

A REPRESENTATIONAL STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS

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THE CREATIVE EXTRUSION: Romans 1:1-7

INTRODUCTION AND TERMINOLOGY

Traditionally we have seen the book of Romans as Paul's exposition on the relationship between grace and law, between faith and works as a means of achieving salvation. While that major theme is unquestionably addressed in this epistle, a representational reading of it allows us to mine great riches from it as well.

The book of Romans is the infusion of the thought and intentions of God into a Gentile worldview; or more properly, into a Gentile cosmology. This cosmology had formed the framework of the way they thought about everything, and God was calling them out of it into absolute obedience to Him.

Cogent to this discussion is the idea of antipodes. This word has been used historically to describe sites on opposite sides of the globe; and is used here to describe elements that are correlative (have an inherent connection or relationship) but incommensurable (in the sense that they cannot ever be equated or related to one another except as opposites.)

Another important term used in this discussion is "prefix". In grammar, a prefix is the first meaningful element of a word, and has the power to change or modify the syllables that follow it. In this discussion, it is used to depict pre-existing conditions of a mental or spiritual nature that affect those things which follow.

ELEMENTS OF THE FIRST THEMATIC

The figure that represents the way that Gentiles think, their cosmology, is depicted as a sphere that is being penetrated by a sharp-edged element depicting the Holy Spirit, who is being extruded--or forcibly pushed--into that cosmology. The two channels by which this is accomplished are revelation and power.

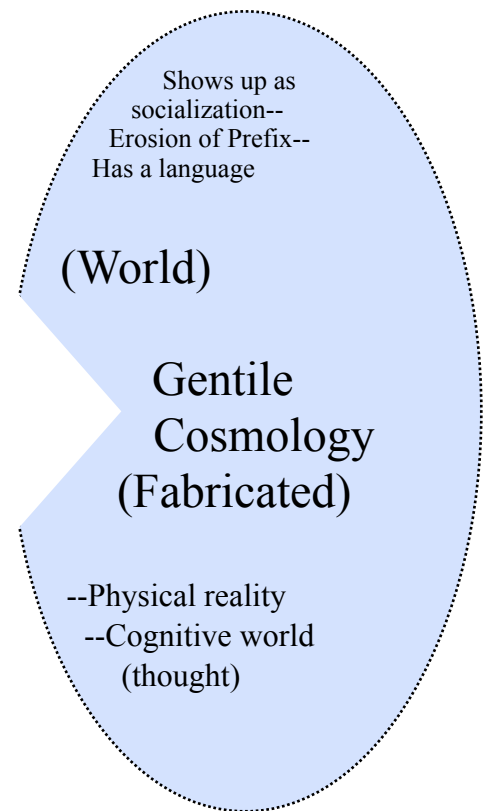
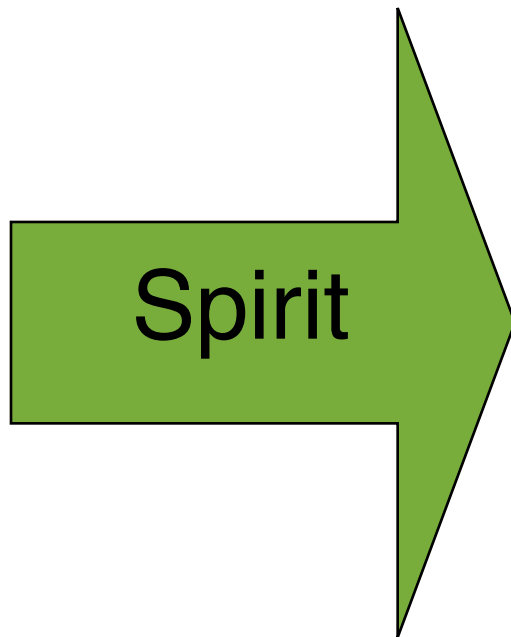
A second thematic demonstrates how people are moved along by the impetus of this extrusion out of the Gentile cosmology as well. Christians who are so moved thus can be seen as a beneficial prefix to the human race. Furthermore, the Gentile cosmology can accurately be assessed as antipode to these Christians. Finally, Christians serve as indices, linking the unseen world to the seen.

The Extrusion
Channel:

Revelation

“Holy Scriptures”
verse 2

Power



SCRIPTURE TEXT:

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God-- the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him and for his name's sake we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

GENERALIZATIONS DERIVED FROM THE TEXT AND FROM THE THEMATIC:

1). We can say that the Gentile cosmology or way of assessing the world is a fabricated one in that it was created by human minds from their own context. It is based upon conclusions the human mind has reached on the basis of on observation of physical reality. (Because plenary or complete reality includes a consideration both of the seen and the unseen, we know that such contextual knowledge as forms the Gentile cosmology is inherently fragmented/incomplete because it does not take the unseen into consideration as having ontological, or absolutely real, status.)

A consideration of the Gentile cosmology also involves the idea that this fabricated entity controls the cognitive, or thought, world of the people it includes. It has its own language which precludes or disregards the spiritual. In addition, the erasure of the prefix, the meaning which God has built into creation to remind all men of Him, is seen clearly in the socialization process.

2) Romans 1 shows us that there are two “extrusion channels” through which God chooses to effect changes to that Gentile cosmology. The first is revelation (“the Holy Scriptures”) and the other is “power.” Every event in the life of Jesus was prefixed by this element of power (v. 4), and was tied to His direct connection with the mind of God.

a. This extrusion by design creates a cognitive channel by which the apostles and prophets spoke to the minds of their day. (It is created.)

b. It created objectifications of the mind of God of two particular types mentioned in Romans 1: The Son (especially in His Incarnation --v. 3--and His Resurrection --v. 4) and the saints whom we find in the Bible, who by their lives are historical examples of this extrusion of the mind of God, objectified in a physical way on this earth (Abraham, for example.)

c. The presence of the extrusion of the mind of God into this world, as personified by the Son and by believers, was intended by God to create a kind of existential tension between what the Gentiles had always thought (their cosmology) and revelation. People were called, Romans 1 tells us, from among the Gentiles to a new posture of obedience and faith.

3) By contrasting the Gentile cosmology to this extrusion, we see an antipode to that cosmology: the recognition of absolute symbolism. God Himself symbolized Jesus in certain, absolute ways by “designating” Him (οριζω) in two ways: as the Son of God (v. 4) and as “Christ our Lord” (v.4.) It was not the choice of men to symbolize Jesus this way, but that of the Father. Only believers would recognize this designation. Saved people have to symbolize from God’s point of view, else they cannot respond to Him as He would have them. Such an antipode is a prefix or type of precondition to our salvation in that it changes the nature of the way we perceive the world.

4) Thus the role of Christians as both prefix and index to the unseen gives the Christian some distinct advantages. Without the prefixing influence of God, we would tend to see the world as simply formalistic--cause-and-effect, sequential, restricted to the observable. Such a view accounts for the anxiety that permeates worldly thinking.

The extrusion gives Christians themselves the ability to prefix. Just as all the events and words of Christ were prefixed, so emotions, security, economics, biology, sociology, marriage, childrearing, death--all the elements of the Gentile cosmology--are prefixed by the mind of God for the Christian.

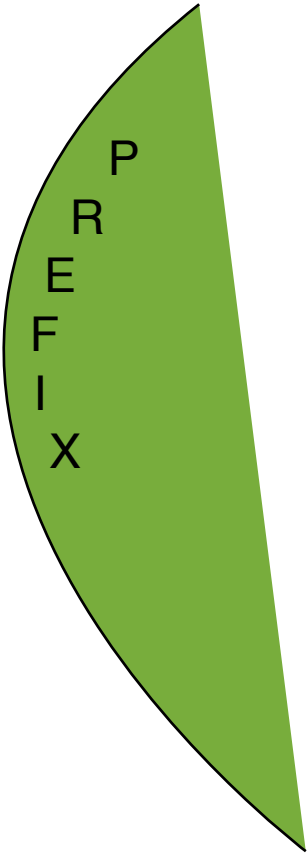
ELEMENTS OF THE SECOND THEMATIC

The second thematic demonstrates how various elements of the temporal world: all events, circumstances, relations, and needs are prefixed. This is accomplished in the unseen world by means of symbols which are known only to God, His exclusive domain until He reveal them to man. There are two kinds of symbols in this prefix: the revealed ones (revelation) and those which remain unknown to us (how a certain situation will play out, for instance.) The way

in which the eternal subsumes the temporal is reflected in the curved section-shape of the eternal, coming to bear on and subsuming the temporal.

Because therefore eternity prefixes the temporal, that means that this indissoluble eternal prefix holds as well for us when we are in a temporal situation of crisis.

SYMBOLS--
THAT ARE
KNOWN:
REVELATION



ALL EVENTS
ALL CIRCUMSTANCES
ALL RELATIONS
ALL NEEDS

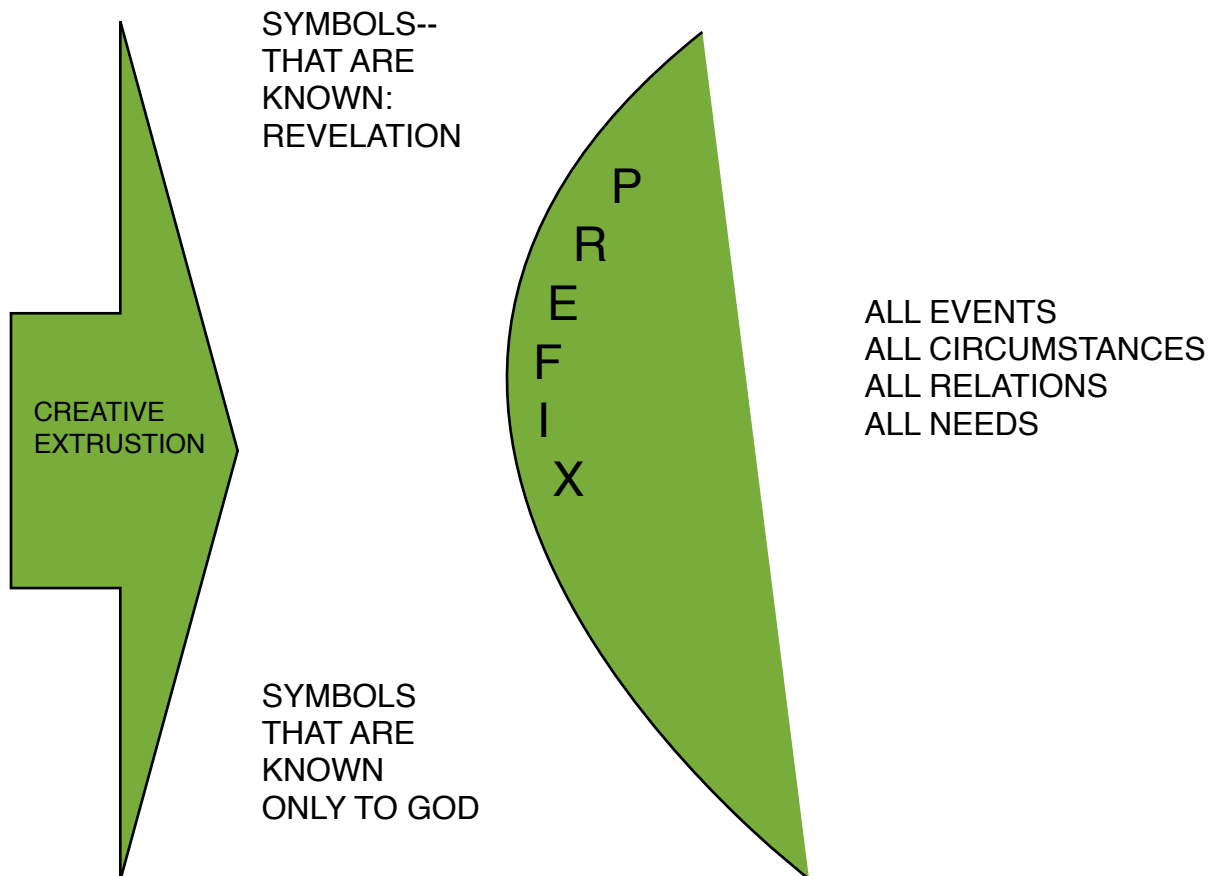
SYMBOLS
THAT ARE
KNOWN
ONLY TO GOD

GENERALIZATIONS DERIVED FROM THE TEXT AND THE SECOND THEMATIC:

All relationships of a Christian are prefixed by symbols of God. Thus whether the relationships be those between a Christian and his salvation, a Christian and other people, or a Christian and his surrounding situations--all are prefixed. We see this prefixing principle in the events of Exodus 17 (Rephidim), 1 Samuel 17 (David and Goliath), and Deuteronomy 1 (Kadesh.)

ELEMENTS OF THE THIRD THEMATIC

Again, the curved section shape indicates the compelling power of the eternal prefix to subsume and shape the temporal. This creative extrusion shows two elements of the eternal and indissoluble prefix: the symbols which exist in the mind of God and are known only to Him; and the symbols of His mind which He has shared with mankind (revelation.) Thus what Paul in the first verse Romans 1 calls "the gospel of God" is not only a prefix to the ideas in the book but in its full meaning, prefix to the human condition--the temporal realm where we deal with crises, events, circumstances, relations, needs, and action.



GENERALIZATIONS DERIVED FROM THE TEXT AND THE THIRD THEMATIC:

We who live on the temporal side can derive from an understanding of the existence of this prefix numerous generalizations. Specifically, we can be assured that while we may not know the outcome of any situation we face, we can take comfort in knowing that that outcome is prefixed.