

Dear Friend,

As we continue to expose the Emergent Church movement, it is very clear that the ecumenical battle plan announced in Vatican Council II and post-Vatican Council II documents is being successfully implemented, as the men and women who lead the Emergent Church movement demonstrate. The Emergent Church continues to grow and infiltrate church in the USA and across the world. Such indeed such is their policy. The Emergent Village website has just announced that “Brian McLaren, Doug Pagitt, Tony Jones, Nanette Sawyer, and Troy Bronsink will team with Columbia Seminary and the Atlanta Emergent Cohort to provide three days of stimulating conversation and dreaming about the nexus of emerging church life and the mainline Protestant church in America.”

In the last three newsletters we have critiqued two prominent leaders of the Emergent Church Movement, Brian McLaren and Tony Jones. Another leader, Anglican Alan Jones takes the movement further into the Roman Catholic fold. His audience is large. It is important study his stratagem. He also has endorsed the United Religions Initiative, which includes an acceptance of Islam that has become a terrorist menace in recent times.

Please both study this article and forward and make known to others. This is the first of two articles on the method and goal of his ecumenism.

Yours in Christ Jesus and for His Gospel,
Richard Bennett

Alan Jones’s *Reimagining Christianity:* the Way Back to Rome

Anglican Alan Jones, Dean of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, California, and author of *Reimagining Christianity: Reconnect Your Spirit without Disconnecting Your Mind*, lives deeply and unhappily awash in a world of particulars from which he has found no escape. He says his book “is a snapshot of the world in which I live. I wrote it because the Christian world for me is no longer as life-bearing as it once was. In fact, much of it is downright toxic.”¹ Alan Jones is not alone in his disenchantment with Christianity nor, apparently, does he comprehend the source of his confusion. There are many today who call themselves Christian and many with them who would not call themselves Christian, and all of them together are milling around in and out of seeker-friendly churches, mega-churches, purpose driven churches, emergent churches, and every kind of liberal church that does not present the Gospel. Neither do such churches worship God in spirit and in truth nor preach the Bible faithfully so that these poor folk might properly understand Who God is, what He requires of them, and what provision He has made for

¹ Alan Jones, *Reimagining Christianity: Reconnect Your Spirit without Disconnecting Your Mind* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2005) p. 2

them. These are potentially Alan Jones' audience.² Their lostness and their ignorance make them especially vulnerable.

Jones is speaking in the wake of the 1960's cultural revolution and Vatican Council II to a generation to whom moral relativism, irrationalism, and Roman Catholic ecumenism are fast becoming dominant forms of thinking. This generation must navigate on the present intellectual high seas where moral absolutes are a thing of the past, and logical opposites are simultaneously held as valid. Rather than an emphasis on logical thinking based on the absolutely rock-solid historical fact of God's revelation to man through His Written Word, visualizations, imaginations, and images based in the lusts of the mind are fast becoming a predominant mode of teaching. In such turbulent waters as these, Alan Jones's book is hardly a strange navigational star.

Indeed, Alan Jones is having a worldwide influence, as a quick perusal of the Internet will confirm. But his influence does not stop with lecturing world wide to ordinary individuals. Much more serious is the political and international recognition that Alan Jones is receiving. In the midst of bloodiest attack on Israel by Hezbollah guerrillas in July 2006,³ "British Prime Minister Tony Blair [was present] at Grace cathedral 2006...[as was] Afif Safieh, the Palestinian Authority's official representative to the U.S. [B]oth worshipped at Grace Cathedral on Sun., July 30. Mr. Blair, [who was] in San Francisco as a part of a five-day official visit to promote trade and environmental issues, attended the 8:15 a.m. service as a private worshipper."⁴

What is critical is Jones' effort to influence the world community by endorsing the United Religions Initiative (URI). In this he follows in the same path as his predecessor, Bishop Swing, who conceived the idea of the URI in 1993. The purpose is to create a United Religions, a world parliament of religions, "a permanent assembly, with the stature and visibility of the United Nations, where the world's religions and spiritual communities will gather on a daily basis, in prayerful dialogue and cooperative action, to make peace among religions and to be a force for peace among nations, to address urgent human need and to heal the earth."⁵ This "peace among religions" is to include acceptance of Islam, something that the Papacy as already officially done.⁶ The political ramifications of this are transparent. For example, URI is to embark on the "International Day of Peace" on September 21, 2006. Of it, Kofi Annan says, "The International Day of Peace 'is meant to be a day of global cease-fire, when all countries and all people stop all hostilities for the entire day.'"⁷

URI has two hundred and two chapters throughout the world, called Cooperation Circles. It is designed to evolve into a United Nations for Religions. While the whole emphasis is supposedly "spiritual", a desire for legal power is evident in URI documents. For example, according to the Preamble to the Charter, URI plans a Worldwide Movement "...to support freedom of religion and spiritual expression, and the rights of all individuals and peoples **as set forth in international law.**"⁸

² Jones, "The fastest-growing 'religious' group is composed of the unaffiliated. This book is for them...." p. 11

³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/nickrobinson/2006/07>

⁴ <http://www.gracecathedral.org/church/new/detail.php?eid=244>

⁵ www.scp-inc.org/publications/journals/J2204/Penn1.php -

⁶ *The Papacy and Islam* on http://www.bereanbeacon.org/articles_new.htm

⁷ www.uri.org/United_Nations.html

⁸ www.uri.org/About_URI.html (Bolding in any quotation indicates emphasis added in this paper.)

Alan Jones also has influence with militant feminists. For example on June 2, 1994, hundreds of women staged San Francisco's "Renaissance of the Sacred Feminine Conference" at Grace Cathedral where Alan Jones is dean. Alan Jones not only participated but he "shared his delight in our 'post-traditional' culture and 'the new ways and forms to express the spirit'. A worldwide sisterhood of angry, militant feminists is rising to power."⁹

Alan Jones' global impact in both religion and politics did not start on its own. Its launching pad was the Emergent Church movement. There Jones will continue dialogue with Brian McLaren in the fall of 2006 as Jones, from his position as Dean of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, California, attempts to change the face of Christianity and the present day world.

Hooked on images from the start

Jones, whose book is endorsed by Emergent Church movement leader Brian McLaren, is an Anglo-Catholic by admission and claims to be Christian. As a boy he gave his heart to Jesus in Sunday school.¹⁰ But it is unclear which Jesus he means for he says, "...from the very beginning when I heard those Bible stories, I believed them but I believed them in a mystical way—as a way of communicating deep truths by way of images. I instinctively read the Bible as allegory and metaphor, not as literal truth..."¹¹ He makes an important point when he says that the Bible stories communicated truth to him by way of images, and denies the fact that the Bible communicates literal truth verbally. In another place he says,

"...about the stories of the Bible. Are they to be trusted? If so, in what way? Are the words attributed to Jesus in the New Testament really his? My approach has always been skeptical with regard to the text and open with regard to the tradition...I don't believe that what we can know of Jesus is confined by the New Testament. We have two thousand years of experience and worship to draw on...We can get to the truth only through inference—through myth and poetry, through metaphor and storytelling. There is no such thing as 'what really happened.' That's why history is always being rewritten." (pp. 209-210)

To posit that "We can get to the truth only through inference...there is no such thing as 'what really happened,'" shows he believes God has not revealed to us truth about Himself and His creation that we can grasp with our rational minds. How cruel then to Jones' perception must be the God whose invitation to the Israelites was "*Come now, and let us **reason together**, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow...*"¹² Given Jones's premise, how logical it is that in his darkened thinking, he offers idolatry through the use of "Christian images" as a primary way to come to a knowledge of God.

To whom ever Jones gave his heart, it clearly is not the Lord Christ Jesus of the Bible. He confirms this when he states,

"I always believed that forgiveness was at the heart of the Christian enterprise, but I was brought up with a great sense of shame and guilt...The Christianity that had been passed on to me saddled me with a crippling idealism. There was no way I could live up to it.... [Eventually] I simply discovered the liberating belief that was known only by those who feel themselves to be morally and spiritually shipwrecked and who experience the miracle of resurrec-

⁹ www.crossroad.to/Books/TwistofFaith/1-Father-Mother.html

¹⁰ Jones, p. Xiv

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. Xiv

¹² Isaiah 1:18

tion in knowing that they are loved. In the end it wasn't beliefs that saved me. It was other people. It was simply other people loving me." (p. Xviii)

Realizing that he could not live up to the standards of divine perfection that God requires of men, he states that he was saved by the love of well-meaning mortals. Jones's own testimony shows that in spite of his undoubtedly sincere ritual of giving his heart to Jesus in his Sunday school class, he does not know the one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Nevertheless, Jones states "Anglicanism is the one tradition that enables me to call myself Christian."¹³ The reason for this is that the Anglican Church is, to use his own terminology, the "tribe" from which he sprang. Perceptively, he also points out that when he was young, "one could move through the whole ecumenical movement without leaving the Church of England. The church was a means of upward mobility...."¹⁴ Clearly, he has made the most of that means.

Flight to irrationalism

Casting aside the ultimate authority of the Bible as the basis of truth by which to understand his life, and by understanding Christianity simply to be the tradition in which he grew up—but one in which the contradiction between Roman Catholicism and Evangelicalism was and still is accepted as the status quo—he demonstrates that he has given up logic when he says, "It is not difficult for me to embrace contradiction. I can be Protestant, Catholic, agnostic, and devout believer all at the same time."¹⁵ This "liberating freedom" as an irrational moral relativist has serious restrictions and problems, for he confides,

"As a romantic, what did I want?...I didn't want either to be a victim of my emotions or enslaved to dogma. Early on I realized that the name of the game is freedom...[but] these early battles have still to be fully resolved and have affected my deepest relationships...At any rate, the world began to slip away from me about twenty years ago [age 45 about], and I have never fully recovered. I believe that the slipping away of the world was the true beginning of my spiritual journey. There was breakdown and there was breakthrough...Looking back, the experience of therapy was central in helping me face that inner, unintegrated world. I joined a growing crowd of pilgrims who were realizing that their inner work was not a private trip but a way of helping to heal the collective psyche." (p. Xix)

Since he has "never fully recovered" from his breakdown, one cannot be so sure that the irrational contradictions he holds are as easily maintained as he purports them to be.

The "inner, unintegrated world" of which Jones speaks Francis Schaeffer addresses in his book *Escape from Reason*¹⁶ as the very dilemma that Thomas Aquinas set in motion within the Roman Catholic Church in the thirteenth century when he took an unbiblical view of the Fall. Using pagan Greek philosophy as his escape route, Aquinas removed Catholic theology from under the absolute authority of the written Word.¹⁷ Deriving from Aristotle the famous principle

¹³ Jones, p. Xii

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. Xiv

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. Xiv-xv

¹⁶ Francis Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1968) p.9.

¹⁷ Jones applauds this aspect of Aquinas, "Thomas Aquinas got up each morning, as it were, studied a pagan philosopher named Aristotle, and found his thought absolutely congenial and appropriate for creating and structuring Christian theology. Why was he never afraid of the conjunction? He was never afraid because truth from whatever source is of the Holy Spirit." p. 149. Jones does not recognize that what Aquinas took from Aristotle was not truth.

regarding knowledge, “Nothing is in the intellect which was not first in the senses,”¹⁸ Aquinas maintained that human reason could prove the existence of God by means of the senses. He held that man had the ability to abstract general meanings from particular experimental data—exactly the premise on which McLaren, Tony Jones, Alan Jones and other “emerging” liberals are constructing their theology and practice. Under ways to know God, Aquinas added to the five senses, the powers of understanding, imagination and memory. Basically Aquinas held that the intellect and imagination make experience understandable by abstracting general principles of knowledge from the data perceived—precisely what Alan Jones does in *Reimagining Christianity*.

While Aquinas held to the Fall of mankind because of Adam’s sin, he still forthrightly taught that the intellect is always accurate as regards first principles, or basic knowledge including the knowledge of God. This he dogmatically held in *The Summa Theologica*. He wrote,

“The intellect is always right as regards first principles, since it is not deceived about them for the same reason that it is not deceived about what a thing is. For self-known principles are such as are known as soon as the terms are understood, from the fact that the predicate is contained in the definition of the subject.”¹⁹

It is no wonder Catholic author G. K. Chesterton declared, “St. Thomas Aquinas was one of the great liberators of the human intellect.”²⁰—but not according to the truth as revealed in the written word of God. Twentieth and twenty-first century history is showing that the Papacy unleashed an unparalleled intellectual disaster in the West by demanding (for centuries coercing by torture and Inquisition) wholesale submission to Aquinas’s theology. The whole Roman Catholic religious system is built on it and even today has never deviated from it as their basis, post Vatican Council II. McLaren, Tony Jones, and Alan Jones—none of whom started as Catholics—trust their own and others’ powers of intellect and imagination, and each prescribes Roman Catholic dogma and mystical exercises as the route to finding a renewing excursion into religion.

Aristotle’s legacy

That dilemma started by Aquinas is now bearing a bumper crop of deadly fruit throughout the West not only within the Catholic Church, but also outwardly into secular society, particularly through Catholic schools and educational institutions, as well as into Evangelical churches as they have gone liberal. This same destructive irrational mind-set is now invading the more conservative Evangelical churches through ecumenism set formally in motion by Vatican Council II, particularly by means of dialogue with them and social action outreaches.²¹ A child of Roman Catholic ecumenism within the Anglican Church, Jones’s expression of his own personal “inner, [still] unintegrated world” is a prime example of this evil fruit. The lack of integration of which he speaks is seen in his insistence on the fact that a man cannot know truth, “there isn’t any such thing”; his ability to hold clear contradictions as valid; his flight from logic to imagination in order to keep his mind together under the tension produced by his irrationalism. He goes further than either McLaren or Tony Jones in his insistence that images are the necessary replacement

¹⁸ Aristotle *De Anima*, 3.8

¹⁹ *The Summa Theologica*, First part Question 17, Article 4 reply to objection 2

²⁰ www.dur.ac.uk/martin.ward/gkc/books/aquinas.txt 8/2/2006

²¹ See Ralph Ovdal, *More Than These: A History of How the Pro-Life Movement Has Advanced the Cause of the Roman Catholic Church: A Call for Reformation* (Monroe, WI: Heart of the Matter Publications, 2004).

for verbal communication. This is his heritage from thirteenth century Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas.

Packaging imaginations for export

Jones's irrationality within the Anglican Church is now being transferred to a broader canvas in his necessity to build a global tribe in which everybody is included. He begins with the premise that "In nearly every major faith, strains of radical fundamentalism have been rising up, renewing or reintensifying faith conflicts that go back, in some cases, for millennia."²² Defining religion as "our response to the ache of life,"²³ he is upset that conflicting views of religion remain strongly held. Particularly those who hold the Bible to be literally true upset him, but so do strong-minded atheists. Rather than logically working through the issue of whether the Bible is literally true, however, Jones retreats into the New Age notion that there is an evolution in human consciousness, which he romantically views as centuries ahead of the spiritual primitiveness of literal belief in the Bible.²⁴

His goal

The goal of his book is to reinvent Christianity because, in his opinion, **'Religion is broken, and something needs to be done to fix it. It needs to be reinvented...Many of us feel that the old story of religion—the way it makes sense of our place in creation—is in need of serious revision...Human beings have always told themselves stories about their longings. In fact, this need for stories binds us together. We need a new way of telling the Great Story.'**²⁵ Given that premise, he states, "This book is about Christianity, its expression in symbols and stories, and how its practice can be redefined as art..." (p. 2)

His dialectical method of argument demonstrated

To accomplish this end, he employs the same anti-biblical dialectical method of argument as do Brian McLaren and Tony Jones. Rather than logically defending what he posits as truth, Alan Jones's method is always to tell a story or quote somebody (mostly Roman Catholics) as his premise or thesis—purposely something open to a veritable briar patch of interpretations because ambiguity is the desired effect, as he says. The next step is to pit the story against some idea (his antithesis) and move to a synthesis, or intermediate position somewhere between the story and his antithesis. The content of this synthesis then becomes the new thesis, which he then illustrates by a different story or anecdote. For example, he states,

"When someone asks me, 'Do you really believe in the Virgin Birth? Do you really believe in the Resurrection?' they want a simple yes-or-no answer....**they assume that there are answers based on an objective knowledge we simply don't have.** With theologian John Millbank I would answer, 'Yes, of course we believe.' But what we're saying is that the story of the Virgin Birth is a complex theological statement that none of us fully understands....The Virgin Birth is...not just a metaphor or only a metaphor. It's something more than that. It uncovers the mystery of language.

"John Millbank writes, 'Jesus is essentially a linguistic and poetic reality.' What can that mean? It means that language is a lot stranger than we think." (p. 145)

²² Jones, p. 2

²³ Jones, p. Xi

²⁴ Chapter entitled "Literalism and Other Headaches", p. 36

²⁵ Jones, pp. 9-10

Jones states that both he and Millbank believe in the Virgin Birth, but he uses it as a statement to float his thesis that we do not have any answers based on objective knowledge because the Virgin Birth is “a complex theological statement that none of us fully understands.” Next he introduces as an antithesis Millbank’s statement, ‘Jesus is essentially a linguistic and poetic reality’”. This statement is undoubtedly meant to shock the reader so that Jones’s synthesis—which comes in the next paragraph, “We live by images”, and is the more familiar concept—might be a bit more readily acceptable to those to whom idolatry is not now acceptable. Another example:

[Thesis] “I ask you to consider the best of the Christian tradition...and see it through its three basic images of pregnancy (Mary), suffering (Jesus), and communion (Trinity).

[Antithesis] It means leaving behind the world of dogma as something fixed and forever—the last word—and entering the world of dogma as the first word to help us move into the mystery, with dogma seen as metaphor, poetry, and myth...dogma rightly understood, should be like an ice ax breaking up the frozen sea inside us. It will open the floodgates of the imagination. It will liberate the mind and heart, not imprison them...

[Synthesis] Remember the only way to talk about the sacred is by metaphor. Metaphor’s power lies in bringing two disparate things together for us to move forward in our feeling and thinking to a place where we could not go before. This is how we construct or invent new ways of thinking and feeling.” (pp. 144-145)

This man is an Anglo-Catholic in a church where for some time biblical doctrine and Roman Catholicism have both been accepted as valid. He is living in the tension between them. Often enough Roman Catholic dogma fits under his definition of “dogma seen as metaphor”. For example, Vatican Council II Document No. 28 states,

“Taken up in to heaven she [Mary]...continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation...Therefore, the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and **Mediatrix**. This however, is so understood that **it neither takes away anything from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator.**”²⁶

This paragraph from Vatican Council II falls directly under Jones’s definition of dogma as metaphor by bringing two essentially opposite ideas together which results in a tension that cannot be solved logically. It is not any wonder that Catholics turn to mysticism and idolatry, and Jones does the same.

[Thesis] “There’s often a stern voice inside us telling us not to think beyond our means. We should be satisfied with flat, one-dimensional thinking, with a kind of nine-to-five inner life.

[Antithesis] But there are already analogies, metaphors, and poems buried in our feelings and thoughts. Sometimes these treasures and mysteries trapped inside us are liberated when we read a book, see a movie, fall in love.

[Synthesis] This is how we move forward in our lives, by engaging in images, even strange ones. They bring us to places we wouldn’t have reached otherwise.”²⁷

So the process rolls from side to side while pointing up into the clouds of his mysticism and then down to the swelling waves of redefined words and data as his argument plows heavily along through circles of hopeless confusion until at last he has tethered it securely to idolatry.

²⁶ Vatican Council II Document No. 28, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 Nov. 1964, Ch. VIII, Sec. 62, pp.418-419 in Flannery.

²⁷ Jones, p. 145

Alan Jones, near perfect Roman Catholic ecumenist

As a writer, Jones, who reveres his Catholic classical education, has absorbed to near perfection the method for ecumenizing to Catholicism those dug into the religious traditions of Christianity but unprotected by the blood of Jesus Christ and the authority of His Word. The technique which Jones uses is clearly described in post Vatican Council II Document No. 42, “the Catholic participant [in ecumenism] must carefully inform himself of the content of his Church’s faith, without either overstating or minimizing it...”²⁸ Jones articulates and advocates Roman Catholic dogma throughout his book. He does not do the same for biblical truth. The same document under Part V, “Method of Dialogue”, states,

“The partners will work together towards a constructive synthesis, in such a way that every legitimate contribution is made use of, in a joint research aimed at the complete assimilation of the revealed datum. This research involves an effort to return to the sources, going back to Christian origins before the appearance of subsequent disagreements. It also calls for...looking to the future for solutions that will transcend present historical differences.” (p. 548)

Throughout this book, Jones pounds on the idea that everyone must work for a synthesis of data offered in which no legitimate datum will be left out. Because the logical mind must reject such a synthesis, he continually hammers at inserting in men’s minds the superiority of imagination over objective revealed truth and historical fact, which leads him finally to idolatry through the use of “Christian images”. In this he looks to the future when the authority of the Bible is again erased and replaced by images, or the Dark Ages Revisited. He also presents both New Age and traditional Roman Catholic mysticism, carefully couched in ambiguously redefined Evangelical terminology, as the method for uniting everybody under a new all-inclusive tribe having one “global soul”, as he calls it.

Rebuttal of Evil by the Power of God

“*The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*”²⁹ True Christians see God’s power and boldly proclaim His grace, every individual who is saved “*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*”³⁰ The Gospel is the chosen instrument that God uses to deliver His people from irrationalism, imaginations, images, false ecumenism, darkness, and the power of Satan. Thus it is proclaimed, “*but God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved).*”³¹ Sin is an evil of infinite significance since it is committed against an infinite Person. There is no way of escaping the wrath of God against sin except by God’s initiative, His grace. This grace is seen in the Lords’ promise to send the Holy Spirit, “*when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*”³² The Holy Spirit convicts of sin as He makes the sinner realize his lost condition and brings him to sense his need of Christ’s righteousness. The Holy Spirit alone can impart spiritual life to the soul and supernatural light to the mind. Therefore the Lord Himself pro-

²⁸ No 42, Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue”, S.P.U.C., 15 Aug., 1970, Sec. 4 (a), p. 545

²⁹ Romans 1:16

³⁰ Romans 3:24

³¹ Ephesians 2:4-5

³² John 16:8

claimed the need for God's proposal, "*verily, verily, I say unto thee except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" (John 3:3)

Where irrationalism substitutes for the new birth, the cultivation of imaginations and images in place of the power of the blood of Christ, false ecumenism as a replacement for complete dependence on God, the carnal mind maybe attracted and human reason charmed but all this is destitute of any power to bring salvation to souls. There is no Gospel in Alan Jones's system nor in the whole Emergent Church movement. In face of all of this, the grace of God still conquers, redeems and saves. The Scripture explains grace as power. Grace not only makes salvation possible but is also efficient and all-powerful to that end. The Lord God's astonishing grace breaks the arrogance of the Emergent Church apostasy. How is God's grace made a reality in one's life? Simply by claiming the promises in His Word. We admit our lost condition and our need of Christ's righteousness. We abandon our own efforts totally. We trust Him in His grace as we are sensitive to the conviction of His Holy Spirit. *'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is a gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.'* *"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace."*³³

The soul-destroying teachings of Alan Jones and his associates are demolished by the direct work of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. The Gospel alone remains the power of God unto salvation. In the face of subjective irrational speculations it is objective, rational, consistent, and all powerful. *"The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* (Hebrews 4:12) ♦

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³³ Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 11:6