**Introduction**

I think the coinage was from Mark Andreesen – the original coder of the web browser, but more famous these days as a venture capitalist. He took to calling whatever all people had to have an opinion on “the current thing.” The current thing would change with the seasons, or when everyone was exhausted with the current current thing. Now Andreesen was doing it largely to mock the conformism of masses of supposedly intelligent people to unthinkingly support propaganda. “I support the current thing” with the current thing always being whatever those currently in power thought correct. But the NPC – the non-player character – captured that better. The current thing demanded a split and argumentation. But when the arguments were over, nothing changed. There was just another current thing.

**Text**

Contrary to the Current Thing which causes unceasing argument and division and then just disappears, you might posit an Eternal Thing. It shares with the current thing an unceasing argument and division. But unlike the current thing, the eternal thing never goes away. And it changes everything.

Joseph and Mary have come to the temple for the time of purification. This comes not from what Christians have labeled the moral law – the 10 commandments – but from the ceremonial law. The laws governing ritual cleanliness or uncleanness. You can find all of this in Leviticus 12. The time period was 40 days for a male child and 80 days for a female. Why the difference? Don’t really know. Every rabbi seems to have a different opinion. That is what the sacrifice is about – restoring Mary and probably Joseph’s – anyone who helped in the delivery which Joseph probably did seeing as it was in a stable away from home – anyone involved would be ritually unclean. The sacrifice, scaled to affordability, was the ritual purification. But if the child was a male and the first born, it was claimed by Yahweh. You also had to redeem the child. Luke is quoting Exodus 13, but the rules are in Numbers 18, and the redemption price was 5 shekels of silver to the priest. A pre-1936 US silver dollar has been used for this act in the US. Modern money doesn’t have silver in it, so none of it satisfies the requirement. If this was done later the “price” of redemption would change per Leviticus 27. So it is interesting that Luke says they brought Jesus to present him to the Lord, and he cites not the redemption price but one “called holy to the LORD.” If Mary and Joseph had redeemed Jesus, I think Luke might have mentioned the silver shekels along side the pigeons. And intuitively I’d tie this into the 30 pieces of silver the Judas takes for betraying and tries to give back to the priests. Although I have to admit that is just intuition and religious imagination.

On their way to carry out everything according to the law, the run into Simeon and Anna. And both of them have important things to say. But what I want to focus on is Simeon’s words to Mary. Behold, look, pay attention, something important follows. This child is appointed for the falling and rising of many in Israel. He is a sign of contradiction. (Yes, our translation has sing that is opposed, but that isn’t very poetic. And neither is it very literal which would simply be a Sign spoken against.) And the outcome of this is “that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed.”

**Christology**

This child Jesus and the man that he would become is the pivot point around which the people of Israel rise and fall. And we really should hear those words apocalyptically. The falling word is the falling of a house. Like the house built on the sand. It is a word for total destruction. Not merely slipping on ice or losing one’s balance. And the word for rising? The same word uses for resurrection. This child is appointed for the destruction and resurrection of many in Israel.

And how does this destruction and resurrection come about? The life of this child Jesus is the sign. Signs were the 10 plagues. Signs were the acts of God. They were the acts of God pointing to the surpassing greatness of God. The life of Jesus is the sign.

And everywhere Jesus is proclaimed, Satan and the World rise up to contradict. They nailed him to a tree. And that cross becomes the sign of contradiction. Everywhere the cross is preached, everywhere the church does her job – proclaiming Jesus until he comes – Satan and the World stand against. Everywhere the grace and truth of God seek to enter our lives, our great enemies are there to attempt to snatch it away. Everywhere the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed and the life of sanctification preached, something is there to deny it. 2000 years later this is still true.

Because the life of Jesus is that which reveals the heart.

**Moral**

Far from the current thing, this cross is the eternal thing. It stands over the wrecks of time decreeing peace. The manger tells us the God is with us. The life of Jesus shows us the narrow way. The way to resurrection. But it is never without contradiction.

This Child is the eternal thing. All creation divides over this one. He changes everything. Christ has become the cornerstone set by God. We can trip over that cornerstone rejecting it and build our lives on the sand. That stone can fall on us. We can fight as hard as we want against its placement. But we are fighting God and will be crushed. Or we can build our lives on Christ. We can confess his name and believe this cross, believe this sign that Christ has made full atonement for us.

We can fall, or we can rise.

And the life of Christ is the eternal thing. The sign of contradiction that reveals hearts.

And such a confession is not without trouble in this world. Even his mother as Simeon would say would have her soul pierced. Unlike the current thing – whatever it is we are arguing about currently – what we confess about Jesus cuts deep. It is costly. As all love is costly.

**Eschatological**

But the good news is that all signs eventually meet their fulfillment. The sign points to the rising. This is the way.

But one day that redemption of Jesusalem comes in its fullness. No longer will Satan or the world be allowed to contradict, but every knee shall bow and every tongue confess.

Today, like Jesus our pattern – we grow. Part of that growth is trouble. We grow through the contradiction. We grow in faith. We grow in understanding the love of God for us. Tomorrow the sign is fulfilled. Tomorrow everything demanded according to the law is finished. And all that remains is the love of God. All the remains is the rising.