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IS HUMAN NATURE GOOD OR EVIL?

What do you think human nature is like? Is it good? Is it evil? Is it perhaps a mixture of good and evil? Or is it perhaps neutral, being neither good nor evil? And if it is evil, then the question is: why did God create human nature evil? Would it not be unfair to us human beings, to give us an evil nature with which to start our lives? What does God in the Bible tell us about human nature?

Before we can examine this subject in more detail, we need to clarify what exactly we mean with the term “human nature”, because different people attach different meanings to this term. So let’s clarify this term “human nature” for our purposes.

The Wikipedia article on “Human nature” states the following:

Human nature is a concept that denotes **the fundamental dispositions and characteristics**, including **ways of thinking, feeling, and acting**, that humans are said to have naturally. The term is often used to denote **the essence of humankind**, or what it 'means' to be human. (Wikipedia “Human nature”)

Merriam-Webster Dictionary has an online “Kids Definition” for “Human nature”, which reads:

“the nature of human beings, especially : **the ways of thinking, acting, and reacting that are common to most or all human beings** or that **are learned** in social situations.” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Other reference works provide similar definitions.

The Merriam-Webster definition adds the thought that certain traits of human nature could perhaps be the result of a learning process, in addition to other traits being innate. However, if something is acquired by learning, then that is not really a part of the original “nature” of that person. Therefore **acquired traits** shouldn’t really be considered as a part of human nature, since they **are not natural** but acquired through learning.

Fundamental dispositions, characteristics, ways of thinking, feeling and behaving ... in one sense that largely covers the term “human nature”. But **there is still something missing**.

All these terms don’t tell us whether human nature is inherently good or bad or both. They don’t reveal any tendencies or proclivities for human nature in relation to the Creator God. But since we human beings were created by God, it means that **human nature must absolutely in some way relate to our Creator**. And there the only options are: to relate to God in a good way or in a bad way. There is no in-between option possible.

The terms “good” and “bad” and “evil” indicate that a judgment as to merit has been made; they represent a value assessment. So when we ask the question “is human nature good or evil”, then we are not just looking for all the attributes that make up human nature. We are really looking for **an evaluation of the merits of human nature**. What are the merits of all the tendencies of human nature? As far as God is concerned, are they good or are they bad? That is my focus in this article.

So let's construct our own definition for “human nature”, a definition that will give us a value assessment for human nature, and which takes our understanding of the Bible into consideration. Here is what we should consider in any discussion about “human nature”:

At birth God gives to every human being “**the spirit in man**”. We could also call this “**the human spirit**”. It is this spirit which distinguishes us from animals. Animals do not have this “human spirit”. It is the spirit in man which enables us to function on the human level, in comparison to all animals. Any human being from whom God would take away the spirit in man would cease to be a human being, even though nothing would have changed in the person's physical outward appearance. Such a person without the spirit in man would in practice be nothing more than a “human-looking” animal. The spirit which God gives to every person at birth is **the single most important criterion** in defining a human being. That spirit is a gift from God to every human being.

Now God has thus far **only one single time** ever taken the spirit in man away from somebody for a limited period of time, and that was from King Nebuchadnezzar of ancient Babylon. That is recorded in Daniel 4:32. I have discussed that incident at some length in my 2012 article “The Perversity of Abortion”. See that article for an explanation. A key verse in that context is Daniel 4:16, which says:

Let his heart be changed from man's, and **let a beast's (i.e. an animal's) heart be given unto him**; and let seven times pass over him. (Daniel 4:16)

Saying that Nebuchadnezzar would have “an animal's heart” is a way of saying that he would not be a human being during those seven years; he would only be a human-looking animal. And here “the heart” is a reference to “the mind”, which is totally dependent on the spirit in man.

So the point is this:

It is not our outward physical appearance that makes us human. It is the spirit in man, given to us by God at birth, that really makes us human. And it is the spirit in man that expresses “human nature”. It is the spirit in man which makes possible our human ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. It is the spirit in man which gives us a mind, and which then empowers our minds to think and reason on the human level. Animals do not have a mind.

So the question “is human nature good or bad?” really boils down to asking “**is the spirit in man good or bad**”, because without the spirit in man we have no human nature whatsoever. That is what King Nebuchadnezzar demonstrated for a period of seven full years.

Here is a simple definition for “human nature”, without unnecessary frills. It is not the final definition of human nature. But it is a stepping-stone towards the definition God provides in the Bible, which we will look at shortly. Here is this stepping-stone definition:

“The term ‘human nature’ identifies **the initial spontaneous relationship which the as yet uninfluenced spirit in man, combined with a human brain, has with the Creator God.**”

By “the as yet uninfluenced spirit in man” I mean the spirit in man that has not yet been exposed to any influence from either God or Satan. I am referring to **the spontaneous tendencies** of the spirit in man, before that spirit has been exposed to any good or bad outside influence.

Even without any exposure to either God or Satan, **the spirit in man has its own tendencies**. Those initial tendencies are capable of then being either reinforced or else altered and replaced by outside influences. In other words, those initial tendencies of the spirit in man are not inflexible; they are capable of being changed.

So from a biblical point of view, in our context “human nature” really expresses **a merit assessment** of the spirit in man. It expresses a merit assessment of the human being’s initial relationship with God. Human nature refers to how the natural man spontaneously responds to the laws and ways of God. Human nature identifies the state of mind, i.e. the spontaneous ways of thinking, feeling and acting of the natural human being from birth onwards, before either a true conversion or any other outside influence.

HUMAN NATURE = MERIT ASSESSMENT OF THE SPIRIT IN MAN

The human brain has access to very little information at birth. But it has a staggering potential to take in an enormous amount of information, and to process that information. However, it is **the spirit in man** that then **assumes control, and supervises the processing of all the information that enters the human brain**.

Now without the human brain the spirit in man cannot express itself; without the brain the spirit in man cannot think or reason, let alone reach conclusions and decisions. The spirit in man needs the brain for the spirit in man to develop and to express itself in a human being. In turn, the brain itself is not capable of functioning on the human level without the presence of the spirit in man, as King Nebuchadnezzar demonstrated. Both, a functioning brain and the spirit in man, are essential for the life of every human being. As far as human life is concerned, you can’t have one without the other.

Because at birth, regarding things like self-identity and the ability to express oneself, there is either no information or else only very limited information in the brain, therefore **human nature is not yet really developed in a newborn baby**. Every baby starts life on a completely different level than the level on which Adam and Eve started their lives as fully mature adults. So any comparisons of newborn babies to the way Adam and Eve used their adult minds in the first few days of their existence would be meaningless.

I mention this because sometimes people have looked at Adam's obedience to God's instructions on the first day of Adam's life, and then wanted to draw conclusions regarding what human nature is like, based on Adam's responses to God on that first day of his life. That reasoning goes as follows: when God instructed Adam to name all the animals, then Adam freely obeyed God. **Therefore** Adam's original nature was (supposedly) not hostile to God.

That is a false conclusion!

A nature that is hostile to God does not express hostility in every single action. A liar does not lie in everything that he says. Liars also say some things, even many things, that are true. Likewise, hostility does not necessarily express itself in every activity every single day. The tendencies of human nature require some time to express themselves and to reveal themselves. So looking at the actions of the human mind for only one particular day can easily result in an unreliable conclusion. Evaluating Adam's very limited actions before exposure to Satan (i.e. Adam's compliance with God's instructions to name all the animals) only gives us very limited information, insufficient for arriving at any reliable conclusions.

(Later we'll take a closer look at Adam's and Eve's specific circumstances. But for now let's move on.)

So let's get back to looking at the newborn child.

As the baby's brain is bombarded with input from its new environment, so the spirit in man enables the brain to work with that input, and to develop what we call "human nature". And by age one year that baby has an established "human nature". Yes certainly, at age one year that child's human nature is still in its infancy, and it is still extremely malleable. But it has been established, and it **already has its own tendencies**, and it is also responsive to the input it receives. In fact, the type of input that the baby receives is of vital importance for future development.

Here is the point I wish to make:

At birth we receive the spirit in man, and that makes us human. But at birth we do not yet have any "human nature". In the first few months of life, and longer, a baby is incapable of choosing between right and wrong. So at birth we are **human beings without human nature!**

Referring to that period of life, God said through the Prophet Isaiah:

For **before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good**, the land that you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings. (Isaiah 7:16)

The expression God used in this verse refers to the period of time from birth to a certain point in the child's development. In our context important is not whether that period consists of weeks or of months or even of a year or two. In our context it is important to recognize that every human life starts out with a **period of time** before we were capable of comprehending the difference between good and evil, and

before we had any human nature (as per our definition of “human nature”).

That is the period of time during which human nature is developed and established in every human being.

That is the period of time during which **how** the human mind will think and reason is established. And **at the end of that period of time**, however long that may be, once a child is capable of comprehending the difference between good and evil, **human nature has been established** in that child. How long that period of time lasts is not particularly important in our discussion.

Important is that **there actually is such a period of time**, when a human being did not yet have any human nature.

At the end of that period of time the human mind has established a spontaneous way of responding to the ways of God. And, as I already mentioned earlier, those initial ways of responding to God will then be subjected to outside influences. That human mind will from then onwards choose how to respond to those outside influences.

Now **how the human mind chooses to respond** to outside influences will then determine the further development of the person’s mind.

GOD DID NOT CREATE HUMAN NATURE

If you understand what I have just explained, then the consequences are staggering! What it means is that human nature was never at any point created by God! The spontaneous nature we human beings have was simply not created by God. **Human nature is not a creation but a development.**

Human nature is the result of combining the spirit in man with a human brain, in which combination the spirit in man will always provide the controlling force. So let’s look at what God tells us about the human spirit.

Here we go.

After God had created Adam and Eve, God worked with and observed human beings for 1536 years, to the time exactly 120 years before the flood started. At that point God then said:

And the LORD said, **My spirit shall not always** strive with (Hebrew = “**judge**”) **man**, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. (Genesis 6:3)

The English word “strive” is a significant mistranslation of the Hebrew verb “din”. This Hebrew word

really means “to judge”. So for the past 1536 years **God had been judging** all human beings, ever since creating Adam and Eve.

Why did God judge human beings for that whole period of time? **Didn't God know in advance** how the spirit in man He had given human beings would make those human beings behave? Didn't God know something like: “this spirit in man which I have given you will make you behave in a good way?”

What do Genesis 6:3 and the following few verses tell us about God?

They tell us that **God had not correctly anticipated what human nature would be like**. They tell us that when God gave the spirit in man to the human beings He had created, giving them totally free and independent minds, God did not anticipate just how perverse and evil we human beings would prove to be. The evil tendencies of human nature caught God somewhat unprepared. That's because God always anticipates the best possible outcome. **The flood is proof** that the result had caught God somewhat unprepared.

God had created human beings with a brain, and then God had placed the spirit in man into that brain. So **why** should **the combination of physical brain + spirit in man** turn out to be so evil, so anti-God? The brain by itself is not evil, and the spirit which God gave to human beings is by itself likewise not evil. So **why** did the combination of those two things turn out to be so anti-God, so spontaneously and consistently opposed to its Creator?

That is apparently something God had not anticipated.

The closest analogy to explain this situation, that I can think of, obviously falls short in certain regards. But this situation is somewhat like the following:

A chemist has never before done a certain experiment. Now while he has certain expectations, in actual fact he has no available data or information regarding how this experiment will actually turn out. Nobody else has ever done this specific experiment before. The chemist wants to find out what will happen when two distinct substances, each with its own unique characteristics, are combined.

So he takes a test tube and places **one specific substance** in that test tube. By itself this specific substance does not have any undesirable qualities or attributes. In our analogy that “specific substance” is a physical human body with a physical brain. Then he adds **the second substance** to that test tube. By itself this second substance also does not have any undesirable qualities or attributes. In our analogy that “second substance” is the spirit in man.

And then the chemist watches to see what will happen. Since this experiment has never been done before, the chemist has no way of predicting with certainty what will happen. All he can do is watch and observe.

So he watches. And while individually both substances are inert, when they are combined in this way, **they actually produce an explosion**. This is an outcome the chemist had not anticipated. Why should two inert substances produce an explosion when they are combined?

So he performs the same experiment over and over, to see if there is some clue that he had missed, or if he had overlooked something. And after repeatedly doing the same experiment, and always getting the same result, the chemist reaches his conclusion.

This is only an analogy, but can you see the point I am trying to make?

“The conclusion” reached is expressed in Genesis 6:5.

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)

Notice that it is “**every** imagination”, and it is “**only** evil”, and it is “**continually**”. The Hebrew word translated as “continually” is “kol-hayom”. In this expression “hayom” means “the day”, and “kol” means “all, every”. So “kol-hayom” literally means “all the day” or “every day” or “**all the time**”. In this context it really means “every day” or “endlessly”, and so “continually” is a good translation in this context.

Yes, the results of the experiment were conclusive. The experiment always produced the same results. Therefore in future the results could be confidently predicted. Mixing substance one with substance two always produced the same result.

The point is:

Yes, God had created the original two substances. But **God had not created the result** that the combining of those two substances always produces. That result represented a spontaneous reaction. And that result (i.e. human nature) had not been predictable to God. Why not? Because that result displayed **characteristics that were not present in either of the two original components**. Combining those two substances produced something (i.e. human nature) that was previously totally unknown.

So let's ask some questions:

Question: What is God doing in Genesis 6:5?

Answer: God is **defining human nature**. Human nature, the product of combining two substances, is defined by God as “every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart”. Genesis 6:5 is God’s assessment of human nature.

Question: How does this definition relate to the definition I provided earlier?

Answer: My definition provides the framework for defining human nature, but without making any judgment. God's definition here goes one step further, and makes the actual value judgment for human nature. God's definition answers the question: is human nature good, bad, or a mixture of good and bad. And God's value judgment is that **human nature is totally bad**.

Question: Did God give any indication that human nature could be "a mixture of both good and evil"?

Answer: No, God did not hint that any part of human nature might perhaps be good. The expression "only evil continually" makes no allowance for any good aspects to human nature.

Question: Did God make allowance for any exceptions to this definition?

Answer: No, God used absolute terms in this definition.

Question: What does "and God saw that ..." mean?

Answer: This means "and God **recognized** that ...".

Question: What is the significance of this short expression "God saw that"?

Answer: It expresses **a result** which God had not anticipated.

Question: Does God attribute the blame for this evil state to Satan?

Answer: No, in this assessment God does not put any blame on Satan.

Question: If God had removed Satan from this planet Earth before creating Adam and Eve, would God have reached a different conclusion regarding human nature, than the one God reached in Genesis 6:5?

Answer: No, the ultimate conclusion would still have been exactly the same as it is in Genesis 6:5. But it would very likely have taken much longer to reach that conclusion. **Satan is nothing more than a catalyst** in the formation of human nature. Genesis 6:5 is God's true and absolutely correct assessment of human nature, irrespective of whether or not Satan is around to influence human beings. (This is something I will discuss a little later.)

Question: How did this recognition affect God?

Answer: It made God regret that He had created human beings. It both grieved God and made God angry, as is revealed in the next two verses.

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

“It repented the LORD” means that God regretted that He had created human beings. “It grieved Him” means that God was **extremely disappointed** with the way human beings turned out.

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)

“I will destroy man” is an expression of **God’s anger** with how things had developed. The flood itself represents an extremely violent destruction of humanity, illustrating the level of God’s anger. The expression “it repents Me” is an emphatic repetition that God really regretted having created human beings.

I suspect that God was prepared for some human beings to turn out to be evil and perverse. What caught God by surprise and what angered God was that **man’s wicked ways of thinking and behaving were universal!** Every single human being fitted the definition in Genesis 6:5. That is what shocked God into making the statements in verses 6-7. (Later I will comment on Abel, Enoch and Noah.)

So here is what these verses in Genesis 6 tell us:

When God created human beings, He gave us a functioning physical brain plus a spirit to control and regulate the brain’s processes. God was **combining something physical** (i.e. the brain) **with something non-physical** (i.e. the spirit in man). That was something God had apparently never done before ... combine something physical with something non-physical. The non-physical component (i.e. the spirit in man) was essential to enable human beings to be tested, without automatically giving them an immortal existence.

And then God observed how that turned out. It is clear that God expected this combination to turn out well, if not in every instance, then at least in a lot of cases. Otherwise God would not have created us human beings. This expectation on God’s part is clear from God’s expression of regret in verse 7.

So what was the cause of the problem? Why didn’t human beings turn out to be as God had hoped?

The problem was the physical component in this creation!

The problem was “the flesh”! The problem was the fact that “the physical component” (i.e. the flesh) would influence “the non-physical component” (i.e. the spirit in man) to prioritize the flesh over the spirit. In plain terms, the flesh would cause the spirit in man to prioritize man’s own desires and needs ahead of God’s ways and instructions. Why did the spirit in man establish this priority? It established this priority because **the spirit in man identified itself with the flesh**. Without the flesh the spirit in man has no identity, and therefore the spirit in man will in every instance initially identify itself with the flesh, with the physical body that it controls.

Instead of the spirit in man placing God's ways first and physical man's wishes second, **the spirit in man** (with its own self-identity coming from the flesh) **actually placed man's wishes first, ahead of God's ways and instructions**. And it did so spontaneously and universally and pretty consistently. That is the conclusion God expressed in verse 3 with the words "**for that he also is flesh**".

But that conclusion was not what God had expected on the day when God had created Adam and Eve.

God obviously knew that man was flesh, because that is how God Himself had created man. So with these words God was not stating the obvious. Rather, with this expression "for that he also is flesh" God was stating that the flesh exerted a negative influence on the spirit in man. **The flesh influences the spirit in man to embrace a selfish motivation**, rather than a motivation of unconditional submission to the Creator God.

In other words, when spirit is combined with flesh, then the flesh will always spontaneously drag the spirit down to the flesh's level. It never happens spontaneously that the spirit can somehow lift the flesh up to the spirit's level.

Now it is possible **with very determined conscious effort** to lift the flesh up to the spirit's level, but this never happens spontaneously. Spontaneously it always goes the other way. When I say that "it is possible" I mean that it is possible **only with a certain amount of help from God**. Without help from God it is simply not possible. That is what God had learned.

The fact that without God's help it is not possible for the spirit in man to lift the desires of the flesh to conform to the laws and ways of God tells us that there is nothing good about human nature. And therefore if there is ever going to be any good coming from human beings, then **human nature must first be put down and replaced by a new nature**.

That is what God had learned after 1536 years.

Now placing man's wishes and desires ahead of God's wishes in any situation is what we call "**selfishness**".

God had learned that in the combination of the flesh (i.e. the human brain) with the spirit (i.e. the spirit in man) the resultant human mind will always place self ahead of any other consideration. That combination will always produce **a mind that is selfishly motivated**.

But that type of mind is foreign to God, and it is anti-God.

God's very nature is an outgoing concern for His creation. That outgoing concern was exhibited to the ultimate degree in Jesus Christ's willingness to die for our sins, and in God the Father's willingness to give the life of Jesus Christ to still make salvation for us human beings possible, to turn around the evil trend human nature had demonstrated for over 1500 years before the flood. I don't believe that any of

us are capable of understanding the staggering enormity of the sacrifice that Jesus Christ willingly gave so that we human beings might still have the opportunity for salvation.

That sacrifice by our Creator God was the ultimate expression of selflessness. Jesus Christ risked his own very existence to make possible salvation for the human beings He Himself had created.

At the time when Jesus Christ created Adam and Eve, Christ did not yet know that the combination of flesh + spirit will always produce a mind that is selfishly motivated, motivated in favor of the flesh.

But this was very clear to Christ after those 1536 years. And that is what God (i.e. Jesus Christ) then revealed later in Genesis 6. Before we look at those verses we should consider a Hebrew verb that is used in those verses.

The Hebrew verb “shachat” is used five times in Genesis 6. This verb means “**to destroy**”. It is also at times translated as “**to corrupt**”, since corruption is one specific form of destruction. The context in which this verb is used will tell us whether “to destroy” or “to corrupt” is more appropriate. Here are the places where this verb is used in Genesis 6.

The earth also **was corrupt** before God, and the earth was filled with violence. (Genesis 6:11)

And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it **was corrupt**; for all flesh **had corrupted** his way upon the earth. (Genesis 6:12)

And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, **I will destroy them** with the earth. (Genesis 6:13)

And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, **to destroy all flesh**, wherein *is* the breath of life, from under heaven; *and* every thing that *is* in the earth shall die. (Genesis 6:17)

In verses 11-12 “destroyed” is a better translation for “shachat” than “corrupted”. Here is what God tells us in these verses.

Verse 11 tells us that **mankind had destroyed the earth** and filled it with violence. We are doing the same thing today.

Verse 12 tells us that mankind had **destroyed the way of life** which God expected human beings to live. We are also doing the same thing today. The “natural” human way of life is perverse before God.

Verse 13 tells us that because human beings had destroyed the earth, therefore **God would destroy**

human beings together with the earth.

Verse 17 repeats what God said in verse 13, that **He would destroy human beings** along with all land-based animal life.

In other words:

“The flesh” had turned out to be the problem. Therefore God determined that He would destroy all flesh.

By the time of the flood it was abundantly clear to God that **human nature was evil and perverse**. Had God created human nature, then God would have already known this all along. But **God had not created human nature**. Instead, human nature is the development that results from combining a physical brain with the spirit in man. This development takes place even in the total absence of Satan, as I will show later.

It was clear to God that there was nothing good about human nature, because God will not destroy the good with the bad. Destroying all human beings tells us that there was nothing good that could perhaps have been salvaged. God did not destroy all fish and all aquatic forms of life, because those life-forms had not yet been perverted by man.

Telling us that the thoughts of man’s heart are “only evil all the time” leaves no room for exceptions. That statement identifies **the problem which God in some way had to deal with** in the revised plan God set in motion after the flood.

LEADING UP TO THE FLOOD

Let’s summarize what we have seen so far.

Before the flood God set in motion a plan for working with human beings, with the intention of ultimately giving those human beings immortal life in the Family of God. To work towards this goal God created human beings physical, with a physical brain plus the spirit in man, which spirit enabled human beings to have totally free and independent minds.

Over a period of 1536 years (i.e. 50% more than 2¹⁰) God learned in absolute terms that the combination of physical brain + spirit in man always produces a mind that is first and foremost selfish, a mind that is “only evil continually”. So God had clearly identified the root problem with human beings. God had identified the spontaneous tendencies of the human mind.

It is one thing to identify a problem. But it is something altogether different to resolve the problem, to overcome the problem. So after identifying the real problem (i.e. a correct assessment of human nature), God took another 120 years before implementing the first step for dealing with that real problem, i.e. before bringing the flood upon the earth.

It was clear to God that the combination of physical human brain with the spirit in man always, without exception, produces a nature that is “only evil continually”. **That could not be changed!**

God had learned that it was impossible for the combination of physical brain + spirit in man to ever produce a nature that was not evil, not without taking free will away from human beings. But that is something God was not prepared to do ... create human beings who did not have a totally independent free mind. **It was not possible for God to give human beings with a free will a nature that was somehow “not evil”.**

Think about it:

“Free will” means that God cannot possibly give us **any** specific nature. **Any** specific nature would automatically infringe on free will, free choice. If a nature already has certain “tendencies”, then it is not really free to go against those tendencies. A truly free will requires us human beings to develop our own nature. I'll repeat that.

A truly free will absolutely requires us human beings to develop our own nature.

But after the flood **something had to be changed** if God ever hoped to achieve a far, far better result than what had been achieved before the flood.

So if the acquired evil human nature could not be changed, then what could be changed?

A NEW PLAN AFTER THE FLOOD

So step one was to kill off all human beings except for eight hand-picked adults (i.e. Noah and family). That way a new start could be made after the flood.

However ...

Human beings after the flood were destined to have the identical nature which human beings before the flood had possessed. **The flood did not change human nature in any way whatsoever.**

It was inevitable that human beings after the flood would all have minds in which “every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually”. Human nature itself could not be changed, if human beings were to continue to be free moral agents with their own free independent minds.

Our human nature today is identical to human nature before the flood. This is clearly acknowledged by the Apostle Paul. As Paul said:

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)

The “carnal” mind is **the natural mind**, the mind that has not been influenced by God. The natural mind will simply not submit itself voluntarily to God and His laws. That is the exact same problem that existed before the flood. It is the identical human nature that existed before the flood. Before the flood human nature was most assuredly “enmity against God”.

As Paul then stated in the next verse:

So then they that are in the flesh **cannot** please God. (Romans 8:8)

And as Paul had quoted earlier in his letter to the Romans:

As it is written, **There is none righteous, no, not one**: (Romans 3:10)

We human beings today have the exact same human nature that all the people who were drowned in the flood had. Human nature has never been changed. The experiment of combining a physical brain with the spirit in man has always produced the same result.

After the flood God implemented a modified version of His plan for dealing with human beings. That modified plan includes the following things:

Instead of leading humanity to spirit life in God's Kingdom in one straight-forward process, as originally intended, God added a few steps to His original plan for mankind. Basically, God inserted three steps ahead of the original first step, and then also added one additional step after the original last step.

God's original plan consisted of three steps, represented by 1) the Day of Trumpets, followed by 2) the Day of Atonement, followed by 3) the Feast of Ingathering. Keep in mind that originally the year started with the Day of Trumpets, which represents step one in the original plan.

The revised plan after the flood consists of seven steps. Those seven steps are represented by 1) the Passover, followed by 2) the Feast of Unleavened Bread, followed by 3) The Feast of Pentecost, and then followed by 4) the Day of Trumpets, followed by 5) the Day of Atonement, followed by 6) the Feast of Tabernacles, and then followed by 7) the Last Great Day. Keep in mind that **God also revised the annual cycle** to reflect these steps that had been inserted before the original step one, as well as the new step that had been appended to the previously last step. So now God has the year starting in the spring, starting with the month that includes the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Notice that for the Feast God had originally (but only revealed in the days of Moses) intended to be

known as “the Feast of Ingathering”, God also changed the name to “the Feast of Tabernacles”.

Here are more details relating to God’s revised plan.

1) Since human nature could not be changed, therefore God determined to not even attempt to work with well in excess of 99.99% of all human beings who would be born after the flood. God decided that in this age He would “call and choose” less than 0.01% of all human beings for an opportunity to be in God’s Kingdom.

More specifically, God decided to call and choose exactly 144,000 individuals from the millions and billions of people who would be born during the period starting with the flood up to the time of Christ’s second coming. (Comment: The only individuals from before the flood included in the 144,000 are Abel, Enoch and Noah.)

2) All the other human beings during the period ending with Jesus Christ’s second coming, God would keep spiritually blinded, unaware of the Creator God and His laws and His way of life. (This was markedly different from before the flood, when every single human being was fully aware of God.) For all those people God added the 100-year period, for people to come up in what we usually call “the second resurrection”, a resurrection to physical, mortal life. That resurrection is represented by step seven in the revised plan.

3) The most significant part in God’s revised plan was the insertion of **Jesus Christ’s sacrifice** for the sins of all those human beings who would make a determined effort to change away from “the human nature” which had established itself in their minds in their very early childhood.

(Comment: For the meaning of the expression “slain from the foundation of the world” in Revelation 13:8 see my 2011 article “What Does ‘The Foundation Of The World’ Really Mean?”)

4) Evil human nature is something God could not take away from human beings, not without taking away our free will. But because human nature is inherently evil, therefore it has to be **eliminated** in some way. The free will in every human mind has to by itself indicate to God that it wants to get rid of its own evil human nature, that it wants to change.

That is what true repentance is all about ... eliminating the selfish way of thinking from our minds.

God will not take a person’s evil human nature away. But if a human being comes to the point of correctly identifying his own evil nature, and then fervently desires to want to get rid of that nature, then God will make help available to such a person with such a desire to want to put down his own evil nature.

In that way the repenting person must go about eliminating his own evil nature by himself. He must do the fighting. The thing God will do for such a person is to provide the superior weapons that are capable

of ensuring victory for the person in this fight to put down human nature. But the person himself must provide the desire to eliminate the selfish way of thinking.

In analogy, it is somewhat like a small country with a small army that is attacked by a large country with a large army. The small country then asks God for help in this unfair fight. God's reply then is: in this specific war I will not fight for you. But I will give you superior weapons, which have the capability to neutralize and to destroy every single attack on your country by that large country with that large army. **But you yourself will have to use the weapons that I will make available to you.** And if you use the weapons that I will give you, then victory will be assured.

Now "the weapon" that God makes available to all human beings who correctly identify their own evil nature, and who earnestly desire to abolish it from their minds, is what the Apostle Paul called "a spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind" (see 2 Timothy 1:7). The spirit of God, if correctly utilized, can produce many different fruits, which together can defeat the evil tendencies of human nature.

When we human beings come to a real repentance, God in effect says: here is My holy spirit. Use it to overcome and to eliminate your own human nature. You developed that nature, so now you get rid of it. And when we then begin to use God's holy spirit, **then a war breaks out in our minds.**

PAUL'S DESCRIPTION OF THE WAR

Paul discussed the war between his human nature and God's holy spirit in his letter to the Romans. Notice what Paul had to say about human nature.

For I know that **in me** (that is, in my flesh,) **dwells no good thing**: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. (Romans 7:18)

What is Paul referring to? What is it that "dwells in him"? Paul is obviously talking about human nature. So Paul says that human nature is not good! Paul says that human nature wants to be considered good, but without actually doing good consistently, without actually unconditionally submitting its own will to the will of God.

Paul did not believe that human nature is "a mixture" of good and evil. Paul had nothing good to say about human nature. Paul then said:

I find then **a law**, that, when I would do good, **evil is present with me**. For I delight in **the law of God** after the inward man: (Romans 7:21-22)

Let's also look at verse 23.

But I see **another law** in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity

to **the law of sin which is in my members**. (Romans 7:23)

In these verses Paul is talking about **two different “laws”**. Laws are binding. One law is good and one law is evil. The law that is good Paul calls “the law of God”. The law that is evil Paul calls “the law of sin”. So what is that “law of sin” that was residing in his body?

With the term “the law of sin” Paul is referring to **human nature**. Clearly Paul does not attribute anything that is good to human nature. There is no hint that human nature might perhaps be “a mixture of good and evil”. For Paul human nature is all evil, plain and simple.

So why were there two laws within Paul’s mind? Why not just one law? There were two laws within Paul’s mind because Paul was a converted Christian. It was Paul’s repentance and subsequent conversion that added the law of God to his mind. For all unrepentant people there is only one law in their minds, human nature. And when there is only one law in a person’s mind, then there is no warfare in that person’s mind.

Now let’s consider Paul’s statement regarding “when I would do good, evil is present with me”. What does this statement tell us?

God’s spirit (i.e. the good law) was motivating Paul to want to faithfully obey all of God’s laws and instructions. But human nature (i.e. the bad law) was with considerable force pulling Paul in the opposite direction. This created a struggle in Paul’s mind. This was a mental war!

Now at the time of writing this letter Paul had been a converted Christian for many years. He was not a novice in God’s Church. And Paul was very committed to change. Yet the only thing that all of Paul’s efforts could achieve was to temporarily suppress the tendencies of human nature. He could temporarily suppress “the law of sin”, but he could never totally eradicate it. He could never totally eliminate human nature from his life. Human nature remained with him for the rest of his human life. This is also true for you and for me.

It will only be in the resurrection that Paul, and all the other people in the first resurrection, will be completely rid of all aspects of human nature. The permanent struggle against the pulls of human nature, from the time of conversion up to the time of death, will in the resurrection result in the complete elimination of human nature.

If we, like Paul, fight against the pulls of human nature until we die, then human nature will have been completely eliminated from our lives, so that God will resurrect us totally and permanently free of human nature.

Now let’s look at “doing good”.

DOES “DOING GOOD” MAKE HUMAN NATURE GOOD?

Unconverted human beings are certainly capable of doing good. Most of us have experienced occasions when worldly people, who were clearly unrepentant, did something good that assisted us in some way. We have all in some way or other been indebted to unrepentant people. And on those occasions we were grateful for what those people did for us.

Now did those good actions make those people less unconverted? No, of course not. Notice something Jesus Christ said.

In Matthew chapters 5-7 Jesus Christ was speaking to His own disciples (Matthew 5:1). He was not speaking to the Pharisees, but to His own disciples. And in speaking to these people who were looking to Him as their Teacher, Jesus Christ said:

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him? (Matthew 7:11)

Jesus Christ told His own disciples that they were “evil”. He also pointed out that they were quite capable of doing good things. **But giving good gifts had no effect whatsoever on their status of “being evil”**. Even after giving good gifts they were still evil. They were not “a mixture of good and evil”. (We should also keep in mind that the apostles did not come to a real repentance until around the time of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. That’s when they made their unconditional commitments to God.)

(Comment: As an aside, what does Matthew 7:11 tell us about “co-workers” during Mr. Armstrong’s time, who gave the Church money, but who never actually repented? Apart from giving us some money, such co-workers were not different from all other unconverted people. We simply liked receiving money from them.)

The following is extremely important to understand.

People who are “evil” as far as God is concerned, are quite capable of doing good things. That is what Jesus Christ said in plain terms. Doing good things is not the same as repenting.

We only cease to be evil when we truly repent by changing the way we use our own minds, changing our minds from putting self first to unconditionally putting God first. Repentance starts the process of putting down human nature and replacing it with a mind that is guided by and motivated by the spirit of God.

When I say that “we only cease to be evil when we repent”, I do not mean to imply that from repentance onwards we never again “do evil”. Not at all. Another way to state the point I am trying to make here is: it is once we can see “the war in our members”, i.e. the war in our minds between the law of God and the law of sin, that we cease to be evil. We cease to be evil because with our minds **we have started to resist the law of sin**. That is a turning point. But the war still continues. And we still sin at various times.

Doing good is a good thing. But by itself doing good has no effect on human nature. By itself doing good does not change human nature's commitment to putting self ahead of unconditional willing submission to God. A change has to take place in a person's mind, not just in their outward actions.

The mind's commitment to God, to putting willing submission to God ahead of self, is the deciding factor for confronting human nature and for fighting against it. Such a commitment will then be the motivating factor in doing good.

Doing good is visible on the outside, though Jesus Christ instructs us to do our good deeds as discreetly as possible (see Matthew 6:3-4). Changing our way of thinking to always putting God first is invisible; it is on the inside. Changing on the inside is the criterion for dealing with human nature. Changes on the outside are good, but they should be nothing more than a reflection of changes that have already been made on the inside.

Above I asked the question: does doing good make human nature good? The answer is: no. The answer is: **nothing can make human nature good!** Even when the outward good actions are a true reflection of a changed way of using our minds on the inside (i.e. for someone who is converted), that still does not change human nature, as made clear by Paul.

The only thing that we can do in dealing with human nature is to suppress it, to not allow it to dominate our actions, conduct and behavior. But **we cannot reform human nature** any more than the Apostle Paul could reform his own human nature. So our good actions today do not guarantee good actions for tomorrow. We can win some battles today, but we must always be ready for more battles tomorrow, because human nature never gives up in seeking to assert itself in our lives.

Human nature always seeks to catch us off-guard. And we have to do our best to be mentally prepared for such out-of-the-blue occasions. As long as we live this physical life, the temptation to put self ahead of God always remains with us.

Now let's consider another question.

WHAT WOULD HUMAN NATURE BE LIKE WITHOUT SATAN?

50 years ago we used to hear jokes about people justifying certain selfish actions with the excuse: **the devil made me do it**. Usually those jokes were about someone having indulged in something obviously selfish, and this expression was a way of humorously deflecting blame.

But that's not how it goes.

Satan cannot make any human being do anything. He simply does not have that power. And yet Satan somehow gets most human beings in this age to do many, though certainly not all of the things he

wants them to do, i.e. breaking the laws of God in many different ways. Although Satan cannot force any human being to do anything, yet he is “the god of this age” (see 2 Corinthians 4:4), and vast numbers of people do his bidding. Satan largely controls humanity in this age.

The proof that Satan cannot “force” any human being to do his will is presented in the Book of James.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. **Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** (James 4:7)

The Apostle Peter also instructs Christians to resist Satan in 1 Peter 5:9. These statements are true for all human beings, not just for members of God’s Church. **All human beings have the power to resist Satan**, and that is exactly what all people do in very many situations ... resist Satan’s influence.

For example, the vast majority of human beings who somehow end up having thoughts of suicide (that’s Satan at work!) never act on those thoughts. Similarly, the vast majority of people who hate someone to the point of wanting to see that person killed (thoughts that Satan will gladly present to someone’s mind, or else magnify already existing thoughts in that person’s mind), never go out and act on those thoughts of murder. This is also true for very many thoughts about breaking other laws of God, like stealing, adultery, etc. Virtually all people resist **some** of the evil thoughts Satan presents to their minds. This proves that all people are in fact capable of resisting Satan.

People do not act on very many of the evil thoughts that Satan, “the prince of the power of the air”, presents to their minds. In very many cases people resist those perverse thoughts. But all human beings, including you and me, have **sometimes** actively responded to the thoughts Satan was able to present to our minds! We did say or do things that violated a law of God, even though Satan was not able to force us to do his bidding. But in those instances we did his bidding anyway. That’s what Paul is talking about in the latter part of Romans 7.

Now **the reason** why we have all sometimes acted on evil thoughts Satan was able to present to our minds **is human nature!**

It is not that we didn’t really stand a chance against Satan, because Satan is supposedly so powerful. Not at all.

Here is the point.

Whenever we hear or read **any aspect of God’s truth**, then God is presenting thoughts to our minds. Our minds are free to evaluate those thoughts however we choose. We don’t have to accept those thoughts that God is presenting to our minds, and in this age the vast majority of human beings actively rejects the truth of God whenever they come into contact with it.

Likewise, whenever Satan presents **any thoughts of evil** to our minds, then our minds are also totally free to evaluate those thoughts. There is no way that Satan can force us to accept those thoughts and to

act on them. We are completely free to make up our own minds, whether to go along with those evil thoughts, or whether to reject them. And of course, in this process Satan often deviously disguises the evil inherent in the thoughts he presents to our minds.

Both situations are very similar. They differ in that the thoughts God presents to us are directed at the human mind, at logic, and not at feelings or emotions. On the other hand, the thoughts Satan presents to our minds are directed specifically at our feelings and emotions, with a powerful appeal to our selfishness, while always deliberately ignoring all logic.

It is somewhat like listening to a debate, where one speaker appeals to sound logic, while the other speaker willingly ignores all logic and appeals totally to the emotions of the audience. And so some of the audience will go along with the sound logic, while another part of the audience will be swayed by the emotional appeals. However, we should recognize that throughout human history the emotional appeal has in most cases soundly defeated the appeal to logic and reason.

The facts are:

It is the spontaneous urge for human nature **to reject** the thoughts **God** presents to us, and **to accept** without question the selfish thoughts **Satan** has presented to our minds ... if not always, then certainly in very many situations. That is what God had learned in those 1536 years leading up to the flood. God had learned that appeals to human selfishness will win every time over appeals to logic.

That's the choice human nature makes every time.

And since on our own we are powerless to make the correct choice every time, therefore God determined to make His holy spirit available on certain conditions, to help us human beings make the right decisions. Think of God making His holy spirit available to human beings as God "**leveling the playing field**". The holy spirit is a tool we can use to counter the selfish pulls of the natural mind.

But receiving the holy spirit does not represent the end of the game! God's spirit must be used by the person. It is no good if, theoretically speaking, someone were to receive God's holy spirit two days before the person dies. That person could not be in the first resurrection. Why not? Because **the person has never had the opportunity to use the holy spirit to change and to grow**. In effect, the person had been given "one talent", but he died before he ever had the opportunity to use that one talent.

The holy spirit is not some merit badge or certificate of achievement. The holy spirit is not something that we receive at the end of the game, when all the action has already taken place. No, receiving the holy spirit is only the signal that **the game is about to start**.

In itself, receipt of the holy spirit (i.e. receiving one talent or two talents from God) does not in any way produce growth in godly character. And possessing God's spirit for only a few days is not enough time to develop any godly character; that is not enough to be in the first resurrection.

The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) is very clear. When God gives us His holy spirit (represented by one or more talents) then that holy spirit absolutely must bear some fruit in our lives. It is “**after a long time**” (verse 19) from when those servants first received the talents, that “the Lord of those servants” returns, and those servants are **then** called to give account. But none of those servants were expected to give account only a few days after having received the talents.

Giving anyone only a few days is simply not how God tests human minds. Receiving God's holy spirit is the sign that for that person **a testing period is about to start**. That is all that receiving God's spirit indicates. The testing period for those servants only started when they received the talents, not before. Therefore that testing period cannot be terminated successfully just a few days later. Testing requires time.

So back to human nature.

Human nature is sooner or later exposed mentally to God's truth (i.e. the gospel will be preached in all the world, Matthew 24:14), and human nature is also exposed emotionally to temptations from Satan. Without any help from God, Satan will always win. Now with the holy spirit a person has the potential to neutralize and defeat every attack from Satan, and to ultimately win the war, not just against Satan, but also against our own human nature.

Now it is going to be a fair fight!

It is still a fight, and there are people who have lost that fight, even though they had received God's holy spirit. That would be the one talent servants in the parable, who never made use of God's spirit. But now with God's spirit it is actually possible for the person to win that fight and that war.

For a person with God's spirit the difference between winning and losing that war lies in how that person chooses to use his mind. Does his mind determine to actively resist the pulls of selfish human nature? Or does his mind continue to give in to the pulls of human nature?

Let's face it: all of us, including me and you, still have a lot of selfishness in us, right? And that will be true until the day we die. The question is: will we use God's spirit to help us suppress that selfishness all the time? Or will we in certain situations **make no effort at all to resist selfishness**? Or are we even oblivious to our own selfish pulls and desires?

In this war **we cannot eradicate selfishness** from our minds. The best we can do, with the help of God's spirit, is to constantly suppress it and keep it under control. And that is exactly what God expects us to do for the rest of our lives, suppress our own selfishness. In the words of the Apostle Paul, “**I keep under my body**, and bring *it* into subjection lest ...” (1 Corinthians 9:27).

But people who do not have access to God's spirit cannot even regularly suppress selfishness. For them the playing field isn't really level, even without having to deal with temptations coming from Satan. And it is because the present playing field is not level for them, therefore for those people God has

added the second resurrection to His plan, for their opportunity to also play on a level playing field.

But you and I, who already possess God's spirit, we are playing on a level playing field right now. For us it was "game on" when God gave us His spirit, when God gave us one or more talents.

Whenever human nature has the upper hand over us, it means that we are not using "the talent" which God entrusted to us. And when we use that talent, then we are able to resist Satan and he will flee from us. So for us the outcome of this war is in our own hands. God will fight for us, but only if we use all the weapons God has put at our disposal. That is the part we absolutely must fulfill.

A WORLD WITHOUT SATAN

There is a distinction between the spontaneous ways human nature responds to opportunities to be selfish, and the temptations that Satan presents to all human beings. Spontaneous ways of responding are characteristics of our own human nature. They don't come from outside of our minds. We ourselves generate those characteristics. Satan's temptations, on the other hand, reach our minds from the outside. And they typically reinforce our own natural characteristics.

Here is what we should to understand:

The development of human nature in every human being has nothing to do with Satan! Satan is not the one who instills human nature in us, any more than God instills human nature in us.

Human nature is the "explosion" that takes place when the spirit in man is added to the physical brain of a human being. Human nature is a reaction that takes place, over a relatively short period of time in our very early childhood, when a human brain is combined with the spirit in man.

Let's consider a world without Satan in it. Let's look at the millennium.

The explicit purpose for which Satan will be bound for 1000 years is spelled out in Revelation 20.

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and **Satan**, and **bound him a thousand years**, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, **that he should deceive the nations no more**, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. (Revelation 20:2-3)

Satan is bound for the explicit purpose of not influencing any human being in any way for 1000 years. Nothing of what happens during the millennium, up to the end of those 1000 years, will be due in any way to Satan's influence.

Nothing!

The millennium will be a world 100% free from any influence of Satan. Christ will be ruling over mortal human beings, and no human being will receive a single thought from Satan.

Everything negative that happens during the millennium, right up to the time of Satan's release at the end of those 1000 years, **will be due entirely to human nature**, the nature that every human being develops within a short period after birth.

Nor will any sinful activities during the millennium be "a hangover" from things those mortal human beings had been exposed to before Christ's second coming. When Jesus Christ removes Satan, then **all of his influence is gone**, and nothing of it remains. Otherwise there would be no point in even removing Satan.

Giving all human beings "a pure language" (see Zephaniah 3:9), a language which will simply not have any words for a large number of the evils that exist in our world today, will be a significant part in eradicating the memory of Satan's influence on humanity before Jesus Christ's second coming. Every language has its own ways of guiding our thinking, by the way it expresses different thoughts and feelings. So "a pure language" will give the physical mortal human beings who live over into the millennium a good start in erasing many past memories.

In plain terms: Satan's influence on human beings for the past approximately 6000 years will not survive the switch to "a pure language" when the millennium starts. So Satan cannot be blamed for any evils during the millennium. He has no access to any human mind for the entirety of those 1000 years.

So will there be any evil during the millennium?

Yes!

Consider Isaiah 30.

And *though* the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not your teachers be removed into a corner any more, but **your eyes shall see your teachers**: (Isaiah 30:20)

This is a scene from the millennium, when human beings will always have access to spirit beings from the first resurrection, who will be their teachers. Think of daily exposure to teachers who are spirit-born sons of God. It couldn't get much better than that, right?

Now look at the next verse.

And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This *is* the way, walk you in it, **when you turn to**

the right hand, and **when you turn to the left**. (Isaiah 30:21)

What do you mean ... “turn to the right hand or the left”? It means “**when you are about to sin**”! It means “when you are about to break a law of God”.

During the millennium, with one exception, Jesus Christ will not let any human being actually commit any sins outwardly. Why? Because any outward sins committed by anyone would invariably affect some other people to also sin. And that Jesus Christ will not tolerate. So Christ will not allow any bad examples (with one exception) to ever be set by anyone during the millennium.

Selfish human nature will still be very much alive. But human nature is going to be watched over very carefully. A spirit-born son of God will intervene before anyone can convert evil selfish thoughts into actions.

However, human minds themselves will not be censored during the millennium. Jesus Christ will allow human beings to think as many evil selfish thoughts as they want to think, as long as they don't express those thoughts outwardly.

And human beings during the millennium assuredly will think evil thoughts, because the human nature they will have will be identical to the nature the people in Genesis 6:5 had. For human nature the only thing that has changed during the millennium will be that human nature will never be allowed to express itself outwardly in any way.

And then there is **the one exception**, which Jesus Christ will allow explicitly to teach all human beings for the rest of the 1000 years that active disobedience to God's way of life will reap extremely severe penalties. That one exception will be when people in a huge rebellion during the millennium, including people from nations identified as Gog, Meshech, Tubal, Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer, Togarmah and “many people with you” (see Ezekiel 38:1-6), decide to attack Israel for the purpose of ransacking and stealing from the people of Israel. Yes, people can have selfish thoughts of stealing something without any input from Satan.

As God tells us:

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)

During the millennium human beings will be quite capable of thinking “evil thoughts”. Those thoughts, if not rejected by that person's mind, are sins. And every human being during the millennium will have the same potential ability, to think evil thoughts.

But none of those evil thoughts will come from Satan. No, **those evil thoughts will be generated by human nature**, without any encouragement from Satan. Human nature has always been very capable of

producing “evil thoughts”. Human nature gladly accepts help in this regard, but it doesn’t actually need any help. Evil thoughts come easy to human nature, even without any outside encouragement from Satan.

Now understand something about the way Jesus Christ will rule during the millennium.

Revelation 12:5 tells us that Jesus Christ is destined “**to rule all nations with a rod of iron**”. Revelation 19:15 repeats this point of ruling nations “with a rod or iron”. But that doesn’t just apply to Jesus Christ. In Revelation 2:26-27 Jesus Christ said to all those who will be in the first resurrection:

And he that overcomes, and keeps My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And **he shall rule them with a rod of iron**; as the vessels of a potter **shall they be broken to shivers**: even as I received of My Father. (Revelation 2:26-27)

All these verses in Revelation are talking about Jesus Christ and the 144000 ruling over mortal human beings during the millennium. Ruling with “a rod of iron” is a rather tough, strict way of ruling. “Breaking people and nations into shivers” also sounds pretty rough. Why so rough, and why so threatening?

Because all the mortal human beings during the millennium will **still have their own selfish human natures**. And millions of them will never, not at any time during the millennium, really repent and change their way of thinking. Large numbers of people during the millennium will never really suppress the selfish tendencies of their own natures.

Oh yes, they will comply outwardly with what they are told to do ... because of “the rod of iron” approach Christ will take to ruling over those people who don’t repent. They will submit their actions, but not their minds to Jesus Christ’s leadership. They will never repent. They don’t fight and resist their own human nature.

It is for the explicit purpose of weeding out all of these people that Satan will be released for a short time at the end of the 1000 years. And in that very short time span Satan gathers a greater army of human beings against God than he was ever able to achieve during the first 6000 years of man’s existence. That army will be “as the sand of the sea”, i.e. billions of people (Revelation 20:8).

Now here is the point about that rebellious army in Revelation 20. **None of them will have been repentant God-fearing Christians** living during the millennium, only to be tempted and deceived by Satan during Satan’s very brief spell of freedom, after having lived joyfully under Jesus Christ’s rule for up to 1000 years. People who have joyfully submitted their lives to God during the millennium will not be deceived by Satan’s last-ditch appeals to selfishness at the end of the millennium.

No, the people who join Satan in that rebellion will be people who never at any time really changed the way their minds work spontaneously. They had just kept their mouths shut, and made sure they didn’t make waves. They smiled, but their hearts weren’t in those smiles.

Satan will not be set free to have some last-minute joyride before permanent banishment into the blackness of darkness (see Jude 1:13). No, he will be set loose because there will be a job that he will still have to do.

At that point in time Satan will help to bring out into the open all those people from the period of the millennium, who were selfishly motivated, and who never really accepted the ways of God into their minds. Satan has to expose all those people from the millennium who never suppressed their own selfish human nature, because they just kept their own true mindset hidden.

For such people Satan is not the instigator for their spirit of rebellion. For such people **Satan is nothing more than a catalyst**, to very quickly expose their true character.

So throughout the millennium Satan is not able to influence a single human being. Yet there will still be people who will sin. There will be people who will not willingly submit their own minds to God's will. Their minds are enmity against God, even when Satan is not in the picture. Their minds are selfishly motivated.

That is human nature!

Human nature, the nature every human being develops during a short period after birth, is inherently evil. It is spontaneously selfish. And **that early developmental process cannot be changed**. In plain language: there is absolutely no way that the development of human nature during the first two years of life (to take an arbitrary time period) can result in a human nature that is not selfish. It is not possible for human nature at age two years to be outgoing, rather than being focused on self first of all.

You may say: well obviously! What else could you possibly expect? You can't possibly expect a 2-year old to be more concerned for others than for self. What do you expect from a small child?

My answer: I don't expect anything else from a small child. But the foundation for **putting self first** has been well established in that child's mind. And that foundation will from then onwards only be reinforced. And when Satan's influence is then added to the mix, it only gets worse, because putting self first in those first years of life made the child's mind so very receptive to Satan's appeals to selfishness.

All it means is that **it is natural for me and for you and for everybody to be spontaneously selfish**. That is the nature all human beings have. So human nature is based on selfishness. And if that process is not opposed or resisted, then it ultimately ends up at the point of Genesis 6:5. And without some help from God it will end up at that point.

It takes God's spirit to recognize the process, and to then actively resist it and suppress it. Without God's spirit people won't even recognize the process. Without God's spirit people can't discern what their own minds are really like. Without God's spirit people will not experience the mental warfare the Apostle Paul described to the Romans. Unconverted people don't have any mental warfare.

If that is always the case, what about Abel and Enoch and Noah?

WHAT ABOUT ABEL, ENOCH AND NOAH?

When God said in Genesis 6:5 that “every imagination of man’s heart is only evil continually”, did that also apply to Abel, Enoch and Noah? And the answer is: yes.

Here is the point:

Without some help from God no human being is going to overcome the selfish tendencies of human nature. That applies to us today, and that applied to every single person before the flood.

Today Jesus Christ is not here on earth in person. Instead, God has made available His holy spirit to make available the help we human beings need to oppose the selfish pulls of human nature, to level the playing field. Now in order to receive access to God’s spirit, **we have to show God that we want to change**, that we want to repent. We make a move in the right direction, and **then** God gives us access to help through His spirit.

Let me try to make one more point clear:

As I have just said, without help from God we cannot overcome the selfish tendencies of human nature, yes. But **we do not need help from God to recognize the selfish tendencies of our own natures!** Overcome on our own ... no; but **recognize** on our own ... **yes!**

We do not need help from God **to recognize** selfishness in ourselves. But the vast majority of human beings will never do that ... acknowledge to themselves that they are selfish. The vast majority of human beings will justify in their own minds all of their own selfishness. It is not that they couldn’t recognize it, if they wanted to. It is that **they refuse** to even consider the possibility that they are totally selfish.

It takes a certain honesty and integrity on our part to even consider that selfishness is the primary motivation for how we think and reason. So the first step towards receiving the help from God to overcome our own human nature is that we ourselves **freely recognize that we are selfishly motivated** regarding how we live our lives.

That is the mindset that we ourselves have to produce to then open up the possibility for receiving help from God to suppress that selfishness, even if we cannot fully eliminate it from our lives. Without such a mindset on our part we are not going to be able to establish any relationship with God. We need to **recognize** that Genesis 6:5 applies to us personally, and therefore we need God’s help to deal with this situation.

Now before the flood Jesus Christ was present in person here on earth. Instead of making God’s spirit available to people, back then all people on earth had the opportunity to seek contact with Jesus Christ,

by approaching Him and wanting “to walk with Him”. But back then nobody (except for three people) actually decided to seek out that opportunity to walk with Jesus Christ.

However, **Abel** determined to “**walk with God**”. How do I know that, since this is not specifically stated in Genesis? I know that because Abel brought an offering to God, which God liked. Or in biblical terms, God “had respect” to Abel’s offering (see Genesis 4:4). Abel’s offering means that Abel had in fact talked to Jesus Christ and found out what kind of offering would be pleasing to God. And so Abel (who was at least 120 years old at that point) brought exactly the type of offering that would be pleasing to God.

In Genesis 5:22 we are told that Enoch also “**walked with God**”, something that is repeated in verse 24. And in Genesis 6:9 we are told that **Noah** also “**walked with God**”. Abel, Enoch and Noah are the only three people who are recorded as having sought out God’s company before the flood.

(Comment: While Cain also appeared before God with an offering, it is clear that he did so with a very bad attitude. So we should not include Cain in this list. Rather, what the incident with Cain appearing before God should tell us is that quite likely some other individuals before the flood also appeared before God, but likewise with a wrong attitude. Therefore they don’t count either.)

So Abel, Enoch and Noah were in a situation similar to the twelve apostles during Jesus Christ’s earthly ministry. The apostles had ready access to Jesus Christ on a daily basis, because they walked with Him. Therefore during Christ’s ministry there was no need for the apostles to have access to the holy spirit. Likewise, anyone before the flood who chose to walk regularly with Jesus Christ also did not really need to have the holy spirit.

By walking with God these men had access to help from God. That help was enough for the playing field to be leveled for them. And these three men were committed to God, and they will be in the first resurrection.

Walking with God may perhaps have given them the holy spirit? I don’t know, though I somehow doubt it. But walking with God did give them sufficient help from God to resolutely suppress the selfish pulls of their own human nature. Jesus Christ briefly explained this specific point during His last observance of the Passover.

Nevertheless I tell you **the truth**; It is expedient for you that I go away: for **if I go not away, the comforter will not come** unto you; but if I depart, I will send it (the holy spirit) to you. (John 16:7)

Do we understand what Jesus Christ is telling us in this verse?

Jesus Christ was saying that the help they had been receiving from His presence with them, that same help they would in future receive from the holy spirit. But if Jesus Christ in person would not leave them, then there was no way that in this life they would ever receive the holy spirit.

We can't have it both ways. Apply this principle to people in the millennium.

Human beings can only receive help from God in one of these two ways: if Jesus Christ is present in person, then that help will come from Jesus Christ. And if Jesus Christ is not present in person, then that help will come from the holy spirit.

Sending **the holy spirit** to people who seek to submit their lives to God **is a replacement for Jesus Christ not being present in person** to provide any help for those people.

The people before the flood had access to personally walk with God, to help them in their effort to suppress all selfish desires. Today we do not have that type of access to God's help. Instead, today that same help is available to us through the holy spirit. Two different ways to provide the same degree of help.

Today God's holy spirit is available to all those people who truly repent. But very few people accept this offer of help. Before the flood the same help was available to all those people who committed to walk with Jesus Christ. But back then only three men actually accepted this offer of help, and therefore they walked with God.

Human nature has never changed. Now let's take another look at Adam and Eve.

WHAT ABOUT ADAM AND EVE?

On the first day of their lives Adam and Eve **did not have any human nature**. God had given them the spirit in man, but God had not given them any specific nature, either good or evil. Human nature is **a development** that requires time to develop. But the development of human nature also requires **something else**.

The development of human nature also requires **opportunities to be selfish!**

Now Adam and Eve on the first day of their lives both possessed fully functioning adult minds. Their minds perfectly understood every word in the language that God had given them, the knowledge of which language God later completely erased at the tower of Babel (see Genesis 11:7), replacing that language with 70 other languages instead.

On the first day of their lives the minds of Adam and Eve could reason flawlessly. But on that first day of their lives Adam and Eve did not have any opportunity to be selfish! **There simply was no opportunity for selfishness.**

God told Adam to give names to all the animals (Genesis 2:19-20). Adam had free range in naming the animals. Jesus Christ was there while Adam thought up hundreds of names. There was no opportunity

for selfishness in this naming process. Then, while Adam slept, God created Eve. And after God had presented Eve to Adam, the sixth day was coming to an end. And from the time that God had created Adam, God was always with Adam.

It was when God left Adam and Eve alone that the process for the development of human nature started for Adam and Eve. As long as God was with them, standing right next to them, there was no opportunity for any thoughts of selfishness.

It was only when Jesus Christ walked away and allowed Satan to confront them in the form of an animal (i.e. a snake), that they for the very first time experienced **the opportunity** to respond selfishly to some situation.

Eating the fruits of any of the other trees did not involve any selfishness, because God had made all those trees freely available to them. And it hadn't occurred to them to approach the tree of the perception of good and evil. It was Satan who then presented the thought of selfishness to them (i.e. first to Eve).

For the first time in their very short lives they were confronted with the opportunity to behave selfishly. The fruit looked good and desirable (Genesis 3:6). This was their first chance to be selfish. And they took the fruit because they wanted to get something that God had forbidden. They acted selfishly.

In Genesis 3:6 human nature was spontaneously developed in both Adam and Eve!

They had made the decision to put a selfish desire ahead of obedience to their Creator. At the very first opportunity to be selfish they gave in to that pull of selfishness.

Now while Adam and Eve gave in to **the very first opportunity** in their lives to be selfish, **Jesus Christ did not yet accept** that it was inevitable that every human being would be equally spontaneously selfish, when given opportunities for selfishness. Therefore Jesus Christ worked with **several billion** human beings over the next 1536 years, hoping for a different outcome.

It was only after several billion consecutive cases **always** produced **the same result**, with never an exception, that Jesus Christ then concluded that "every imagination of **the thoughts** of his heart is **only evil** continually".

So Adam and Eve developed human nature, the character trait of putting self ahead of God, at the very first opportunity they had for selfishness. And all human beings since then have likewise developed the trait of selfishness in very early childhood. Selfishness is readily discernible in a one-year old child, and certainly in a two-year old child.

Let's wrap up this subject of human nature.

IN SUMMARY

Here is the correct picture for human nature.

- 1) We are not born with human nature. And human nature was not created by God.

- 2) Human nature is developed in the first few months, and perhaps even years, of our lives, when the spirit in man utilizes the physical brain to express itself. **How long** that developmental period may last **is not particularly important**. That development is not influenced by God in any way, and God is certainly not responsible for human nature. But that development establishes a certain way in which a person will use his mind.

- 3) The nature that is then developed in every single human being during that very early period of life **always puts self first**. Human nature is always spontaneously selfish. This is something that cannot be changed.

- 4) Satan will greatly magnify the selfish tendencies of human nature. That's because human nature expresses the identical motivations that identify Satan's character. But Satan is not responsible for the existence of human nature. Satan only influences feelings and emotions that are already present in the human mind before any exposure to Satan's influence.

- 5) All forms of selfishness are opposed to God. So human nature is inherently and spontaneously evil. God's definition of human nature is that "every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually".

- 6) Human nature cannot be rehabilitated. It is not possible to make human nature "not evil". Therefore the only option is that human nature must be eradicated. It must be rooted out. But that is only possible with some help from God.

- 7) To help initiate the process of suppressing and eventually rooting out human nature, God makes available His holy spirit on certain conditions. The main condition God sets is that a person must repent in order to receive access to the holy spirit. A part of real repentance is that we recognize our own inherent selfishness, and that we then desire to eliminate it from our lives. When a person meets the condition of repentance, then God gives that person one or more "talents" of His holy spirit.

- 8) Receiving the holy spirit creates a war in a person's mind. The war is between the person's natural selfish human nature, and the holy spirit's influence to place obedience to God ahead of all selfishness.

- 9) The outcome of that war is by no means a foregone conclusion. The outcome is determined primarily by whether or not the person will actually make use of the power God makes available through His holy spirit. Some people put God's spirit to use in their lives (the two-talent and five-talent servants), while other people never actually use the holy spirit that God has made available to them (the one-talent servants).

10) For all those people who use God's spirit to constantly suppress the selfish motivations of their own human nature, when they are resurrected with a spirit body, their human nature will have been eradicated and replaced by a godly nature of willing submission to all of God's ways.

God is looking at us and judging us, to see if we human beings are willing to confront and then reject the selfish motivations of human nature.

Frank W Nelte