tentatively titled "Sheep to Wolves, The science to restore a viable Christian ardor in the world." Essentially what this does is use

ecology, bio energetics, genetics, in conjunction with the Bible, to describe in allegory what is happening in our current world. This allows us to see how those changes will bring about alterations that will bring glory only to God, as change unfolds through the mechanisms of creation and recreation, both gradual and catastrophic. Right now the outline runs for a two day workshop, with most of the blanks still blank.

Briefly the story line goes as follows: Left to the nature of this fallen world, over time, the church, as do all enterprises of mankind, slowly transforms itself from a sheep shepherd analogy into a sheep led by a wolf in sheep's clothing. The time that is required for this to take place depends upon the science underlying the specific congregation, denomination, movement, business etc. This may be a few or hundreds of years, depending upon the underlying descriptive science and whether that science is known, followed, or ignored. Most of what many describe in mystical terms is really just natural science following God's created natural laws, but unknown to the uneducated mystic.

However, if sometime along this evolutionary, or thermodynamic continuum, internal or external forces for change again seek to rely on God alone, the organization can be transformed allegorically into spiritual wolves. These are not the wolves described in man's hostile representation, but the community that is among the most complex among all of natural creation.

Therefore, we can learn a lot from wolves, just as native peoples adapted their humble communities following the model of the wolf pack. Since humble communities is an oxymoron in modern culture, we have a lot to learn, or a long way to fall, depending upon your world view and your underlying ontological paradigms.

Therefore, to kick off this new year, like never in our past history, we are going to need your indulgent support to pull this off. Consider this New Years resolution a step toward some heavy lifting you will be called upon to do in the proximate future.