DIALOGUE

AUGUSTINE AND AQUINAS
THEIR THEOLOGICAL PROGENY COME FACE TO FACE
WITH "BUSINESS AS MISSION"

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*"And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, **that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God**." 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 (emphasis added)*

The Christian Business Faculty Association (CBFA) has not, from its conception, delved into the *theological distinctives* represented within its membership. This is so, not by design or intent, but because the kind of work the members have been engaged in, *Biblical integration* is more narrowly focused. Members have been primarily concerned with the question: What is revealed in Scripture regarding the mind of Christ that relates to the subject matter we are involved with as we work and encourage students to be disciples of Christ in the context of their various majors? Discussing theological distinctives has not been important, *until now*.

Business As Mission (BAM)—a conceptualization of business that merges the "creation mandate" regarding work with the "great commission"—emerged as a significant topic for discussion in the context of both the 2010 CBFA Annual Conference in Lakeland, Florida and the 2011 CBFA Annual Conference in Mount Vernon, Ohio. As a consequence, the schools represented at the annual meetings are minimally being challenged to consider: Should our school introduce a course, a minor, or a major that focuses on BAM? There are serious *theological* questions associated with these questions that need examining before a decision of this magnitude is made.

First, what is theology? Theology, in its *informal* display, is simply an individual's study of the Bible to determine what it reveals about God's nature, thoughts, and conduct as they pertain to the relationships within and between the members of the Trinity, and God's concerns for and involvement in the everyday activities of His image bearers. Those engaged in a more *formal* study of the teachings of Scripture often refer to *systematic theology* and *Biblical theology.*

Systematic theology is the logical, organized, and step-by-step study of a Biblical subject or topic by searching the entire Bible to learn what it reveals regarding the particular topic or subject. For example, what does the Bible say about: forgiveness; or judgment; or sin; or free-will; or conversion; or regeneration; or salvation; or everlasting life; or God's attributes; or Christ's incarnation; etc.? These are all topics that warrant systematic study that is generally followed by definitive assertions called Biblical doctrines.

Biblical theology, on the other hand, is generally thought of as an in-depth examination of a particular passage of Scripture to discern God's mind as it would instruct us both as to His character and conduct, and our motives, thoughts, and behavior in light of His revelation. For example, John 11:1-46 is a passage that contains much revelation about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit along with many lessons for us. It is the story of Jesus calling Lazarus from the tomb after he had already been there *four days* (V. 17). The lessons contained therein are many: God is omnipotent;

God is love; there is a resurrection for us; God is never late; believe that Christ is God; etc. Ferreting out "life applications" from such a passage is the role of *Biblical theology.*

This treatise will look at the theology of two men who are generally regarded by Christians in the West as great theologians. They are Augustine (354-430), Bishop of Hippo; and St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), a scholastic philosopher and Biblical scholar. They have been selected for three reasons. First, both men were profoundly influential in their day and both men continue to have momentous influence today. The following statement has been made regarding Augustine:

> No other single Christian thinker after Paul was to influence so profoundly the Christianity of Western European peoples. [Others] were to have as great or greater effect on <u>particular branches</u> of the Christianity of the West, but no other after the apostolic age was so deeply to mold all the major forms of the Western wing of the faith [as Augustine].[1] (Emphasis added)

Second, Augustine and Aquinas will provide us a way to identify theological distinctives that have, like leaven, permeated the modern Protestant denominations and fellowships without discussing the particular denominations. This is being done to allow the reader to identify him or herself with particular theological distinctives without implying "rightness" or "wrongness." ***The distinctives to be pointed out between Augustine and Aquinas are <u>not</u> differences that determine salvation. They are distinctives that expose our <u>presuppositions</u> and have an enormous impact on how we <u>think,</u> and thus live and work in relationship to Christ.***

Finally, *CBFA members for the first time in history are coming face to face with the "Business as Mission" (BAM) movement that rests atop a set of underlying theological beliefs <u>that flow from one of the two principle theologians who are the focus of this treatise</u>—Augustine and Aquinas.* Reviewing the differences will enable the reader to see whether: (a) he or she is more closely aligned with the theology of Augustine or Aquinas; (b) whether it is Augustine or Aquinas that the BAM movement is most closely associated with; (c) whether in her

or his mind there is a reasonable probability of BAM's being successful as a "kingdom" force.

Both of these theologians were engaged by the Spirit of God in the context of their nature, and life's experiences (personal and cultural). Their *hermeneutics* [2] and *exegesis* [3] guided their world/life-view. The significance of this will become apparent as the background of each man is revealed. So a brief review of each man's life experiences will be laid out to give context to their theological understandings. We are all deeply influenced by our personal life experiences and the hermeneutics employed by the person who first discipled us. Only the Spirit of God has the power to alter such realities.

The reality of what has just been said is most profoundly seen in one's hermeneutics—his or her interpretation of Scripture—more so than by their exegesis. The interpretation of Scripture is *so easily* impacted by one's personal existential experiences and absorption of the pervasive cultural *philosophy* that surrounds everyone in a culture like a mist. The Christian's challenge is staying dry in the mist. Only the Holy Spirit can help the Christian avoid the saturation. Augustine and Aquinas were confronted by very different worldly philosophies. They therefore faced very different challenges from the cultures in which they grew up.

AUGUSTINE (354—430)

Augustine is best remembered for his two writings, *Confessions* (400 AD) and *The City of God* (412-427 AD).[4] As these two books are studied, Augustine's interpretative understanding of the theology embedded in Scripture becomes apparent. His *Confessions* expose us to his rebellion against God and his gradual transformation by the Holy Spirit over time. He did not have a Pauline "road to Damascus" experience. He yielded his life to Christ more gradually and tenuously. Paul was trained in Old Testament theology. Augustine was better acquainted with the works of Plato, the Greek philosopher.

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1. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity.* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1953) 174. Latourette does name Thomas Aquinas in the above quote as one of "three others" who had profound impacts on other branches of the Western Church after the Reformation.

2. Hermeneutics: the *interpretation* of the Old and New Testaments—the *presuppositions* and *system* employed in the interpretation—the ruling principles of Biblical interpretation. (Example: employing all of God's Word that addresses one's interpretation of Scripture as it applies to the question under consideration.)
3. Exegesis: The science of exposing the meaning of individual words, statements, or passages that are being translated from Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, or Latin into English—seeking the "shades of meaning" after translation.
4. Anthony Flew, *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, Revised 2nd Ed. (New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 1984) 31.

The City of God opens up for its reader Augustine's thinking regarding the stark difference between our fallen condition here on earth before our glorification, and what our raised and immortal lives will experience in the heavenly union with God. The "earthly city" and the "heavenly city" were in irreconcilable conflict, apart from the redemption that was only available through the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Apart from this narrow remedy, there was only war. This book also gives us a glimpse into the impact the Greek philosopher, Plato, was still exerting on the Western and North African cultures eight hundred years after his death, and the emergence of Neoplatonism that so influenced Augustine.

Augustine's Hermeneutic and Exegesis: Their Shaping and Impact.

The early church (third through fifth century), in the Western half of the emerging Christian community, was confronted with understanding the teachings of Paul in the midst of a Hellenistic culture that was profoundly influenced by Greek philosophy, and particularly the teachings of Plato. Plato had envisioned a dualistic reality that was made up of a "spiritual" realm and a "temporal" domain. There was a "sharp disjunction between the unseen realm of the spirit and temporal matter which was a basic assumption in much of Hellenism." This was "perpetuated through Platonism and Neoplatonism." It included the idea that the "flesh" is evil and only what is pure spirit is good. It conceived of humanity as a blend of both.[5] Neoplatonism failed the "exegetical test" of discerning that the word "flesh," as used extensively by the Apostle Paul, is really referring to the ungodly attention to and enjoyment of "self" (flesh spelled backwards—hself—and dropping the "h" = self). The seventh chapter of Romans expounds profoundly on the conflict between the "old self" and "new self." Neoplatonism escaped the unbiblical and extreme dualism that surrounded the fractured thinking that permeated the Hellenistic ideas regarding the "spiritual" and earthly realms.[6]

> [Augustine] saw both philosophy and religion as essentially quests for wisdom and, through wisdom, beatitude; the crucial difference was that Christian faith succeeded in the quest, while the unaided human reason of the philosophical schools could not. . . . But the task of **reason** was essentially that of elucidating things already ac-

cepted by faith as divine revelation—an attitude later summed up in a formula *'Credo ut intelligam'* (**I believe so that I may understand**)." [7],[8] (Emphasis added.)

". . . Augustine, while retaining much of the Neoplatonism…held it to be basically defective in not taking cognizance of the incarnation [of Christ]." Furthermore, his most quoted belief, "I believe so that I may understand," placed *reason* on a different level than it was accorded in Greek philosophy.[9]

Plato believed that all entities existing in the temporal realm had a perfect example of that entity in the spirit realm. He further believed that any idea regarding an entity that existed in the mind of a human was gathered there by the person's soul prior to its taking on a body. Augustine on the other hand believed there were perfect forms in the spirit realm but that God illumined the human mind regarding them after their physical birth.[10]

The early Neoplatonist taught there was a hierarchy within the totality of the spiritual entities that existed in the spiritual realm. They believed there were higher and lower entities within this sphere. Indeed, they thought there was a number "one" entity. Augustine agreed and declared that this "One" was God.[11]

Perhaps what has been forgotten today is just how much *philosophy* had to be reformed and/or extricated from the thinking in the church in the first five centuries. The Apostle Paul's teaching was cast throughout a

5. Latourette, pages 122-123.
6. *Ibid.* 210

7. Anthony Flew, 31.
8. **"I believe so that I may understand"** is probably the clearest separator distinguishing the difference in thought between Augustine and Aquinas. More will be said about this later.
9. Latourette, page 260.
10. An unpublished "paper" was written and sent to me by Winfried ("Win") Corduan, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana, a Thomas scholar and friend, when I asked him to review the first 20 + pages of this treatise during its time of preparation. He graciously reviewed my work and helped me gain a clearer focus on the pre- and post-Reformation struggles in the church between theology and philosophy. He added greatly to my understanding of both Augustine and Aquinas, and he suggested it might well be men such as Rene` Descartes' and other Renaissance philosophers that provided "new thoughts" to the cultural equation that influenced greatly the emergence of the contemporary Infer-Thomists (inferred) or even Neocene-Thomists (newest Thomists) in the United States. This struck a note of "probable cause" within me that is now reflected in a number of places in the treatise. I am deeply indebted to Win Corduan for his insight. Dr Corduan has published such works as: *How to do Theology; Handmaid to Theology; Philosophy of Religion (with Norman Geisler); Mysticism;* and *No Doubt About It.*
11. Ibid.

Hellenistic culture where philosophy had dominated the thinking for centuries. **Clearing *theology* of wayward *philosophy* was one of the great challenges**. The Church improved this process over time but the culture that surrounds the church has a relentless habit of asserting itself against the Church over and over again. As we shall see later in the treatise, twenty-first century *theology* is once again in a momentous struggle with the culture that is attacking it. Those within the Church who adopt a mixture of *theology/philosophy* do more harm than the naked philosophies. The Reformation was, if nothing else, a struggle to purify and reduce one's foundational *beliefs* to that which was divinely revealed in the Bible.

One of Augustine's foundational beliefs that emerged from his understanding of the Bible is that the fallen human's *heart is absolutely dead to God before regeneration*. Augustine believed regeneration preceded conversion in the *heart*. And without regeneration the heart's: (a) *intellectual* abilities will not be able to effectively contemplate or understand God; (b) *passions* (desires, affections, and identity needs) cannot affect an association with God; and (c) *volition* (will) will not and cannot obey God.[12] Augustine believed that unregenerated humans were completely dead to God, as he perceived he had been when rejecting God and living in gross sexual immorality. He believed all humans, from the time of their conception until God regenerates them, are "dead to God" in all three of the above areas of the *heart*. The heart, in Augustine's understanding, is not simply wounded or impaired, it is stone dead through and through.

The great struggle and discourse in the fourth and fifth centuries in the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) was over the true *nature of man*. This was theologically connected to a host of questions regarding exactly how God redeems and transforms His image bearers into the likeness of Christ.[13] Augustine was a leader in defining and persuading those in the RCC that his *hermeneutic* was Biblically sound.

In keeping with Augustine's "I believe so that I may understand," he believed "that God's attitude toward man can be known only through faith; that faith is a guide to truth; and that faith is belief in what is taught in the Scripture and by the Church." And this belief in

turn led to his "most distinctive works [that] were on the interrelated subjects of human nature, the character of sin, [and] the redemption of man . . ."[14]

Another part of the theological struggle in the fourth and fifth centuries was the question regarding the nature of the human's "free will." Chrysostom maintained that humans had a free will that could turn to God on its own. Ambrose believed that God's grace initiated the turning of the human will toward Him and that the human could then carry on the act of returning to God before actual regeneration.

> Augustine [however] went much further than Ambrose. That was probably in part because of his personal history of prolonged moral impotence against the sin which he believed had been with him from his conception and his infancy and because of his experience of having been sought by God's grace until he could but not yield to it. Augustine held that at the onset angels and men were created rational and free, the only created beings of which that could be said…His capacity for rational free choice, so Augustine went on to hold, is at once man's highest quality, a gift from God intended for his own good, and his chief peril. Only men and angels have rational free choice.[15]

Augustine insisted that humanity could not return by "self-effort" to a true relationship with God. The marring of original sin had been too deep and was too pervasive. Humanity cannot raise itself by its own boot straps. The self-focus into which mankind was thrust at the time of the "fall" was simply too powerful a state of captivity from which to extricate one's self. Oh, yes, mankind is still free, but only free to sin and sink ever lower into sin than at conception by hardening one's own heart. Humanity is therefore in bondage to sin until God, and God alone gives them new life in Christ.[16]

> Augustine declared, "The entire mass of our nature was ruined and fell into the possession of its destroyer. And from him no one—no, not one—has been delivered, or ever will be delivered, except by the grace of the Redeemer." And

12. Richard C. Chewning, *Becoming..." partakers of the divine nature..."* 2 Peter 1:4 (Quarryville, PA: Great Rock Publishers, scheduled for release in 2012) Chapter 16.
13. Latourette, p. 173

14. Ibid. 175
15. Ibid. 177
16. Ibid. 178

Augustine, like Paul, insisted that "a gift, unless it is wholly unearned, is not a gift at all."[17]

Furthermore, Augustine felt so strongly about the total depravity of all humans that he taught that all humans, when compared with the attributes and conduct of God, deserved God's eternal wrath. God had, however, told Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy . . . [and] He hardens whom He desires" (Romans 9:15, 18). "Augustine held that God had predetermined the exact number of those who are to receive His grace, and that number is so certain that one can neither be added to them nor taken from them."[18] And to support this reality, as Augustine discerned it, God will accord the elect the gift of perseverance so that even if they do sin they will be afforded the opportunity to repent.[19]

> The culminating blessing given to the elect will be that they will not be able to forsake good and not be able to die. This is the highest freedom of all.[20] [This became known as the teaching of "irresistible grace."]

Christians with experiences like Paul's "road to Damascus" encounter with Christ—"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (Acts 9:4; 26:14)—and Augustine's year after year refusal to abandon his acts of fornication and rejection of the Gospel had only one explanation that fit their comprehension of what had happened: God had given them an absolutely undeserved *gift of grace.* Their salvation had been determined by God. But the controversy between "election"[21]—God alone determines who will be saved—(Paul and Augustine's position) and "indeterminism"—humans decide, based upon the individual's free-will, whether or not God will be his or her King, regained a respectable place "at the theological table" and was much debated during the thirteenth century.

A summary (outline) of Augustine's hermeneutics will be presented later in the treatise when they are contrasted with Aquinas hermeneutics. The beliefs of the two men will be outlined side by side later. But first a brief history is in order.

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17. Ibid. 178
18. Ibid. 179
19. Ibid. 179
20. Ibid. 179
21. Ibid. 181

A BIT OF 6TH—12TH CENTURY CHURCH HISTORY: THE TIME BETWEEN THE DEATH OF AUGUSTINE AND BIRTH OF AQUINAS

By the sixth century, in the Western or Latin part of the Catholic Church, Augustine's work had clarified "the nature of man and the manner in which God, through Christ, redeems and transforms [people]." Augustine's understanding came to be the most respected and leading theological formulation in the RCC by the sixth century.[22] Human nature and how people are subsequently regenerated and converted was Augustine's "major focus" along with the rest of the Western part of the Catholic Church. The Hellenistic Eastern part of the Catholic Church was still wrestling "over the relation of the human and the divine in Christ." [23]

Augustine's *hermeneutics* were at the core of the RCC's teaching from the sixth century through the Twelfth Century. It was not until the thirteenth century when Aquinas' incorporation of certain aspects of Aristotle's thoughts concerning the *rational* ability of the human's mind began to clash with Augustine's *theological* construction that the "theological pot" began to boil once again.

Indeed, the whole educational model was going through a transformation between the fifth and thirteenth centuries.

> The teaching work of the church had moved from the monasteries to the newly-founded universities. Thus the new breed of teachers were called "scholastics," from the Latin word, *schola*, meaning "school." Scholasticism, or the teaching of the "schoolmen," had nothing to do with any particular philosophical orientation, only the location of where they taught. The name is also associated with a certain rigor of teaching, namely regular staged debates, *diputationes*, which were observed equally by the Augustinians and the subsequent philosophical schools.[24]

Even before Aquinas' birth, Aristotle's *philosophy* was having a substantial influence in the university debates. Other schoolmen were struggling with its importance and how or if it could be reconciled with a Biblical

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22. Ibid. 173.
23. Ibid. 173.
24. Winfried Corduan, (private paper)

theology. Aristotle's work had been preserved but had not been translated until a group of Muslim scholars translated it into Latin. It was not until the thirteenth century that William of Moerbeke (1215—1286) translated Aristotle's works directly from Greek into Latin. Some scholars have suggested that this was done at Aquinas' request.[25]

> When the philosophy of Aristotle first started to make itself felt in Christian theology, it was treated with heavy suspicion by the church authorities. Emperor Fredrick II, who spent a lifetime antagonizing the Popes, founded the University of Naples in 1224 and insisted that the study of Aristotle must be in the curriculum. For a time, attending or teaching at the University of Naples carried the penalty of excommunication. [Thomas Aquinas was one of its first students.] [26]

Today Thomas Aquinas is considered to be "the outstanding Western theologian of the Middle Ages."[27] Not only did he rival Augustine in his theological popularity, he eventually surpassed him in the thinking within the RCC. And those who adhered to the theological construct of Aquinas after his death are known as Thomists.

THOMAS AQUINAS (1225—1274)

Thomas was born into a cultured family. His father was the Count of Aquino (hence Thomas' historic surname) and connected to the "imperial house of Hohenstauffen." He was the youngest son in a home of nobility and that presented a challenge to the family. What do you do with a son when tradition has no answer regarding his place in life? So, in the hope that he might someday become an abbot or bishop, Thomas, at the age of five, was sent to a monastery in Naples to be educated under the supervision of his uncle who was an abbot. When he graduated from Naples he joined the Dominican order, which, because of the laws of that time, ended any hope that he might become a high official in the RCC. [28]

The family was so distressed that Thomas had become a Dominican that his mother and brothers took it upon themselves to place him under house arrest for over a year. This, however, did not dissuade him. He followed the Dominican orders and subsequently escaped and went to Paris to study where he became identified with the *scholastic movement.*[29]

The scholastic movement actually began in the eleventh century, but the struggle was still going on in the thirteenth entury when Thomas (Aquinas) entered the fray. And just what was the burning issue they had been groping with for two centuries? The big question was: *How were Christians to understand the relationship between* _faith_ *and* _reason?_[30] Thomas' writings that wrestle with this question are voluminous. His two best remembered works are *Summa contra Gentiles* (Against the Errors of the Infidels), and *Summa Theologiae* which expands upon his more mature thinking.[31]

Thomas' hermeneutic and exegesis: their shaping and impact

Thomas, as a *scholastic,* became an avid devotee of Aristotle. He wrestled with things like:

> Is what the Christian believes to have been given by God in the long process of revelation which culminated in Christ consistent with reason or are the two contradictory? If they are compatible, which should have priority, the faith by which the Christian accepts and commits himself fully to what has been given in the divine revelation and transmitted through the Church, or man's reason? *Can reason demonstrate as true what the Christian believes about God?* If it cannot, does what is received by faith complement what is reached by reason or do the two contradict each other? If reason seems to deny what the Christian accepts on faith as given by God, shall the Christian accord his reason priority and throw over as false what he has received by faith or can he find some way of holding to both? [32] (Emphasis added)

Thomas resolved questions like those outlined above in the following fashion:

> The human intellect is not able to reach a comprehension of the divine substance through its natural power (SCG, vol. 1, Ch. 3, 3) . . . it is the acme of stupidity for a man to suspect as false what

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Latourette, 211.

28. Winfried Corduan, (private paper)

29. Latourette. 509.

30. Ibid. 496.

31. Anthony Flew, 17.

32. Latourette. 496. These were the kinds of questions the *scholastics* asked, wrestled with, and answered, although not all agreed with each other on the proper answer.

is divinely revealed through the ministry of the angels simply because it cannot be investigated by reason (SCG, vol. 1, Ch. 3, 4) . . . the sole way to overcome an adversity of divine truth is from the authority of Scripture—an authority divinely confirmed by miracles. (SCG, vol. 1, Ch. 9, 2) [33]

Thomas did not mean by this that *reason* was completely incompetent as long as it was used within its limits. What he meant by this was that the Spirit was essential to open one's comprehension of God's revealed *truth* (special revelation) but this did not undermine the use of reason in those areas of the temporal realm that may be known naturally (natural revelation).[34]

At the age of thirty-four, Thomas was called to southern Italy to start a school of theology for boys where he further refined his argument that *reason* was subservient to *faith* in what God had divinely revealed.

> Sacred doctrine derives its principles, not from any human knowledge, but from the divine knowledge, by which, as by the highest wisdom, all our knowledge is ordered (ST, I, Q. 1 Art. 6, Reply Obj. 1) . . . For whatsoever is found in the other sciences contrary to the truth of this science [Christian theology] must be condemned as false. (ST, 1, Q. 1, Art. 6, Reply Obj. 2)[35]

Ten years later he was called back to Paris where theological teaching was taking place that incorporated Aristotelian thought that deviated from Christian orthodoxy in numerous places. Thomas refuted these deviations from truth that held *reason to be supreme over faith*.

Aquinas combined Augustine and Aristotle.

> On the all important matter of salvation, Aquinas also gave priority to God, not the human being. In the Summa Theologica he addresses the question, whether a man, by himself and without the external aid of grace, can prepare himself for grace. . . . And [concluded] that their turning to God can only spring from God's having turned them now to prepare oneself for grace is, as it were, to be turned to God . . . hence it is clear that man cannot prepare himself to receive the light of grace

except by the gratuitous help of God moving him inwardly . . . man is bidden to turn himself to God. But free choice can be turned to God only when God turns it.[36]

There was also a modicum of mysticism in the minds of both Augustine and Thomas. Thomas' mysticism can best be described as believing (a belief attached to logic that is affirmed in temporal reality) in the presence of God that has an <u>emotiona</u>l element attached to it that comes from contemplating the wonder of God that surfaces from observing and interacting with the physical universe.

There was also a touch of mysticism in the heart of Augustine. While Thomas focused more on the temporal side of God's creation and Christ's humanity, Augustine was amazed at the *grace* and *mercy* of God and tended to focus more on the divinity of Christ. It was the sense of God's presence (existential feeling) that came from prayerfully reading the Word that lay at the root of Augustine's mysticism. Augustine delighted most in focusing on Christ's divinity, His teachings, and His life amongst humanity.

AUGUSTINE'S AND THOMAS' SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Fundamentally Augustine and Thomas were on the same page *theologically*, but operationally they were on very different sides of the same page. Thomas and Augustine agreed in principle about the fall of man, original sin, the need for the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration, predestination, election, God's compelling grace, and the perseverance of the saints. But the *philosophical* challenges they faced were entirely different.

Augustine was immersed in Platonism and his struggle was to discern how aspects of it complimented the Biblical explanation of reality and which parts needed to be jettisoned. Thomas, on the other hand, was surrounded by the emerging interest in Aristotle and the ensuing emphasis on the human's capacity to *reason* and the relationship between *faith*, *reason*, and the *will*.

As stated earlier, Augustine's most remembered statement, **"I believe so that I may understand,"** puts him unmistakably on the side that argues *faith* (beliefs) precedes *reason*. Augustine believed that no one could know how to accurately apply *reason* to a given proposition until he had some understanding of God's perspec-

33. Winfried Corduan, (private paper)
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

tive on the matter. Thomas, while agreeing with Augustine in principle, believed that it was *logical* to believe that *reason* also was necessary before one could correctly interpret revelation as it pertained to God's perspective on a given matter. Little refinements like this lead some of Thomas' followers to carry his teachings far beyond his intent as the years passed.

The "right understanding" of the human *will* was also an ever present part of the dialogue between the philosophers and the theologians. The theologians in particular had to work hard to discern the Biblical revelation regarding this very important subject. Augustine and Thomas both agreed that the human, apart from the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, could not in his or her own strength and effort turn the *will* to accept Christ and follow Him. They agreed that God was the initiator, but they did not express their belief in the same way.

Thomas seemed to believe that the human *will* had a greater ability and power to self-actualize itself and turn toward God once God began "calling" the individual to Himself than did Augustine. Augustine's personal experience with sin and his hermeneutical understanding of one's self-centeredness led him to believe that the human will was absolutely incapable of drawing a fallen person's *heart* (mind, passions, will) to repentance and turning back to God as easily as Thomas seemed to imply.

The two men, while being on the same page, were not at all together regarding their emphasis or focus on *faith, reason,* and the *will*.

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION—
1600-1850[37]

The transition of the Thomists to the Neocene-Thomists in North America, throughout the fifteenth to the twenty-first centuries, came about as a "mirror reflection" of the Roman Catholic Thomists who were "party-line" participants in the Reformation. By "mirror reflection" it is meant that the Thomists emerged from the reformation as Thomists but as the years passed and the "Great Awakening" (discussed later) occurred, the "mystic' aspects of Thomas' theology and "curves" to his integrated theology/philosophy took some detours that, in many ways, turned the less educated Thomists into "Infer-Thomists" (inferred), and in the past sixty

years into "Neocene-Thomists"—<u>newest</u> Thomists. Who led this transition? Were they theologians, or were they philosophers? The answer is extremely complex. There is certainly no agreed upon answer to the question. But it appears to this author that the emerging Neocene-Thomists reflected a slow synthesis of forces, events, and assimilations that drew upon the thoughts of those that deeply influenced the New World's assimilation of the Reformation and the Renaissance. Indeed, many of the Renaissance thinkers also were professing Christians. So the thesis is this: the North American Neocene-Thomists are those theologians and ministers who were slowly saturated and enveloped in the transitioning "culture." The *philosophers* of this period, not the theologians, had become enslaved to a world/life-view that could at best be described as *skeptical*. Into this skepticism stepped René Descartes (1596-1650).

The Impact of the Renaissance

René Descartes, a philosopher and professing Christian, is often referred to as the "father" of Rationalism. He is widely recognized as the first true *rationalist*. He believed "mathematical reasoning was to be the paradigm for [a] new system of knowledge: 'those who are seeking the strict way of truth should not trouble themselves about any object concerning which they cannot have a certainty equal to arithmetical or geometrical demonstration.'"[38] The door Descartes' opened was "making scientific knowledge possible. For once God's existence is established, one is no longer limited to the private momentary certainty of one's own existence; one can now…have a reasonable degree of confidence in the existence of an external world . . . in the normal reliability…of the senses."[39] Descartes' effort was directed at establishing a "self-contained" system that would put an end to skepticism within a framework of its own making: *natural reason*.[40] This marked a shift, however, in the paradigm. It was no longer simply sufficient to *accept reality,* the philosophical community had moved to the point of needing to *prove reality*.

Descartes' was followed by Benedictus de Spinoza (1632-1677); Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1753); and eventually Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant's most famous contribution to moral philosophy was a categorical imperative he articulated: "Act only on that maxim which

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37. A re-reading of Footnote 10 gives Winfried Corduan the credit due him for his help in suggesting that the great philosophers who "led the cultural debates" during this period probably had a great deal of influence on both the general culture and theology during the period.

38. Anthony Flew, p.89
39. Ibid. p. 91.
40. Winfried Corduan, private paper.

you can at the same time will to become a universal law."[41] His main enquiry, however, was "*How do values and facts fit together?*" His answer was devastating to the philosophers of his day. He told both the empiricists and rationalists they could not answer the question because their methodology did not fit the topic being explored. The question Kant set out to answer remained unanswered. He told the world that the realm of values, metaphysics, and theology, *were not open* to the empirical, rational dimensions of the human intellect.[42] He even stated, "I have therefore found it necessary to deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*."[43]

Intertwined with these rationalists were a number of *empiricists*: Francis Bacon (1561-1626); Thomas Hobbs (1588-1679); John Locke (1632-1704); and David Hume (1711-1776). Kant's failure to reconcile *empiricism* and *rationalism* opened the door to *dialectical synthesis*—a thesis opposed by an antithesis resulting in a new synthesis: picking the "best" from the thesis and the "best" from the antithesis and combining them into a "new truth" that is in turn waiting for a new antithesis. This was the culture changing work that was emphasized by George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). But this raised the question, "Is truth an ever moving and elusive quest?"

Into this rational, empirical "stew" came the thinking of Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) with his *existential* "leap-of-faith"[44] that became acceptable in many quarters in the fields of both *theology* and *philosophy.* He believed you could only possess truth—personally know and come to rely on what was to become "my truth"—by

experiencing, in a moment of time, a phenomenon that engendered in you an *emotional* reaction that becomes your personal validation of the experienced reality: *truth*. From this new form of knowledge came the elevation of *feelings* and the emergence of *relativism*, both of which have permeated the mind of many, many Christians in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The Impact of the Reformation.

As stated earlier, it is this author's belief that the Neocene-Thomists did not appear on the twentieth century stage by following a recognized Thomists theologian, but that they arose by absorbing the new cultural world view that the philosophers of the Post-Renaissance championed—rationalism, existentialism, free will, emotionalism, situationalism, relativism, feelings, etc.

The church community was impacted most in the eighteenth century by what has come to be called the "Great Awakening" (GA) that took place in the Thirteen Colonies prior to their uniting to become a new nation. The GA took place between 1720 and 1770. From this intense period of preaching and revival, a number of church branches emerged that were led by Neocene-Thomists. They were joined by many who lost interest in the more historic an unemotionally guided dogmatic system of beliefs expounded by Augustine. Thus the Neocene-Thomists make up a larger proportion of the twenty-first century American Christian community than do the Augustinians.

There were several extremely popular preachers that influenced many during the period of the GA. One of the most recognized personalities preaching and writing during the GA taught that one must have "*an experience*" of salvation. Since an experience was deemed to be essential, the experience was expected to be *emotional* in character. Seasons of emotional experiences came to be expected when communities were aroused and tides swept through them, changing many individuals. There were . . . clergy who . . . sought to encourage them."[45] **An emotional experience became evidence of a "true conversion experience."**

Two of these men symbolize perhaps near-perfect examples of the permeating influence a man's preaching—not writings—can have on a culture in this era of transition. They were Augustinians. Their writings offer a strong example of this fact. But those who copied

41. Anthony Flew, p.191.

42. Richard Chewning, *Business Ethics in a Changing Culture* (Reston, VA: Reston Publishing Company—A Prentice Hall Co., 1984) p. 45.

43. Immanuel Kant, *Critique od Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Macmillan and Company, Ltd. 1963 p. 29.

44. Soren Kierkegaard's "leap of faith" is a progressively developed concept and theme in much of his work, but it is not a specific phrase used by him. The introductory comments to *Philosophical Fragments* (translated from Danish by David F Swenson) show the concept to be pure Kierkegaardian, however (page xxii). In Chapter III of *Philosophical Fragments*, he develops the specific concept of the "leap" and its core importance (page 34). Then in Chapter IV he carefully defines "faith" and its importance in dealing with Reason, the Paradox, and the Moment (page 47). It is his work *The Concept of Dread* (translated from Danish by Walter Lowrie, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1946), however, that the motivation for the "leap of faith" is developed. This is seen clearly in Chapter V, "Dread as a Saving Experience by Means of Faith." Dread (despair), and the realization that Reason is incapable of proving God, serve to motivate the individual to take the "leap of faith" and by it come to a peaceful trust in the reality of God's atonement.

45. Latourette, p. 958. The idea of experiencing salvation was not an aspect of the sober beliefs of the Augustinians.

their preaching style with fervor, and deviated from their precise doctrinal teachings, led many into the Neocene-Thomists camp.

The Great Awakening was an early stage in a mass conversion of the partially de-Christianized population which characterized the religious history of the Thirteen Colonies on the eve of independence and then of the United States. The mass <u>conversion</u>, in part by "revivals" and "evangelistic" preaching for reaching the "unconverted" or "unsaved," was one of the distinguishing features of the Christianity of the United States, and especially of those elements of the population of Protestant . . . heredity. (emphasis added)[46]

Many of the older points of theology held by Augustine, such as the absolute sovereignty of God, election by eternal decree, and other doctrines gave way to ideas that "made room for the action of the sinner in accepting the divine forgiveness."And "an already existing tendency was strengthened which soon was to reject [Augustinianism] with its doctrine of total depravity of man and the [presumed] arbitrary choice by God of some for salvation."[47]

Two of the GA preachers were Englishmen, one an Augustinian and the other a Thomist. One of them had a voice that could be heard by thousands in an outdoor forum. He preached to the lower economic classes with great *emotion* and they responded with deeply felt emotions. He came to America on several occasions from England and stirred those who heard him. There is, in many ways, an irony regarding this particular individual His theology was closely aligned with Augustine's, but his preaching did not emphasize Augustine's *hermeneutic*. He was *emotive* when he preached,[48] and the resulting emotional experience upon hearing the Word was prone to become the focal point of one's "personal belief" that she or he had been saved.

It is now time to look at a side-by-side comparison of the residual **effects** of the theology of these GA preachers' prodigy, along with an exposition on the fallout of both their *specifics* and their *emphasis* that is reflected in their personal *hermeneutics* and *exegeses*.

Those believers who chose their *hermeneutics* on the basis of their *personal, emotional, existential experience* found the Neocene-Thomists' theology more appealing and easier to identify with than Augustine's. Even with

46. Ibid. p. 958.
47. Ibid. p. 961.
48. Ibid. pp.959-960, 1020-1026.

all of the modifications and deviations from the original teachings of Augustine and Thomas, they are still the two most dominant, albeit generally unconsciously adhered to, theologians in the twenty-first century Protestant Churches. Augustine's teachings remain a bit more intact in a *formal* sense. Thomas' theology has to a considerable degree been sublimated to his Aristotelian teachings that were modified by his followers to carry his teachings <u>far beyond the bounds of his original intent</u>. In the balance of the treatise their theological perspectives will be referred to as the Augustinians and Neocene-Thomists theological interpretations of reality, without any comment as to the faithfulness with which Thomas' and Augustine's perspectives have been retained or portrayed.

AUGUSTINIANS AND NEOCENE-THOMISTS: A COMPARISON

In the sixteen and seventeenth centuries when the strongest protesting from within and outside of the RCC was occurring, the Augustinians and Thomists adherents compiled a theological formulation called the *Ordo Salutis*—"The Order of Salvation." The Augustinians and Neo-Thomists views of this formulation in the eighteenth century were the same, but their beliefs were becoming very divergent by the middle of the nineteenth century, especially in North America, and became even further separated during the twentieth century.

Before examining the *Ordo Salutis* we will first consider a simple "three concept flow diagram;" ask ourselves which diagram best describes our personal understanding of the "road to salvation;" and thereby attempt to identify our personal position: "I am an Augustinian;" or "I am a Neocene-Thomists." The two "road to salvation" diagrams are:

Salvation Diagram 1:

My Pre-Christian Faith –> I Discerned God's Grace –> Salvation

Salvation Diagram 2:

God's Grace –> Transformed My Pre-Christian Faith –> Salvation

Stop and choose one! Which one best describes your understanding of the "path to salvation?" If you selected "Diagram 1" where *faith* is presumed to be present in a person's *heart* before God's special *grace* appears to lead them to the road to *salvation*, this would indicate

a possible alignment with the Neocene-Thomist community of believers. If, on the other hand, you selected "Diagram 2," that indicates you believe that *faith* itself is a necessary gift of *grace* that enables one to continue following Christ unto *salvation*. If this was your choice, you may well be more comfortable with the Augustinian perspectives.

Next, let's look at two verses: John 1:12, 13. They are verses that many Christians are familiar with but *exegete* differently.

> 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right[49] (power, authority) to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,
> 13 who were born not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The question to be answered is, "Which of the two verses is the "controlling verse?" Or asking it another way, does verse 12, the "conversion verse" occur in the Christian's life prior to the "born from above" rebirth verse 13? Which verse takes place first and which verse is the "after event" verse?

If "Diagram 1" and "Verse 12" were selected, this tends to indicate the person believes that *faith* is an aspect of one's inherent personal capability that allows that individual to select his or her personal preference—existential experiences, feelings, reason, will, and emotions. If this is so, it indicates the person is probably in the Neocene-Thomists camp.

If "Diagram 2" and "Verse 13" were selected, this tends to indicate further the person making the selection believes that it is by God's *grace*—His giving a free and undeserved gift—that He imparts *faith* to the heart of the new believer through the Holy Spirit initiating "a born from above" experience. A person holding this belief would probably be more comfortable in the Augustinian camp.

The Neocene-Thomists have a much *higher* view of the human in general than do the Augustinians—higher in the sense that a person is more capable, than Augustinians believe, of seeking and finding God through the exercise of his or her *reason* and *will*. Neocene-Thomists typically hold such a belief because they interpret their *personal salvation experience* first and foremost in the

light of their "personal conversion experience" (John 1:12)—the Spirit *called*; I responded to the *call*; I had an *emotional conversion experience* (mystical); and was subsequently *regenerated* by the Holy Spirit. Neocene-Thomists typically interpret their experience in terms like: "I invited Christ into my heart when I <u>felt</u> His call (conversion), and I have been following Him ever since. Personal experience guides their *hermeneutics* and *exegesis*. Neocene-Thomists typically refer to their conversion experience, not their regeneration. The *hermeneutic* justification for such an understanding can be easily seen in the text of John 1:12-13.

The Augustinians, on the other hand, believe verse 13 is the controlling verse and explains how what is referred to in verse 12 comes about—*regeneration precedes conversion*. The Augustinians perceive that the Neocene-Thomists have consciously or unconsciously rejected the doctrines of *election* and *predestination* that Thomas Aquinas affirmed in his writings.

What has been described above will emerge again as the reader examines the *Ordo Salutis* that materialized from the struggles of the Reformation. The Augustinians and Thomists were originally on the same side of the "*Ordo*" but the Post-Reformation cultural struggles in the nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries undermined aspects of the original *Ordo* and gave rise to the Neocene-Thomists side of the *Ordo*.

Ordo Salutis

Augustinians	Neocene-Thomists
1) All are to be "called"	1) All are to be "called"
2) Regeneration: Election	**2) Conversion: Repentance Faith**
3) Conversion: Repentance Faith	**3) Regeneration**
4) Justification: Imputed Righteousness	4) Justification: Imputed Righteousness
5) Adoption: God's Children	5) Adoption: God's Children
6) Sanctification: Renovation & Growth	6) Sanctification: Renovation & Growth
7) Glorification	7) Glorification

It is immediately clear that most serious Augustinians and Neocene-Thomists hold the same beliefs regarding five of the enumerated items that composed the *Ordo Salutis* while differing *completely* regarding number 2) and number 3). The impact of this difference is profound, not as it pertains to a person's salvation, but as it pertains to her or his understanding of the process of salvation, and in partic-

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49. The Greek word for "**right**" is *exousia* (Lexical #1849) which means: "permission, authority, right, liberty, power to do…"

ular the role of God in its *commencement*. The differences also create a different understanding of several of God's more difficult attributes to "get one's mind around"—His sovereignty, omniscience, and immutability.

It should first be noted that the word **"election"** appears behind the word **Regeneration** on the Augustinian side of the *Ordo Salutis* but does not appear behind the word **Regeneration** on the Neocene-Thomist side of the *Ordo Salutis*. Even though Thomas agreed with Augustine regarding the matters of *election* and *predestination*, the Neocene-Thomists subsequently deviated in this way from their iconic leader (Thomas).

Augustine and Thomas believed so deeply in the doctrines of *predestination* and *election* that these two truths were in essence the building blocks for comprehending God's *sovereignty*. They believed that *all* humans were so corrupted in their fallen nature that *everyone* <u>ought</u> *to be eternally separated from God for such defilement could not exist in the presence of a pure, perfect, and holy God.* The only solution was for God to choose (predestine and elect) an inheritance for His Son. The Father would accomplish this by sending Christ as the Savior and have the Holy Spirit *call, regenerate* (elect), *convert, justify, adopt, sanctify, and eventually glorify* those persons chosen before the foundations of the earth were established.

The Neocene-Thomists rejection of the doctrine of *election* leads to a number of theological differentiations that distinguish them from the Augustinians. For example, the two groups have very different understandings of the impairment consequences of the *fall,* and how these differences impact the human's pre-conversion experience with regards to their *heart*: mind (ability to comprehend and reason); passions (desires, identity needs); and volition (the ability to control one's will). The following outline enumerates four substantive doctrinal differences that flow from the dissimilarity revealed in the *Ordo Salutis*.

Fundamental Doctrinal Differences

<u>Augustinians</u>	<u>Neocene-Thomists</u>
1) Election / Determinism	1) Free Will / Indeterminism
2) Total Depravity	2) Limited Depravity
3) Perseverance of the Elect	3) Christians May Fall Away
4) Irresistible Grace	4) Resistible Grace

The doctrinal distinctions between the Augustinians and the Neocene-Thomists reflect significant differences in how they each "see" and understand God, and how they perceive their interactive capability between themselves and God. The two theological groups have very different ideas and beliefs regarding God's *grace*—when it is <u>needed</u>; what it <u>encompasses</u>; and how these two "contributions" affect their understanding of "God is sovereign" and "God is *love*."

The Neocene-Thomists have a considerably "higher view" of the human's power to *reason* correctly and to control her or his *will* than do the Augustinians who perceive that all humans are absolutely "dead to God." Augustinians believe the "soil of the heart" is either rocky, shallow, or subject to being choked by worries and cares, unless the Holy Spirit has prepared the "good soil of the heart" by His "washing with the Word."

We will now look briefly at the specific differences between the two theological groups that are revealed in the four "fundamental doctrinal differences" listed above.

1) Election / Determinism vs. Free Will / Indeterminism

The Apostle Peter made the following comment, "…just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, *in which are some things hard to understand…*" (2 Peter 3:15-16, emphasis added). Amen!

The Augustinians believe that *election* (having been *predestined*) is as much a core necessity for salvation as *regeneration* is deemed to be a prerequisite for *conversion*. Without *election* no one would be saved, from an Augustinian's perspective, because everyone is "dead to God" and cannot return to Him on his or her own volition. It is the Holy Spirit who spiritually awakens those who are dead to Christ—they are *spiritually resurrected*—and this could only occur if God chose those to be "resurrected" from their spiritual death.

Neocene-Thomists disagree on the grounds that this, in their mind, makes God out to be both *arbitrary* and *unloving*. This would seem to make God arbitrary for if individuals were chosen or not chosen before the earth was formed, the persons chosen and not chosen would have done nothing to warrant their selection or rejection. And the Neocene-Thomists ask, "How could this be fair?" And, if it were not fair, then unfairness would call the pronouncement that "God is *love*!" into question.

If the reader believes in *predestination* and *election* he or she will likely be comfortable in the Augustinian community. If the reader rejects *predestination* and *elec-*

tion as being compatible with their understanding of God, then their comfort will more than likely be found amongst the Neocene-Thomists.

How *do our* beliefs *regarding* election and *predestination impact our understanding of the nature of God and people?* The breadth and depth of one's belief in or rejection of the doctrine of *election* minimally is impacting one's view of God's *active will*—what He causes to occur—and God's *decretive will*—what He permits to occur. And, our personal belief regarding *election* is tied closely to our belief regarding "free will." Neocene-Thomists believe the human's *free will* is able to perceive and accomplish much more in the spiritual sphere of reality, before "conversion," than do the Augustinians. For example, the unconverted/unregenerated person can by his or her free will fruitfully look for God. Neocene-Thomists generally believe this; Augustinians do not believe this. Augustinians define free will as "the exercise of the will within the constraints of one's nature: as a slave to sin, or as a slave to righteousness."

The Augustinians perceive God's *omniscient* nature (knowledge of all things past, present, future, and suppositional) differently than the Neocene-Thomists, who in some sense perceive God as waiting to ascertain what those who reject Him at some point in time will do in the future. If this is true, then what does God being *omniscient* mean? In the case posited, it means that to some degree God is still becoming aware of new information—learning. This, however, undermines the doctrine of God's *omniscience* from the view-point of an Augustinian.

If the above is true, then God is not *immutable* (unchangeable) either. Indeed, some Neocene-Thomists believe that God is *immutable only in matters that are* essential. Knowing how individuals will make choices in her or his everyday decision making process is non-essential to God's rule from the Neocene-Thomists perspective. As a result God's sovereignty means something different to the Neocene-Thomists and Augustinians.

> **Sample of Hermeneutical References**
>
> **Election:** Isaiah 42:1; Romans 9:10-24; Matthew 24:31; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 1:1-2
>
> **Free Will:** Joshua 24:14-15; Deuteronomy y 30:19-20; Isaiah 55:7; Isaiah 1:16, 19; Jeremiah 15:6

2) Total Depravity vs. Limited Depravity

Those who *believe* in *total depravity* are not saying that every thought or act is sinful. They are saying that the sin nature of every person so permeates every aspect of their *heart* (mind, passions, and will) that they are incapable of having a perfectly pure motive, thought, or action. Sin is ubiquitous. Sin is inherent in every human motive and thought and thus every activity is "marred." Sin is so pervasive that it can be likened to breaking a rotten egg and stirring it in with six good eggs thereby contaminating all the eggs.

Those who subscribe to *limited depravity believe* there are good motives and good acts performed by all humans, and Christians in particular. Giving a glass of water to someone when they are thirsty is a good act. Even if there is a smidgen of pride or self-approval involved at the motive level, the act was still mostly a good one, so if depravity was involved, it was certainly very limited in scope.

> **Sample of Hermeneutical References**
>
> **Total Depravity:** Isaiah 64:6; Psalm 14:1-3; Psalm 53:1-3; Romans 3:10-18; Romans 7:14-23
>
> **Limited Depravity:** Romans 5:7; Romans 2:14-16; Proverbs 2:2-5; Proverbs 13:22; Mark 12:34

3) Perseverance of the Elect vs. Christians May Fall Away

Needing the inner strength to persevere when trials and tribulations enter our lives is something Christians will encounter during their lifetime. For those whom the Father loves He disciplines (not punishes), trains, and scourges.[50]

The Augustinians, even in the face of the above truth, believed that a person whom the Father had given to the Son would not—in fact, could not—fall away from Christ, for Christ would not lose any whom the Father had given Him. Those given to Christ by the Father are Christ's inheritance. This does not mean, however, that the child adopted by God could not fall into deep sin and appear for a season to be far from God, like King David when he had his affair with Bathsheba and had her husband, Uriah, the Hittite, killed. The Augustinians believed that God permitted this to happen in David's life for many reasons, but one was to reveal His faithfulness in keeping the promises He had made years earlier to David.

Neocene-Thomists, on the other hand, reject the idea of "unmovable perseverance" in the face of the Scrip-

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50. Hebrews 12:4-11.

tural testimony stating that there will be a great falling away at some time in the future when the Christian community faces severe persecution. They also can point to the statistics that show a percentage of pastors deserting their calling every year while giving into a severe temptation. Or there is the reality that there are those who have appeared faithful in their commitment to Christ and then just drifted away and abandoned their prior commitment.

Evidence seems to be plentiful on both sides of the question. Which is *true*?

Sample of Hermeneutical References

Perseverance of the Elect: Philippians 1:6; 2 Peter 1:10; John 10:28-29; 1 John 3:9; 1 Peter 1:5, 9

Christians May Fall Away: 1 Timothy 4:1; Luke 8:13; 2 Peter 3:17; Hebrews 6:4-6; Hebrews 10:32-39

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4) Irresistible Grace vs. Resistible Grace

If God elects those who come to Christ, and He does not violate their will, but after regenerating them expects them to come to Him voluntarily, even though they recognize that depravity has been such a part of their prior life, surely the *grace* that is perceived to be offered must be *irresistible*. So concludes an Augustinian.

Augustinians may indeed perceive of reality in the way that has just been described, but not the Neocene-Thomists. Believing that *conversion* precedes *regeneration*, no such logic is controlling. The presupposition is simply incorrect. This being the case (believed case) it is just as logical to look at the Biblical evidence and conclude that *grace* can be resisted, even to one's own condemnation. Free will permits this.

Again, one's *belief* in or rejection of *election* determines the outcome of what they believe regarding *grace*.

Sample of Hermeneutical References

Irresistible Grace: Acts 13:48; Romans 8:15-16; Hebrews 7:19; Titus 2:14; 1 John 1:8-9

Resistible Grace: John 12:42-43; John 5:44; John 7:5; Mark 8:31; Matthew 21:42-45

This concludes the review of the historical and contemporary theological positions of Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas and those who have followed their footsteps into the twenty-first century, and have subsequently morphed into Augustinians and Neocene-Thomists.

We will now examine the contemporary interest in the "Business as Mission" movement under the *theological hermeneutic* of the Augustinians and the Neocene-Thomists.

AUGUSTINIANS AND NEOCENE-THOMISTS COME FACE TO FACE WITH "BUSINESS AS MISSION"

Christian men and women who own and lead successful economic enterprises have increasing opportunities to join organizations that encourage their members to employ business as a starting point for some form of Christian outreach. Some of these models are as old as Moses and the Apostle Paul, while others are more recent. Godly entrepreneurs differ widely in their opinions regarding the appropriateness of envisaging their business as a *ministry*, a *mission*, or *just a business*.

What are "born from above"[51] Christian businesspeople to think or say regarding their business? Is it their world/life-view, their faith, their particular theological hermeneutic, their spiritual gifts, their winsome attitude, the service or product they offer their workers and customers, or some other criteria that places them in a particular category of commerce—an ordinary business, a ministry, or a mission? In seeking to answer such questions regarding "Business as Mission" (BAM) we are going to take a serious look at a particular theological question: <u>are there theological prerequisites that need to be present before a Christian entrepreneur can legitimately call his or her business a</u> <u>mission</u>? This question is critical. Without a clear answer to it the classification "BAM" has an indeterminable meaning in the broader Christian community. The answer will either affirm there is a legitimate Biblical basis for calling a particular economic enterprise a "mission" (BAM), or the term is subject to many interpretations.

There are two terms that appear frequently in the "Faith at Work" (FAW) literature. They are *ministry* and *mission*. For the purpose of this article, *ministry* is an outreach that seeks to foster *economic*, *mental, or physical health*, or a person's *social wellbeing*. The second term, *mission*, is being used to connote the effort to *disciple* and/or *evangelize* in the context of Christian outreach.

The word "*mission*" obviously does not need to be cast in so limited a manner in either its use or under-

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51. John 3:3-7; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:4, 18. All Biblical references in this essay are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1977 edition, copyrighted by The Lockman Foundation.

> If "BAM" stood for "Business As Ministry," this treatise would never have been written. Every Christian ought to be "ministering" to her or his neighbors. But because the movement has elected to refer to itself as "Business As **Mission**" this places it in an entirely different theological category that deserves careful scrutiny as to just what it is endeavoring to accomplish.

standing, but it is being limited in this way here because the author perceives that BAM is, above all else, interested in promoting *discipleship* and *evangelism*. If the author's perception is correct, BAM is at its heart a multifaceted variant of what has historically been referred to as a "Tent-Making Ministry."

The "faith at work movement," so carefully and thoroughly described by David W. Miller in his book, *God at Work,*[52] discloses that in 2003 there were "more than 1,200 groups, institutions, and organizations…part of the Faith at Work (FAW) movement."[53] Some people, when asked why there is such a proliferation of groups with the zeal to relate their faith to their everyday work beyond the context of the church, point their fingers at the clergy and fault them for not encouraging and supporting the lay business persons' "faith at work" interests.[54] Dr. Miller, in fact, devotes an entire chapter, "Response of the Church and the Theological Academy to FAW" to the "disconnect" between the lay entrepreneurs and the trained clergy.[55] There is undoubtedly a great deal of validity to these perceptions, as explained and discussed by David Miller (Chapter 5, pages 79-103). But it is just as plausible to ascribe fault to those in the FAW movement for not possessing a clear understanding of just what is necessary before the members of a group such as BAM can expect their clergy and church to accept them as a "mission" that not only sees itself as economically helping those it employs and serves, but engages in forms of "*discipleship*" and "*evangelism*."

BAM is a subset within the larger FAW movement.[56] The best definer of the BAM movement, however, as

incompletely defined as it may still remain, is C. Neal Johnson's tome, *Business As Mission.*[57] It is a "must read" for anyone interested in the BAM movement. There is an entire section of this book that discusses pragmatic (non-theological) matters and issues that those considering or engaged in BAM would be well advised to read and take seriously.[58] His material is thorough and clearly relevant.

BUSINESS AS MISSION: SOME THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

This treatise has been written to aid those persons in business higher education in making an informed judgment when asking the following question: "Should a business department (college, school) become engaged in *teaching/training* undergraduate students how to practice Biblical *discipleship* and *evangelism* in conjunction with their *entrepreneurial* curriculum or other business majors?"

In an effort to generate a responsible answer to this question, eight theological questions have been constructed and are accompanied by numerous Biblical references to help the reader develop a defensible response that conforms to their Augustinian or Neocene-Thomists *hermeneutic.*[59]

It is important for the Augustinian and Neocene-Thomists readers to assess the following eight questions. Or approaching the questions on a different level, after reading and reflecting on the eight questions, would Augustinians or Neocene-Thomists likely be more interested in promoting BAM in an undergraduate business program?

Eight Theological Questions:

First question: The word "mission," as defined earlier, is being limited to the basics of the *great commission*: its leaders and members feel called to *disciple* and *evangelize*. This does not mean its membership is not interested in *ministering* to the economic, health, and social wellbe-

52. Miller, David W., *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement,* (Oxford University Press, New York) 222 pages, 2007.

53. *Ibid.*, page 106. Miller cites, "Mike McLoughlin, ed., *The Scruples Directory of Marketplace Ministry: Millennium 2000 Edition* (Kelowna, B.C. Canada: WYAM, 2000).

54. *Ibid.,* page 10.

55. *Ibid.,* Chapter 5, pages79-103.

56. Miller's book, first referenced in footnote # 10, has a 22 page "Selected Bibliography" in it that contains approximately 24 references per page. This is a "gold mine" for those wanting to research "faith at work."

57. Johnson, C. Neal, *Business As Mission: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice,* (IVP, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois) 528 pages, 2009.

58. See: "PART 3: BUSINESS AS MISSION—COUNTING THE COST; Chapters 20 -24; Pages 417 - 476.

59. Even asking questions that have substantiating Biblical references that guide the readers' thinking reveal that the questions themselves rest on top of certain theological presuppositions, in this case Augustinian or Neocene-Thomists presuppositions. This being so it is only fair to tell the reader that the following eight questions reflect the concerns of an Augustinian to a greater degree than might be present in the minds of Neocene-Thomists.

ing of those with whom they serve and come in contact. They simply yearn to do more. **Does BAM <u>intend</u> to portray the idea that its members are *primarily* interested in *discipleship* and *evangelism*?** Words do have meaning. Jesus was God's *logos* ("word"), sent to intelligently communicate to the world the nature of God: His holiness, goodness, wisdom, patience, righteousness, mercy, faithfulness, justice, sovereignty, love, all knowing, all powerful, immutability, spirit nature, etc. We live in a time when it is popular to denigrate the ability of anyone to communicate clearly so that the "hearer" can really know what the "speaker" means. This is called deconstruction. It, I am afraid, infects the church almost as much as it does the world.

This being so, BAM must make it clear to the broader Christian community that the word "mission" embodied in its name means exactly what BAM intends it to mean—BAM's "mission" is to encourage and educate its membership in Christ honoring ways to *disciple* and *evangelize*. Without such clarity the clergy will smile and nod, but not have a clue how to help. They will be forced to conclude that BAM has confused the "creation mandate" regarding work with the "great commission" that embodies a mission. The "creation mandate" regarding work does not embody the idea of "mission" as defined above. The creation mandate encompasses both the unregenerate and those "born from above" while the "great commission" is only given to those "born from above." *The aspiration of BAM, as the author understands it, is to unify the creation mandate and great commission— make them one.* This might be referred to as *a goal of enormous proportions.*

Second question: Are there not different "common grace" and "special grace" qualifications associated with the notion of "success" in business and the idea of "success" in missions? Yes! Success has two different meanings when the word is used in the context of talking about business success and when referring to the success of a discipling and evangelizing endeavor.

Being a successful business entrepreneur is dependent upon a combination of *common grace talents* that are as dispersed throughout the unregenerate entrepreneurs as they are those who have been drawn to Christ. There is no reason (evidence) to believe that an unregenerate entrepreneur is not as likely to make a profit and remain in business as is a "born from above" Christian entrepreneur. Profit making and longevity are not the only measures of success in an entrepreneurial business,

but without a profit you are out of business. Having the *talent* to make a profit reflects God's *common grace* that is poured out upon all humanity: the righteous and the unrighteous; the just and the unjust. *Talents* and *spiritual gifts* are very different things when talking about them in the context of *common grace* and *special grace*.

On the other hand, to achieve <u>success</u> in the context of a "mission" (as defined above)—*evidenced by **fruit**: growth in Christlikeness* (discipleship); *regeneration/ conversion* (evangelism)—requires the imparting of *spiritual gifts* by the Holy Spirit to individuals *called by God*.[60] It is unreasonable to believe that all successful Christian entrepreneurs have been given spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit to demonstrate <u>success</u> in the context of a "mission." Even an entrepreneur's strong interest in BAM is not sufficient evidence to equate this interest with having the requisite spiritual gifts.

Third question: What are spiritual gifts? (Not their names, but their "source" and "fundamental nature"?) A spiritual gift is *an ability accompanied by God's power* that is <u>defined</u> and <u>distributed</u> by the Holy Spirit to an individual He chooses, to build up another person or group in the likeness of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the sole "source" of *spiritual gifts*. Spiritual gifts are <u>not given to edify the individual with the *gift*</u> [61] <u>but are "distributed to each one individually just as He wills"</u>[62] in order to enlighten and build up another individual or group.

The fundamental nature of *spiritual gifts* is that they are designed, administered, and made effective by the Holy Spirit alone. We shall see when we address the Sixth and Seventh Theological Questions below, that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit's blessing reveals that He is at *work* in and through particular individuals whom He chooses and uses to help, build, train, comfort, etc. individual members or groups in the "body of Christ." (Biblical listings of the spiritual gifts can be found in: Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-12; 28-30; and Ephesians 4:11-12.)

It is also true that some of the more dramatic gifts such as the "gift of *healing*;" the "gift of performing *miracles*;" and "raising the dead" were manifested at specific times by the power of the Holy Spirit and then at

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60. 1 Corinthians 12:11

61. There is one exception mentioned in Scripture to this statement. In 1 Corinthians 14:4 the Apostle Paul tells us that the person who speaks in a <u>tongue</u> (Greek: *glossa*—a "tongue" that is not interpretable) "**edifies himself**."

62. 1 Corinthians 12:11

other times, and under seemingly similar circumstances, the particular gifts were not evident in the life of the Apostle in whom the gifts first appeared.[63] (A gift can be given and then removed.)

The Holy Spirit does the choosing of those whom He desires to gift, **but** it is our privilege, as God's adopted children, to express our earnest desire for a specific gift.[64] This is important because God invites His adopted children to ask for specific spiritual gifts to prepare and enable those who *desire to serve Him in specific ways*. This truth seems particularly important for those involved in the BAM movement.

Fourth question: Why or how does God go about selecting person "A" rather than person "B" to give a specific spiritual gift to?

Such a question reveals the heart of the questioner to the all-knowing, omniscient God we worship. Indeed, this may be exactly why the Holy Spirit will not give a particular gift to a particular individual. He knows it would expand their pride. To illustrate, Charles may desire (covet?) the *gift of teaching* that Bob has been given and say to himself, "Why didn't God give me that gift? I am as Biblically knowledgeable as Bob." Charles, it might appear, is not yet ready for the gift, though later he might be.

On the other hand Arnold may observe the *gift of hospitality* the Spirit has given both Bradley and his wife and say to the Lord, "Oh, Lord, it is such a joy to see how you have given Bradley and Mary such a love for those around them and to see so many people in their home that are really unable to return the invitation in kind.[65] Help me, O God, to grow in my love for the disadvantaged."

The truth is there is no answer available to the children of God regarding the reason (the WHY?) He chooses to give specific spiritual gifts to one person and not another. Many people may enjoy seeking answers to mysteries, but God has told us, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever…" (Deuteronomy 29:29). God in His infinite wisdom does what He chooses to do. God is the "I AM THAT I AM!"

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63. See: Acts 5:12-16 (especially verses 15-16); Acts 19:11-17 (especially verses 11-12); and Acts 20:9-10.
64. 1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1, 39.
65. Luke 14:12-14.

Fifth question: What *spiritual gifts* does the Holy Spirit employ in the work of *disciplining* and *evangelizing*?

This is an important matter because successful business entrepreneurs who associate themselves with BAM have demonstrated their "business talents" (common grace skills) in a way that has generated profits for a sustained period of time. This is not intending to imply that the talents Christian entrepreneurs employ in their business may not also used as spiritual gifts in their church by the Holy Spirit—the *gift of administration* would be a good example. Or a school teacher might have a teaching talent without having been given the *spiritual gift of teaching*.

The *spiritual gifts* most commonly identified in the Scripture as being associated with the work of *disciplining* and *evangelizing* are *teaching*[66] and *evangelism*.[67] These are not simply talents; they are *spiritual gifts*. The Holy Spirit has ordained to use the particular gifts He has imparted. This is essential to understand. A person does not designate him or herself as either an evangelist or as one who disciples. The Holy Spirit must gift them, call them, and direct them or they will be fruitless.

As was stated before, it is our privilege, as God's adopted children, to express our earnest desire for a specific gift.[68] God invites His adopted children to ask for specific spiritual gifts to prepare and enable those who desire to serve Him in specific ways. The leaders of BAM should encourage the members to seek God's will as it pertains to the members' need for specific gifts.

Ascertaining the presence of the *qualifying gifts* that are used by the Holy Spirit in His work of *discipling* and *evangelizing* is important because their presence indicates God's call on a person's life. It is very easy to lose focus on just who does the teaching and evangelizing. The thesis put forth in the **Sixth** and **Seventh** questions below will, I trust, make it clear who is to receive the glory that is associated with building up the "body of Christ."

Sixth question: What constitutes legitimate evidence that a particular individual has the *spiritual gift* of "teaching" (discipleship)?

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66. Romans 12:6-7. "And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given us, let each exercise them accordingly…he who teaches, in his teaching…" (Emphasis added).
67. Ephesians 4:7, 11. "But to each one of us [every Christian] grace was given according to the measure of Christ's *gift* [to each Christian]…and He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists…" (Emphasis added).
68. 1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1, 39.

Said differently, what is the evidence that God has chosen a particular person to use as His agent through whom He will teach? The "teacher" (human) speaks, but it is only the Holy Spirit that has the ability and power to take the Word spoken, place the teaching in the heart of the hearer, cause it to take root, and cause it to bear fruit. Only God is the true teacher of His Word, the Scripture.

God has said, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they _shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me. . . ._"[69] The Word says again, "And as for you, the anointing [indwelling of the Holy Spirit] which you received from Him _abides in you_, and you have _no need for anyone to teach you_; but as His _anointing teaches you_ about all things . . . you abide in Him."[70] And Christ said on the night He was betrayed, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, _He will teach you all things_, and _bring to your remembrance_ all that I said to you."[71]

This was a mystery, but it has been made understandable to those in Christ who live in the post-resurrection era. The work of the Holy Spirit has been explained to those who can hear. God chooses a person to do His discipling; God plants His truth in the discipling agent's heart—mind, passions and will; God providentially provides the discipling agent opportunities to share His truth (teachings); and the Holy Spirit decides which listeners He wants to plant the Word in; nurture and grow it, and subsequently harvest it. The teacher, God's selected agent, has no control over the outcome of his or her teaching.

Then what is the evidence that a particular child of God has been given the _gift of discipling_ (teaching)? We will begin with a negation—what is not good or sufficient evidence that one has a gift of teaching. The compliments that are so welcomed and fun to hear after giving a good, challenging, provocative, stimulating, entertaining, or serious talk, lesson, sermon, or time spent in listening and responding to someone are not evidence that the individual speaking has a "_gift of teaching._"

Good evidence is usually slow to manifest itself. Is the person who wants to disciple others a parent? If so, are his children maturing and walking with the Lord? If an adult Sunday school teacher, do those in his or her class say occasionally, "Do you remember the class you taught three months ago from the 'Sermon On The Mount' about our having 'logs in our eyes' and how we can be guilty of seeing other people's 'specks as logs?'[72] Well, the Holy Spirit has convicted me several times since then that I was doing just that." This kind of feedback reveals the Spirit's _use of the teaching._ This is good evidence that the _gift of teaching_ has been given by the Holy Spirit to the individual.

In passing, it also is appropriate to note that church pulpit committees, mission boards, church sessions and other such groups, if they are wise, when examining a person who believes he has a "call to the ministry" will attempt to identify individuals in their midst who have the _gift of discernment_ [73] in the evaluation of that person's call—to speak to their perception of the validity of the evidence supporting the "call."

Seventh question: What constitutes legitimate evidence that a particular individual has the _spiritual gift_ of "evangelism?"

Evangelism is generally thought of as sharing the good news of Christ's incarnation, life, atoning death, and resurrection. When this good news is _used by the Holy Spirit_ to convict and persuade the listener to surrender his or her life to Christ, in whom there is forgiveness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption, salvation has occurred.[74]

The Apostle Paul spends much of the first chapter of his first epistle to the church at Corinth (VS. 17-31) explaining that Christ sent him to preach the Gospel, _not in cleverness of speech_ [literally: _wisdom of speech_] so that the cross of Christ would not be made void (V. 17), but that "God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (V. 21). Being an accurate and persuasive presenter of the _Gospel_ is not evidence that the individual has the gift of evangelism.

The point to be made now is subtle, but important. The relationship between the person evangelizing (or discipling) and the person being "wooed" to Christ is extremely important. We often hear of the positive aspects about relationships when discussing evangelism, but there are also negative things to be guarded against. Scripture speaks of those who **pretend**[75] to know and

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69. Jeremiah 31:33-34.
70. 1 John 2:27.
71. John 14:26.

72. Matthew 7:1-5.
73. See: 1 Corinthians 12:10; Philippians 1:9; and Colossians 1:9.
74. 1 Corinthians 1:30.
75. Philippians 1:12-20 (especially verses 15-18).

love God.[76] Pretending, or thinking that one's clean looking "outside" is sufficient, while ignoring his or her filthy "inside," is a mistake often made by the *self-deceived* and *pretenders* whom the Father has not drawn to Christ.[77] An entrepreneur who loves Christ and seeks to serve Him should be <u>extremely careful</u> to avoid the creation of any environment that could lead to a misunderstanding of the kind of righteousness God is interested in—the free and unconditional crediting of Christ's righteousness to those in whom Christ dwells. The Pharisees did not understand this.

> Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also. But give that which is within as charity [your gift of love to God], and behold all things are clean for you." (Luke 11:39-41. Explanation added).

An entrepreneur who is openly evangelizing (or discipling) her or his employee puts that employee in a tangled and potentially compromising position. The employer/employee relationship is an unequal one in the context of the workplace.[78] An employee who is asked to attend a Bible study or is asked about his or her spiritual interests or commitments, in all likelihood, feels either a degree of inner tension or a sense of personal superiority for being noticed by the boss. In dealing with that conflict there may well be a pretended interest, or an emotional display of sincere interest that has no God-directed "end" to the response given.

The evidence to be looked for regarding the presence of the *spiritual gift of evangelism* in an entrepreneur is the same as it was in the life of a person engaged in discipling. Has his or her sharing of the Gospel been used by the Holy Spirit to draw those who previously did not know Christ to turn to Him and begin to be transformed by the Holy Spirit into the <u>image</u> of Christ? Are they being ". . . renewed to a *true knowledge* according to the *image of the One* who created him;" [79] and ". . . put on the man, which *in the likeness of God* (image) has been created in *righteousness* and *holiness* of the truth?" [80]

Eighth question: How can an individual entrepreneur *know* if God is calling him or her to make a commitment to a "mission" in the context of BAM, or any other part of Christ's "body?"

This is the most difficult question of the eight to answer because the answer embodies an "*experiencing existentially*" component that is absent when considering the first seven questions. The first seven questions are answerable with Biblically derived definitions and observable evidence. However, when asked, "How do you **know** God wants you to set up a business in Angola?," the answer rests within the *heart* (mind, passions, and will) of the one being questioned, but so deep in the recesses of the individual's *spirit* that others will only know if the answer is correct long after the entrepreneur has gone to Angola. Likewise, if the entrepreneur does not choose to go to Angola, those who know him will not know if God's choice was made.[81]

Before going any further we need to explain what "*experiencing knowledge existentially*" means or is. The Bible describes several kinds of knowledge. There is *gnosis* (Greek: know) which is ordinary, everyday knowledge—"That is a rock." There is *epignosis* (Greek: true knowledge) that is "knowing" something as God sees and knows it. And there is *ginosko* (Greek: to know by "experiencing") that is, for example, used in the following Biblical text:

> And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever. That is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but **you _know_ Him** because He abides with you, and will be in you. (John 14:16-17.)

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76. There are others who mistakenly think they know Christ but are confused and believe their abilities to accomplish "great things" bears testimony to their relationship with Christ, when they do not. For example: "**Many** will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not *prophesy* (preach) in Your name, and in Your name *cast out demons*, and in your name perform many miracles?' And **I** (Jesus speaking) will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" (Matthew 7:22-23)

77. See: John 6:37, 44.

78. Galatians 3:28.

79. Colossians 3:10

80. Ephesians 4:24.

81. The decision to not go to Angola reveals to the observers what God's *decretive* (what comes to pass) will was but it does not reveal what God's *perceptive* (what should have been done—God's revelation in His Word) will was. Luke 7:29 provides us with a Biblical example of this distinction: "But the Pharisees and lawyers [experts in the Mosaic law] rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John."

When the Holy Spirit comforts us, we have *experienced* Him and *ginosko* (know) Him. When we are given the peace that passes understanding we have been blessed by the Holy Spirit and had our *ginosko* (knowledge) of Him deepened. When we are convicted of a particular sin that we have committed, that is the Holy Spirit's loving chastisement and call to repentance. Through this *ginosko* (experienced knowledge) we know the depth of His love for us.

The person wrestling with his or her "call" to be an entrepreneur in Angola, as BAM envisions the purpose of mission, is faced with the question that only he or she can respond to. Others may pray for the person, they may ask him questions; they may encourage her or they may discourage him in the belief that the evidence discussed above does not point to a successful experience in Angola. There is no chapter or verse in the Scripture that answers the question for those on the "outside" trying to help the person facing the decision.

A caution is appropriate for those entrepreneurs who are questioning if God is calling them to a "mission" experience to serve Him. I cannot readily think of a Biblical example of a person called by God to undertake a special assignment who was giddy with delight. Moses asked God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11). Gideon, too, questioned his qualifications to serve God. (Judges 6:12-15). And can one forget Isaiah's sense of unfitness to serve God? (Isaiah 6:5-7). Or there is the example of Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 1:6-10). And what of the Apostle Paul's inner thoughts about doing Christ's bidding? Surely he loved to preach and teach. He must have gotten a bang out of it. You judge after reading 1 Corinthians 9:16-17:

> For if I preach the *Gospel*, I have nothing to boast of, **for I am under compulsion**; **for woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel**. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but **if against my will**, I have a stewardship entrusted to me."

Then how is an individual to know if he or she is being "called" by Christ to go and disciple others and share the Gospel as an entrepreneurial missionary? "Waiting upon the Lord" is a theme found throughout the Scripture. We wait upon the Lord in prayer asking Christ to make known His will to us through our personal *experiential knowledge* (ginosko) of His will—by conviction; compulsion; imprinting of a Word of Scripture on our heart; or any other existentially experienced knowledge. Only God can truly guide such a decision.

CONCLUSION

The idea of combining the *creation mandate* regarding *work* with its accompanying *talents*, and the *great commission* with its needed God-dispensed *gifts*, is exciting to contemplate. The leadership of BAM has an enormous responsibility to discern[82] God's will and to put in place a strategic vision that is manageable and realistic. Faculties considering promoting BAM have a serious responsibility to discern what is required on their part if a program is to be instituted.

Leadership that is committed to an Augustinian perspective will find "Question Eight" to be the most important question for them to engage and answer. It is predicated upon the presupposition that God is in charge, He is sovereign, and we, as His adopted children, are committed to His rule and His glory. Augustinians believe they bring "nothing to the table" except what God has been pleased to regenerate, convert, and then renovate so that the "new person" can be trained and led by the Holy Spirit into a fruitful life of service.

Neocene-Thomists are more likely to perceive of God as coming along side His children to see that they succeed in their endeavors to please and serve Him as they employ their *reason* and *will* in a manner that finds them being restored to His image through a coordinated effort that is assisted along with God's provisions. So called "Type 1" or "Alpha" personalities that happen to be Neocene-Thomists tend to have a much higher view of their ability to assist God in what He might desire than do their Augustinian counterparts who tend to focus on their absolute continuing dependency upon the enabling hand of their Triune God.

Should the CBFA Board promote BAM? Should the CBFA membership have a round of discussions and papers debating the merits and hazards associated with BAM? Or should we all just let the "BAM question" take its natural course over time and disregard any "collective concern" that may exist within the CBFA? The CBFA has, for the first time, come face to face with a *theological issue*, not merely an issue regarding *integration*.

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82. A *gift* dispensed by the Holy Spirit.

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