

Wharf and Bearings

X

*Essays on
Our Times and Futures*

Ralph C. Ennis

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Introduction to WB Series

As land dwelling beings, when we are at sea, two thoughts are always in mind—even if in the back of our minds. Where’s the wharf—a safe place to dock? What’s my bearing—which direction am I going and will it in time get me to a safe wharf?

We all need safe places. Fundamentally, life is filled with uncertainties. Sometimes we feel in control or at minimal risk of danger, but that is always only temporary. Our common human experience inevitably involves risks of the unknown. And through death, not to be feared, we journey to an eternal wharf in Jesus.

We all need a bearing that will get us where we want to go while preserving the ability to plot a course to a safe place. We can play far from this wharf, but we desire home.

Wharf and Bearings Series, a collection of essays, poems and a short story, is intended to present a journey—my journey. I share it with the hope that it will give some guidance as you seek your bearings and wharf throughout your life.

At no time are these essays to be considered exhaustive, they are pathways I have taken to find wharf and bearings for me. And collectively, they represent “philosophical peace” for me.



I dedicate this series to my wife of 40 years (in 2013), our four children and their spouses and our 13+ grandchildren and the generations to follow! Here's an overview of the series:

Wharf and Bearings ONE:
Hope and Beholding the Triune God

Wharf and Bearings TWO:
Spirituality and the Triune God

Wharf and Bearings THREE:
Knowing, Beauty, Ethics and Reality

Wharf and Bearings FOUR:
Love, Longings, Success and Consequences

Wharf and Bearings FIVE:
Poems from the Soul

Wharf and Bearing SIX:
Oneness in Marriage

Wharf and Bearings SEVEN:
The Mind, Decisions and Artificial Intelligence

Wharf and Bearing EIGHT:
World View and Culture

Wharf and Bearing NINE:
Gospel Implications

Wharf and Bearing TEN:
Our Times and Futures

*"... we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power,
and the wonders He has done ..."
Psalm 78:4 -6*

Why Weep America

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001 and after a very short period of solidarity, Liberals and the Right are playing the offense and defense game again. Stanley Fish, in the July 2002 edition of Harper's, noted, "Who would have thought, in those first few minutes, hours, days, that what we now call 9/11 was to become an event in the Culture Wars?" In the midst of the war on terrorism, the internal cultural war is raging.

Writing in the National Review, Jonah Goldberg has forcefully confronted Fish. He states, "Fish's hypocrisy is stunning." Goldberg quotes Fish as writing, "Postmodernism maintains only that there can be no independent standard for determining which of many rival interpretations of an event is the true one." Goldberg decries, "Fish damn well knows that millions of people think postmodernism means something very, very, very different – even if they don't know what postmodernism is. For lots of Americans, the idea that there are no objective standards of truth or morality is incredibly sophisticated and intelligent ... The uninformed, the lazy, the affected, the ambitious, and the dumb can adopt sharp-edged ideas and use them as blunt cudgels if we are not careful. The authors of postmodernism have not been careful." With 9/11 in the background, this fight between Liberals and the Right has resumed with passion.

September 11 shook America. We look at life differently since those horrific events. Much has changes. We cried for the many people who lost their lives that day. We have embraced and praised our new heroes. Our fears have been aroused. Our identity as Americans is reinforced. Our economy has been affected. And our demand for justice came vehemently to the surface. (We even called our campaign against terrorism "Ultimate Justice" until our Islamic citizens cried only God can give ultimate justice.) In the midst of these changes, the pragmatic soul of America has experienced little or no change.

America is now a two-cultured nation with Florida's write-in voters deciding the balance of power. America has many ethnic cultures in the melting pot. But we have melted into two cultures with diverse groups in each. One culture believes in dogma – guiding principles that lead civilization on the path of good and away from evil. In political terms we call this the culture of the Right. The other culture has minimized issues of morality based on some standard of truth and pushed an agenda of freedom and power for diverse life-styles. We call this culture Liberals.

Jonah Goldberg, of the political Right, nailed Stanley Fish, a Liberal academician, for his irresponsible defense of postmodernism (the philosophical underpinnings of Liberalism) in American academia and arts. With dogmatic fervor he assailed Fish and other intelligentsia for their lack of care in unleashing the postmodern idea that there is no independent standard of truth. Fish, on the other hand, stands the high ground and summarily labels the Right as ignorant. "In the end, the post-9/11 flap about postmodernism is blowing of so much smoke, sound and fury signifying very little apart from the ignorance of those who produce it."

The dogma culture claims the right interpretation of September 11th is simply that the actions of terrorists are evil and tragic and that the long-term solution is to bomb them into oblivion. The Liberal postmodern culture proclaims the actions of the terrorists are tragic and criminal. They seek a long-term solution by reframing the issues of power and authority, while in the meantime bombing terrorist is quite necessary.

These cultures, both uncertain in themselves after September 11th, are vying for power on the political, artistic and educational landscapes of America. And yet both share much in common. Practicality rules the day in America's mindscape. And for that we can weep!

The culture of dogma asks what practical good will come of an action. It also demands conformity from others to enhance good at a societal level. This culture is increasing unsure of what is good and evil and increasing raging against those who don't agree with them. Surely Goldberg is raging against Fish. The Liberal culture asks what practical pleasure can be enjoyed and demands the freedom of expression with few or no boundaries. This culture is increasing unsure of the practical value of alterative views in the wake of terrorism. (It is also unsure of sexual license in the face of sexual abuse of children by pedophiles in the clergy and others.) With head held high, they can label the Right as ignorant and intolerant.

At the core of American decision making is the pragmatic, hedonistic axiom: "We have the right to happiness." This right to happiness is defined as either individual freedom of expression and lifestyles (Liberal culture) or the comfort of others conforming to our definition of good especially when applied to foreign policy (dogma culture). From business scandals, to terrorist threats, to stock market plunges and surges, to foreign oil policies, to environmental catastrophes, and to ethnic tensions, Americans still wants to know "Practically speaking, what's in for me?" Why weep for America? Weep because our national soul has not yet been stirred from its pragmatic roots.

Is pragmatism a problem and what is at the core of America's practicality? It is a problem in that our two-cultured nation is fast facing the inconsistencies of our choices without a clear underlying construct of thought. Our internal contradictions can tear us apart over the next several decades if the battle is not quickly resolved. If one culture wins over the other, will the outcome be any better? I think not. Rather both cultures need to be transformed from their pragmatic roots.

The core issue in this problem of pragmatism is America's theory of knowledge. Historically we have had a religious moral view of knowledge wrapped with a hedonistic practicality (America's dogma culture). How else could slavery, near genocide of American Indians and industrial abuse of the environment be justified? We are now shifting to a hedonistic, constructionist view of knowledge with moral practicality as a wrapping (America's Liberal culture). We want pleasure now. We want people to have the right to define what is pleasurable to them. And we want to employ moral justification when necessary to get what we want in the world.

Practically speaking, we need a new theory of knowledge. And there seems to be little stomach to acknowledge this core issue or to deal with it. That is why we can weep for America.

A sidetrack may be helpful here. Why do nations fail? There are a myriad of reasons. Some are split apart from internal inconsistencies of values. The American experiment almost failed under the contradiction of freedom for all except slaves. Some nations fail due to loss of identity. The colonies of America first had to establish an independent identity before it could stand free from England. Many were called traitors (to England or to the Colonies) during this period of identity formation. Some nations fail because they open their borders to others without understanding the purposes and agendas of these immigrants. The First Nations of America allowed European entry to the continent without understanding the consequences. (If they had refused, and some did, they would still have lost to European gunpowder.) Some nations fail for lack of a purpose apart from a hedonistic agenda. America is full of hedonism but still maintains a formable purpose—to passionately protect its identity and interest as a land of freedom and opportunity.

Both Islam and Christianity assert some nations fail because they oppose God. America has marginalized God in the public arena. And yet America has publicly asked God to bless her in the aftermath of terror. Which “God” is America asking for blessing? Will He bless or be marginalized forever? And some nations fail due to poor economic theories. The Communist world substantially failed due to an economic theory that didn’t embrace the full range of human nature (esp. jealousy impacting private ownership). Will capitalism wrapped in democracy last forever? Our system is based on trust fortified through authority. As our world minimizes authority, as terrorists seek to destroy trust and corporate scandals erode confidence, will our economic system withstand these assaults?

All this leads us to ask the question, “Do nations fail because they have an inadequate theory of knowledge?” In that a theory of knowledge clarifies value inconsistencies, identities, purposes and agendas, God’s voice and economic theories, yes, a theory of knowledge is at the core of a nation’s existence.

Our competing theories of knowledge are absolutism (the Right) and cultural constructivism (Liberals). Both theories have a pragmatic agenda and justification. Absolutism claims it can generate a good society and demands justice for non-conformists. Cultural constructivism claims to generate a creative, free and tolerant society and demands elimination of absolutism. Will our nation be torn apart by these two cultural agendas? The Right will continue to lambaste Liberals and Liberals will continue to win the cultural wars at home and lose when our nation is called to defend itself from outside forces.

Can pragmatism continue to carry both cultures into the uncertainties of the 21st century? Is there another option? If we cannot give up some of our pragmatism, we cannot do the work as a culture of searching for a different theory of knowledge. I would propose there is a path for this search. It is to look deeply at decision making about rhetoric and then explore symbolic reasoning as we revise our theory of knowledge. These discussions will then lead us to grapple with the pragmatic question, “What are healthy cultures?” These are topics to be grappled with by academia, politicians, businesspeople, artists and ordinary citizens of one of the most amazing nations ever to survive on the planet. (It is the only nation in human history that has had the technological means of total world domination over a period of weeks and chose rather to rebuild her allies and enemies.) In the end pragmatism will never leave the soul of America – it is probably our role in the global village. However, if we cannot be freed from its hold for a while, the Right and Liberal cultures may well rip our nation apart while blaming each other.

America continues to weep for those lost on September 11th. Will America learn to weep for its pragmatism soul? Will America look at the core of its existence—its theory of knowledge? Will Goldberg and Fish fight or weep?

Written July 2002

The Worldwide Freedom Agenda: The Right and Power to Live as We Want—That's Happiness

*You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free.
But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh;
rather, serve one another humbly in love. (Galatians 5:13).*

Is there a worldwide agenda? Due to the complexity of our global social system, we could easily conclude “no”. There are many agendas, but to reduce this issue to one agenda is difficult and problematic.

However, I will like to suggest that our global agenda is and always has been freedom. From the Garden of Eden till today, humanity has been in rebellion toward God. That rebellion can be viewed as a search for independence from God—freedom to be apart from His agenda, His framing of our identities, His purposes and plans. Free and empowered to do as we want—and the right to do so.

Thus, I suggest that the pursuit of freedom is the worldwide agenda. That freedom is nuanced differently in each generation and culture—but it is still freedom we want. In today's world, it seems that freedom is best defined as the right and power to live as we want; and that freedom will lead us into the promised land of happiness.

We are a global civilization that longs for and pursues happiness as defined by this freedom to live as we want. The democracy movement over the past several hundred years has paved a way to this happiness. And freedom is a good pursuit—if we know what binds us in the first place.

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free...” (Galatians 5:1). God does not wish for us to be in bondage to sin or spiritual forces (Romans 6:15-18; Galatians 4:3). He has made a pathway to freedom—through Jesus Christ. He has set us free. But this freedom is a freedom to love without the constraints of sin. That is the radical freedom Paul spoke of in Galatians 5:13. We are now free in Jesus to serve in humble love. We are freed to serve in righteousness—our true identity in Christ.

If we are to be truly free, we must understand to what we are currently enslaved to. As much as political, economic, cultural, health, psychological, etc. factors come into play, the reality that we are in bondage to sin, our sin nature, is evident everywhere. Without a direct solution to this bondage, we simply move from one bondage to the next. With a solution to sin, all other bondages cease their power to control our futures thus making us free to serve in love.

Though our world remains in bondage and yet seeks the happiness of freedoms, it often fails to deal with our rebellion toward God and our sin nature as the primary issues. Without such a radical re-arrangement of the worldwide freedom agenda, humanity will continue to experience the bondage of sin and subsequent miseries apart from righteousness.

As followers of Jesus we are called to live within the freedom of our relationship with God. We are freed from sin and spiritual forces. We are free to worship God and humbly serve others in love. Our example to a world struggling for freedom can have a profound impact—as we live to God.

Written July 2013

Humanism and Spiritual Pluralism as Drivers

We live in a day of extreme humanism and spiritual pluralism. In the post-Christian West, we hope that humanity's structures (democracy and capitalism) and knowledge (esp. science) are our saviors. In the East, we believe the gods, if real, can be summoned to our aide. They may or may not come. In the Christianly Southern hemisphere, we mix and match old ways with Christian beliefs. And in the Middle East, the God of Israel and Allah are in battle with the winner to possibly emerge within the next few decades.

In short, if we believe that God exist, we most often marry Him with other spiritualities to avoid the appearance of condemning the plurality of spiritualities on the planet.

Thus humanism and spiritual pluralism form the backbone of meanings for humanity. Humans are driven by meanings. We need to know "Why" to go forward. Without the hope of meanings, we wither and retreat from conflict—from life. With meanings, we will face great persecution with courage and honor.

The story of God as told in the Old and New Testament Scriptures offers a way forward as well as a look back. We find meanings—explanation for life's existence, struggles and futures. We are encouraged to persevere even as persecutions exist and intensify. The Christian driver is the Driver of our times and futures—the Alpha and Omega of time.

Written July 2013

Democracy, Capitalism and Technology as Saviors

Every generation needs a savior. We sense it; we need it; we make up our own saviors. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have their saviors. They are democracy, capitalism and technology.

Democracy brings us the right for our voice be heard and for a more equal distribution of wealth as we cry for justice. Capitalism offers thus the hope of abundant of wealth accumulated and traded within free markets. And technology, the innovative offspring of science, offers new products and process for the amelioration of our sufferings.

The twin experiment of global democracy with capitalism is fully underway. Economic communism has played itself out while political communism with capitalism is transforming China—and thus the rest of the world. In any case, democracy with capitalism is now more than an experiment—it is the expected savior for structuring our present and future human civilization.

However, more is needed than the freedoms of democracy and abundant of capitalism. We need innovations to make human existent more palatable. We need new medicines, quicker communication systems, efficient means of transportation, reverse engineered body parts—in short we need technical revolutions in all facets of our lives in order to lessen human suffering even as democracy and capitalism promises this better way of life.

If all local efforts fail, we will still have the hope of off-world colonization. We pour billions into this hope that may well come to fruition within a decade or two as new materials, propulsions and life support technologies surrender the heavens to humanities' creativity and gumption.

If all our human efforts fail to deliver a better life, our last hope is to hand humanity over to artificial intelligence and to imbed our own individual and collective minds into it. Within the 21st century this future may be our strongest human hope—without the Triune God.

And yet God offers a very different and radical hope. The hope of a new creation—individual, collective and universal. He offers to liberate us from the inside out—to free our souls; to transform our minds; to forgive our rebellious hearts. Jesus truly is humanity's Savior.

Written July 2013

Sexual Diversity, Christian Ideals and Symbols

Our times and futures are intrinsically wrapped up in the human freedom to define and express our sexuality. Sex is a big deal in every generation. However, in today's world we have unique power to define our sexuality and manage the consequences of our sexual behaviors. We have birth controls, hormone therapies and sex altering surgeries that were unavailable to previous civilizations.

From heterosexuality to homosexuality to bisexuality to bestiality—we like options that bring forth pleasure. From a humanistic worldview of freedom, power and happiness, all expressions of sexuality *should* be, not only permitted, but championed. Pleasure demands to be expressed and experienced. Though preferences may arise, all forms of consensual pleasure should at least be considered if not explored. In this line of reasoning, bisexuality seems the most “logical” expression of sexuality across the human experience. Fundamentally, sexuality is a pleasuring of the body. That which touches and pleasures should not be denied. It's only “logical and natural” to enjoy diverse pleasures. Bisexuality seems to best fit the logic of pleasure. Heterosexuality and homosexuality are thus preferences at individual levels.

As homosexuality comes directly into the public consciousness, we need to see that some people are more prone to this expression than to heterosexuality. There are probably many explanations for these inclinations. Early socialization to homosexual acceptance, genetics, hormones in our food chain, pharmaceutical side effects, chemical interactions—these might help explain the seeming increase of homosexual lifestyles. However, homosexuality has been part of human history for millennia.

In time, group orgies and bestiality may surface as an alternate but acceptable means for pleasuring oneself and others. And in time and far beyond current pornographic experiences, virtual 3-D interactive and pharmaceutical assisted sex might become the hot spot of sexual experiences with those who would otherwise be unattainable or unavailable for physical contact. Thus, the logic of pleasure extends to the fringes of our imaginations.

In the face of this pleasure dynamic for multi-varied sexual expression, the Christian ideal of *heterosexual, lifelong, monogamous marriage* seems more than antiquated—it feels like a violation of our civil right to the pursuit of happiness. It feels like hate speech to non-practitioners of such limitations on the body.

However, for the Christian, sexual ideals are rooted in a symbolism of our relationship with the Triune God. We believe God is the jealous Lover of our souls. His love is jealous—not permissive. And yet His jealousy is pure, without the over possessiveness of human envy/jealousy. He is jealous *for* us, not jealous *of* us.

In His jealous love, the Triune God calls us into the high honor of being the “Bride of Christ.” We are not to be lowly servants, but a glorious bride. *We are called to be monogamous with our God*—all idols are rejections of His authority and power and of His loving pursuit of us.

In Scripture, God has symbolically linked this high calling with the union of a man and woman in marriage. *He calls us to lifelong marriages for He offers us an eternal position as bride.* He calls us to reject unfaithfulness even as He has called us into a covenantal—not contractual—relationship.

And we are called to be heterosexual. This sensitivity to symbolic meanings is understood in the idea that God is “Other” to us humans. And as “male” and “female” are “other” to each other, *our heterosexuality affirms our faith that our Supreme Other calls us to Himself.*

Furthermore, the symbolism of “other” might even be viewed as a twisted support for bestiality. When shame turns to shamelessness and Biblical symbolism is not a viable mindset, then bestiality can become a preference for pleasure. The prophet Jeremiah dealt with people in his nation who had lost the capacity to “blush” (Jeremiah 6:15). And God used images of bestiality to call the people back to Himself (Ezekiel 23:20,21). God seeks people who have turned far from His ways and His revealed meanings for sexuality.

However, the reality of human experience and worship of God is clear—we do it imperfectly and God is still calling us out of His jealous love. We must take comfort in His patience. We must take warning in His jealousy.

We must not give up the symbols of our sexuality—the ideal of heterosexual, lifelong, monogamous marriage that points us into the heart and ways of the Triune God. From this basic symbolism, the notion of male headship in marriage is also evident. Christ is the Head of the church and the husband is the head of the wife.

Increasingly within society, sexuality is defined and projected without Christian symbolism. Since our world deeply values happiness, power and freedom, it should come as no surprise that sensuality—the freedom to explore our bodily senses for pleasure, including sexual pleasures—is and will increasingly rule the day. This is no cultural tide. It is a tsunami that has come ashore. There is no return until sexual sensuality plays itself out. That may take many decades.

So how should Christians live within this hyper-sexuality culture? First, we, as followers of Christ, must affirm our commitment to *heterosexual, lifelong, monogamous marriage with headship* as a symbol of our ideal relationship with God. Grow into the intimacy of that relationship. Celebrate marriage as a marriage couple or as a single. The epidemic of divorce among Christians has eroded our platform for speaking about the symbolism of marriage. We must learn to be faithful in marriage and in worship.

Second, understand that sexual diversity is “reasonable” given certain assumptions of freedom, power and happiness. Therefore, let the results of these assumptions play out in society. The days of institutionalization of heterosexuality are almost over. Some Christians are still called to fight for the Christian definition of marriage. They must fight legally with love—even if it is perceived differently. Sexual restraint laws in a highly sexualized culture (starting with early childhood socialization of sensual sexuality) will inevitably fail to be passed or enforced. Even as legal mandates for male-female marriage are eroding in the social conscience, we need a different way to call people to God through the symbol of sexuality that links His jealous love to their souls’ longings. Both by example, by speech and through the arts, we need to lift high the Christian ideal and symbolism of marriage that calls us into worship of the Triune God.

Third, acknowledge the longings of your soul and body and go to God for ultimate fulfillment—even as immediate needs go unfulfilled in both marriage and in singleness. Our sexual longings are real, but they need not define us. God alone is our Definer.

Fourth, in the church, leaders must hold dearly to these Christian ideals and symbols of sexuality. We must not ordain those who would suggest that these symbols, these meanings of sexuality, have no relevance and that our longings for love should overdrive the jealous Love of God.

Fifth and finally, learn to love those different from us. Learn to communicate God's kindness and patience to all human beings with a humble belief in God Who has established behavioral ideals and symbols to call us to Himself in purity and without idols. And do not expect or demand others to agree with Christian ideals and symbols before they have tasted the reality of Christ as Savior, Master, Friend and Bridegroom.

Written July 2013

Also in Wharf and Bearing IV

Humanity's End Games

Our world sees an end game coming. Our pop culture highlights the end of our planet and humanity through a wide array of movies, books and songs. It just feels right to project the end of all times—or history as we know it.

From weapons of mass destruction to asteroids to global pollution and seismic shifts, we see potential ways that our planet is in ultimate danger. Even as the illusion of abundance of goods calls us to purchase and enjoy, the fears of scarcity, terrorism and state control require us to see other possible futures. The end game toward elimination of humanity is well within our imaginations. This elimination even provides a degree of comfort—for suffering ceases for the eliminated.

As we face our future, we are attempting to restructure our planet. We are moving the lines of authority and power to accommodate change. Nations are less autonomous. The communities of nations and artists have an increasingly “moral voice.” Corporations are now wielding enormous wealth and must be consulted for human futures to be employed and productive. Economic, political, information and decision making restructuring are rapidly progressing. If the changes since WWII are an indication, we will have a brave new world by mid-to-late twenty-first century. A question remains in this restructuring: Who will hold authority and power? The options now include machines as well as humans.

And yet God's story goes forward. He is neither shaken nor surprised by the rapid changes of the end game of humanity. He's story will prevail. His Son will return and the end will be the beginning. He will restructure humanity by His very presence. He will restructure the new heavens and earth by His power and authority in His Kingdom!

What remains very unclear is how long His patience will allow our human trajectory? And after He comes, how will human imagination and creativity be restructured?

Written July 2013

Partnering with God in the USA

God calls us His friends, stewards and ambassadors. Therefore, it's not our arrogance that assumes the right to partner with God. Rather, it is He who grants us the humble privilege to be His laborers in His creation, kingdom and redemptive harvest. What a glorious mystery that a holy God would allow us the honor of participating in His work! And though ours is not an equal partnership with God, He has granted us partnership privileges. Or as Jesus said, "I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I have learned from My Father, I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name. This is my command, love each other." (John 15:15-17).

Below is a series of 21 questions to guide us through reflecting on our partnership with God or better stated His partnership with us as junior partners.

Question #1

What does God want to do in and through His church and kingdom during the next 25 years?

In the broadest terms, His plan is to overcome evil with good for His glory. He accomplishes this by His grace and mercy working through His Son Jesus and the empowerment of His people by His Holy Spirit (Isaiah 61:1-5; Romans 12:21).

God's primary means of overcoming evil includes overcoming evil with the humble sacrifice of His Son (Colossians 2:15) and resurrection power (Ephesians 1:20-23). This power of powerlessness based in love is counter-cultural to the human mindset.

Question #2

How is evil pervading America today?

In the broadest terms, Satan is the architect of the evil in this country and in the world. His accomplices – individuals, human systems and demons – carry out his plans (Ephesians 6:10) as they continue the rebellion begun long ago.

Question #3

What are Satan's primary schemes for the USA and how are they manifested? What spirits are at work?

A spirit of destruction

- Violence: ~16 thousand murders per year. ~400 thousand over the past 25 years
- Abortion: ~1 million per year. ~56 million since legalized in 1973.
- Euthanasia: We are at the threshold legalizing this
- Vicarious Violent Entertainment: "Blood Thirsty Thrills"

- Drugs & Alcohol: Our Illegal drug and alcohol casualties claim many

A spirit of independence (pride)

- Lawlessness: Disrespecting and defying authority
- Godlessness: God is removed from much of private and public decision-making
- Little sense of resting from work to honor God

A spirit of deception

- Relativism: "There is no absolute truth"
- Illusion vs. Reality: Virtual reality is coming into its own
- Self-help Movement: The answers are within us
- Good is often equated with pleasure; evil is minimized through tolerance
- Spiritual Pluralism and Universalism: All paths can lead to heaven

A spirit of sensuality

- Sexuality Identity: Heterosexual, homosexual and bi-sexual are all considered healthy
- Promiscuity/Adultery: Unfaithfulness is a regrettable given. Starter marriages are taking hold.
- Perversion including bestiality is beginning
- Sexual Abuse is significant: 1 out of 6 woman have been raped or victims of attempted rape
- Pornography is readily available on the Internet and TV
- Vicarious Entertainment: "movie temples"
- Sexual "goddesses" and "gods" become cultural icons (e.g. rock stars)

A spirit of materialism

- Greed: Top 1% own 40% of America's wealth
- CEO pay grew 127 faster than workers over past 30 years (2012)
- Power: Money and acquisitions are assumed to increase one's sense of power
- Consumerism helps creates needs and fills them with material goods
- National & personal debt are very high
- Wealthy and no need of God (Rev. 3:17)

A spirit of fragmentation & meaninglessness

- Loss of symbolic meanings
- Ill-formed worldview including understanding of rebellion toward God, pain in a fallen world and personal identity
- Relational tearing from meaning through the means and locations of work
- Fragmentation of extended families and communities
- A false division between sacred and secular that denies the omni-presence of God

A spirit of idolatry

- Materialism as a god
- New Age Pantheism
- Occult – Satanic worship
- Free Masonry
- Other gods & goddesses

A spirit of racism

- Racial divisions, hatred, bitterness and fear
- Unresolved centuries of racial strife

A spirit of divisiveness and brokenness

- Church divisions: relationships not reconciled and turf competitiveness
- Family Divisions

A spirit of human achievement

- Self-reliance
- Self-sufficiency
- 'Tower of Babel' mentality

A spirit of blaming

- God is harsh and distant: He's to blame
- Rampant lawsuits
- Blaming others is often preferred over taking personal responsibility

A spirit of fear

- Of losing comfort and control
- Of facing pain and shame
- Of confronting evil

A spirit of intolerance

- Tolerance toward all
- Intolerance of the One God

A spirit of unbelief

- Denial of God's historic work and His purposes and plans
- Denial of Jesus Christ as God
- Cognitive beliefs only without whole hearted commitment

A spirit of rebellion

- Since 'I' am my own lord, I am in rebellion toward the Triune God at various stages of awareness
- I am the judge of God and His Word

Question #4

In partnering with God, what are means of overcoming evil with good?

The primary weapons of our warfare are the power of divine truth clothed by and enacted in divine love and displayed through humility and the power of powerlessness. (See 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Romans 12: 21; Colossians 2:15.)

Question #5:

What truths and ways enacted through divine power and in love with humility and the power of powerlessness will overcome human, systemic and demonic evil in the U.S.

A Spirit of Destruction

The value of humans as God's image-bearers

A Spirit of Independence (pride)

Humble, loving servant leadership

Dependency / depravity orientation

A Spirit of Deception

Biblical view of knowledge

Biblical view of pain and reality

Biblical transformation model

A Spirit of Sensuality

Beauty of sexual-spirituality

Healing sexual woundedness

Restoring the family

Jealousy of God

A Spirit of Materialism

Redistribution of wealth

Re-funding of church

Worship and stewardship giving

Giving and saving

A Spirit of Fragmentation and Meaninglessness

God of order and mystery

Omnipresence of God

A Spirit of Idolatry

Creator God

God Whose Name is Jealous

A Spirit of Racism

Public repentance of racial sins

Shame based reconciliation

A Spirit of Divisiveness
Priesthood of believers
Kingdom paradigm
Humility and mercy

A Spirit of Human Achievement
Joy of utter dependency
A Spirit of Blaming
God as Jealous and omni-present
Personal responsibility

A Spirit of Fear
God as Provider and Protector
Holy Spirit as Comforter

A Spirit of Intolerance
God as Truth-Giver and Mercy

A Spirit of Unbelief
God as Rewarder and Judge

A Spirit of Rebellion
God as Judge and Redeemer

Question #6:

How does God desire to empower these truths and ways?

What functions must His people perform to enact these ways in the USA?

1. **Praying & Repenting**
 - ❖ Worship. Listen.
 - ❖ Repent. Humility. Bind the forces of darkness. Ask.
2. **Envisioning**
 - ❖ A clear definition of battlefronts and strategies tempered by love for people in opposition and a genuine humility.
3. **Researching and Articulating**
 - ❖ The new Christian paradigm needs a new Biblical worldview for the 21st century that is Biblically sound and culturally relevant.
 - ❖ A Christian viewpoint on the needs and opportunities in the USA must be articulated.
4. **Networking and Facilitating**
 - ❖ Believers need to embrace the big picture of God's kingdom.

- ❖ Develop workable models at city, state and national level.
 - ❖ Connect, affirm and protect movement leaders.
 - ❖ Keep control decentralized.
5. **Resourcing**
- ❖ Financing through worship giving.
 - ❖ Develop, catalogue and disseminate materials (from a spiritual transformation perspective) for literate, oral and visual learners.
 - ❖ Identify, train, deploy and support believers called to church and missions both in USA and worldwide.
6. **Training**
- ❖ **ALL** believers - clergy and laity - need a new paradigm of non-compartmentalized Christian living that is beholding God as a lifetime journey of spiritual transformation ... a different way of doing life.
7. **Love-Service**
- ❖ A focus on loving God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength
 - ❖ Loving both believers & non-believers
 - ❖ Loving both friends & enemies
 - ❖ Loving across ethnic, racial, economic and cultural boundaries
8. **Reporting and Evaluating**
- ❖ Progress needs assessment and mid-course modifications.
 - ❖ Meaningful reporting that both encourages and stimulates.
9. **Confronting**
- ❖ Direct confrontation, with humility, of specific societal evils

Question #7:

What basic beliefs must be held in common?

- ❖ Lausanne Covenant
- ❖ The watershed issues are the knowledge of the Triune God (especially His jealousy and omni-presence), sin with guilt and shame, Living Word of God, multiple paths to faith in Jesus Who is God and leads us to the Father, and meanings of sexuality.

Question #8:

What basic values must be held in common and promoted throughout the movement?

- ❖ Receiving God's jealous love, mercy, grace, truth and power

- ❖ Recognizing the power of the Holy Spirit to effect change in and through us
- ❖ Love for God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength
- ❖ Love for people (believers, non-believers and enemies)
- ❖ Faith in the Triune God as trustworthy and His Living Word
- ❖ Hope in eternal life in Christ
- ❖ Humility as displayed by Jesus

Question #9:

What basic behaviors must be held in common and promoted throughout the movement?

- ❖ Worship and glorify God
- ❖ Scriptures and openness
- ❖ Godly sexuality
- ❖ Integrity of the heart and behaviors
- ❖ Humility
- ❖ Correcting/restoring relationships
- ❖ Operating out of connectedness with the Holy Spirit
- ❖ Defer to others: keep kingdom perspective - all are not called to do all.
- ❖ Giving and sharing

Question #10:

At what levels do we partner with God in confronting evil with truth, love, humility and the power of powerlessness?

In the broadest terms, **all** levels because He resists evil at all levels. But specifically:

- ❖ Spiritual beings (Ephesians 6)
- ❖ Governmental levels (national, state, county, and city)
- ❖ National/regional networks and systems (unions, political parties, military, education, etc.)
- ❖ Church (national, city)
- ❖ Community groups
- ❖ Families
- ❖ Individuals
- ❖ Self

NOTE: *Not everyone will personally feel comfortable or called to all these levels, but if we don't affirm them all, we will not free believers to minister at all levels in their societies, careers, families, churches, etc.*

Question #11:

Why is national Christian inter-connectedness desirable?

- ❖ Unity of loving believers is a powerful witness for

- Jesus to the sought ones.
- ❖ Represents wise stewardship of resources.
 - ❖ National faith and efforts of believers can overcome national strongholds of evil.
 - ❖ This will help free the laity to view themselves as Christians who minister full-time in all of life: careers, families and volunteer time.

Question #12:
What can destroy/impede this movement?

Internally

- ❖ Pride among leaders: "I don't need God and/or His kingdom or others."
- ❖ Unresolved interpersonal conflicts: Placing blame. Judging worth.
- ❖ Lack of love: Fear. Distrust. Anger. Hate. Bitterness. Pride.
- ❖ Lack of faith: "God isn't big enough." Or " We/I are/am too weak."
- ❖ Lack of sexual purity: "We/ I are/am unusable to God."
- ❖ Lack of faith-works: We don't initiate works with God. He may lead us to 'will and do of His good pleasure' (Phil 2: 13).
- ❖ Lack of holiness: Unconfessed sin inhibits His working through us.
- ❖ Lack of vision: Majoring on minor points with little vision of God.

Externally

- ❖ Onslaughts of Satan
- ❖ Focused attacks on leaders and their families
- ❖ Laws directed against Christians

Question #13:
What Christian movements are currently unconnected or semi-connected in the U.S.?

- ❖ Prayer Movement
- ❖ Metro and Inner City Movement
- ❖ Missions Movement
- ❖ Racial Reconciliation Movement
- ❖ Family Movement
- ❖ Home Church Movement
- ❖ Independent Bible Church Movement
- ❖ Charismatic Movement
- ❖ Christina On-Line Dating Movement
- ❖ Kingdom Paradigm Movement
- ❖ Home Schooling Movement
- ❖ Christian School Movement
- ❖ Legal Action Movement
- ❖ Pro-Life Movement
- ❖ Men's Movement
- ❖ Social Web Networking Communities
- ❖ Others

Question #14:

What forms are needed to perform the functions in Question #6? (e.g. structures, methods, processes, prayers)

Leadership Networking Forms to provide...

- ❖ Relational connectedness among leaders
- ❖ Communication (clearinghouse) services for
 - ◆ Organizations
 - ◆ Opportunities
 - ◆ Vision
 - ◆ Values modeling (e.g. humility, love, faith, hope)
 - ◆ Materials
 - ◆ Battle line issues
 - ◆ Progress reports
- ❖ **Overall** - This form is the major player in the following functions:
 - ◆ Envisioning
 - ◆ Researching and articulating
 - ◆ Networking and facilitating
 - ◆ Resourcing

NOTE: This form must be frequently and regularly connected to the Prayer Form.

Prayer Forms to provide impetus in...

- ❖ Worshipping
- ❖ Listening
- ❖ Repenting
- ❖ Binding
- ❖ Humbling
- ❖ Asking

A Society of Influencers for Jesus

A national/international network of men and women committed to 24/7 worship of the Triune God and to bringing the goodness and the message of the Gospel of Jesus into every aspect of USA and international society.

Love-service Forms

These are as numerous and varied as God's servants. Believers must be freed and empowered to minister full-time within their careers, families, etc. We need lots of "Daniels and Deborahs".

Social Action Forms

These are numerous. Some are city specific; others are nation wide.

City-Church Forms

Within each city the church must unite to pray and love-serve.

Training Center Forms

A national network of training forms that deal with the truth and way issues in Question #5. These centers need to employ both high touch and high tech methodology to reach/train our diverse society.

Possible emphasis of centers for believers (clergy and laity):

1. *Invention, Workmanship, Work Significance Emphasis*
(i.e. Jesus, as a carpenter redeemed work.)
2. *Beauty, Sexual-Spirituality, Arts Emphasis*
3. *Holistic Spiritual Transformation & Spiritual Warfare Emphasis*
4. *Leadership Development Emphasis*
5. *Gifting-Placement Emphasis*
6. *Bible Content Emphasis*
7. *Social Justice Emphasis*
8. *Biblical World View Emphasis*

Existing Forms to Affirm

- ❖ Seminaries
- ❖ Christian Colleges
- ❖ Institutes

Distinctives of New Training Forms

- ❖ Non-formal mentoring forms
- ❖ CEU option for professionals in their field of service

Distinctives of New Training Values

- ❖ Loving God: Emphasis on personal relationship, listening, serving Him
- ❖ Kingdom orientation
- ❖ Relational orientation (vs. propositional)
- ❖ Financially accessible to most/all
- ❖ Values oriented vs. mostly belief orientation
- ❖ Mentoring emphasis
- ❖ Web based social networks

Question #15:

How do we assess this movement's efforts?

1. Faithfulness
 - ◆ To listen to God
 - ◆ To labor with God through the power of the Spirit
2. Values
 - ◆ Humility
 - ◆ Love
 - ◆ Faith

- ♦ Hope
- ♦ Power of powerlessness

3. Specific outcomes

Evaluation not just based on the number participating but also on values.

**Question #16:
What are the prayed for outcomes?**

Short-term Outcomes:

- ❖ The sought ones may come into the kingdom.
- ❖ Evil at a societal level may be abated.
- ❖ Believers, both individually and corporately, may experience God and His plan for their lives at a much deeper and richer level.
- ❖ The joy of utter obedience to the Sovereign Lord may fill believers' hearts.
- ❖ While evil may temporarily seemingly surround and pillage us, we may see good rise in our country and world.
- ❖ God may be glorified.

Long-term Outcomes:

- ❖ Jesus will ultimately overcome evil in His return.

**Question #17:
What are difficult issues for Christians impacting a nation not headed by God Himself?**

1. How can Christians justly and lovingly govern the Sought? How can they frame laws affecting beliefs, values, and behaviors, which are good and just for the Sought, as well as for believers?
2. How do Christians co-labor with "common value" groups which are not "common belief" or "common behavior" groups? For example, some environmentalists groups have many common values regarding the care of creation but their beliefs and behaviors may or may not be acceptable.
3. How do we justly fund the activities of the church in the next 25 years? Will we give out of worship? Will we distribute funds within our communities, nation and the world?

**Question #18:
Who are some of the key players in this movement?**

Not addressed at this time.

Question #19:**What are the implementation steps?**

Step 1 Pray, Listening, Visioning, and Architecting by core players
Prayer Form and Leadership Network Form leaders identified and interface.

Step 2 Recruiting, Financing
No centralized money control
Leadership Network Form requires funding

Step 3 Establish Various Regional and Internet Training Forms

Step 4 Networking Leaders and Widespread Communication

Question #20:**When and how do we disband as a unified movement?**

1. Maybe we never become a unified movement in the sovereignty of God and for our protection in the coming age of persecution.
2. When God tells us to. We must be listening.
3. Have renewable agreements—not open-end agreements.

Question #21**How does all this relate to partnering with God worldwide?****Perspectives Needed**

1. Viewing the world as the kingdom of God in conflict with the kingdom of Satan
2. Viewing the world as a family of nations (greater connectivity leads to greater deception due to human nature)
3. Viewing conviction of the Holy Spirit through guilt, shame, judgment and righteousness
4. Viewing the world through a moral capital lens: holiness, love, truth, justice, mercy, faith and humility
5. Viewing the world through desired diversity and the glory of God is to conceal a matter
6. Viewing the world through the power and truth, mercy and grace of God

Worldwide Needs

1. Worldwide prayer movement
2. Orality, Secondary Orality and Visual Storytelling
3. Shame based Gospel and discipleship

4. Holistic transformation
5. Biblical worldview for 21st Century
6. Kingdom leaders for the church
7. Godly societal leaders ministering throughout the workplaces
8. Gifted laity mobilized, equipped and released for ministry – esp. third world missions
9. Deep spirituality and listening to God (no disillusionment)
10. Cross learning from Christians in different cultures
11. Generosity, love, faith and hope
12. Biblical view and value of pain and suffering

Entering the Coming Age of the Great Spiritual War in Heaven and on Earth

1. Confront angry, impatient evil spirits
2. Spirit of “Babel” – self-reliance
3. Spirit of deception
4. Spirit of brutality – the persecution of believers
5. Spirit of open rebellion toward the Triune God
6. Direct worship of Satan and other gods
7. Moving to a one-world connectivity with much diversity and a vision of tolerance

YOUR THOUGHTS:

Written 1993, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2008, 2012

Toward a Global Strategic Agenda

The following agenda items seem to address the core problems humanity is seeking to solve at this juncture of our history. As we seek solutions as followers of Jesus, we must ask: How does the Gospel of Jesus and His Kingdom speak into these issues—one-by-one and as a whole problem set?

In this essay I will attempt to speak into the problems of identity, sustainability, diversity, complexity and meanings. And in each problem arena, we, as followers of Jesus, must see opportunities for the Kingdom of God and for us as creatures in His image.

PROBLEMS OF IDENTITY

Being and Becoming Fully Human

What does it mean to be truly human? How can we become better—more physically, mentally, socially, spiritually healthy—human beings? Given the fragmentation of modern and postmodern society, how do we become fully human?

Current discussions in the public domain have significantly omitted the topic of the soul. We are created in the image of God. He has a soul and has given us one as well. We are more than dirt molded into beings. We are God-breathed beings who can be redeemed into His image—the image of Christ becoming fully human beings with our Creator.

Unrestrained Sexual Identity and Behaviors

Can we pursuit unbounded pleasure without the historical consequences of jealousy and procreation? Can we pursue this agenda without damaging our children? Can all forms of sexual expression be redefined as healthy? Our world wants pleasure now—sexual pleasure without relational consequences.

As Christians, we believe sexuality has meanings that link us to the image of God. Not that He is sexual, but that as sexual beings we participate in the play of jealous love—and God has proclaimed His Name to be Jealous (Exodus 34:14). That said, we are called to live out our sexuality displaying the jealous heart of God to humanity. With pleasure, commitment, loyalty, delight, expectation, fulfillment—we engage is this wonderful gift of God called sexuality.

Global Citizenship

As our world shrinks, old alliances are being shaken. What is trying to emerge is a sense of global citizenship and identity. We have long existed with national identities. People form a loyalty to that which is near them—their place, their home, their people. What is now needed is a shrinking of place to provide the emotional perspective that we all first and foremost share this planet. We need a global identity; we need to become global citizens.

From a Christian perspective, this discussion must also include that our citizenship is first and foremost as citizens of the Kingdom of God. We are aliens here. This reality provides powerful fodder for persecution. We must also embrace our citizenship in society as secondary. We are to do good to all—we are global citizens as well.

PROBLEMS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable Organizing Structures

Human organization is the hallmark of civilization and progress. Without organization, we would all be left in caves without the benefits of tools created and shared among us. In our day and time, organizational sustainability is paramount to human survival. Our modern existence demands the interdependencies that organizations provide. Government and economic structures are key to the sustainability of our species. But how can we sustain our organizations in the face of such destabilizing factors as social networking and decryption of individual, corporation and state secrets by supercomputers?

As Christians, we can help sustain organizations through ethical behavior. Goodness in character provides the trust needed for organizations to sustain and thrive. Without trust, chaos will eventually ensue.

Sustainable Generations

We will pass this world to the next generation, if we don't destroy it first. Sustainable generations require socialization across generations. We must find ways to pass on what we have learned and the lessons from our failures.

This socialization occurs in homes, school, churches, media communication and dialogues with friends and foes. How will the Internet Mind change socialization forever? Has the balance of power in socialization shifted to the digital world? Will it shift further to direct machine-brain interfaces? Families must decide: How much digital input is enough or too much?

Sustainable Healthy Living

How long can a human person live productively? The hope of longevity is now driven through genome research as well as organic foods and various paradigms of medicine. The hope of offering a few a life span of 200+ years is at hand.

As Christians we embrace life and death with hope. The pursuit of eternal life in this world is not all that appealing. We prefer to be at home with Him Who as made us and called us to Himself. That said the project to extend life on earth is a worthy effort to humanity. And we must seek to make those technologies available to all, rich and poor even as we call them to an eternal hope.

Sustainable Energy

Energy is all around us. The planet, as long as the sun shines, is energy rich. The trick is to harness it an economically viable ways. Our search for sustainable energy has taken us miles beneath the ground, into the winds, exploring the motions of the oceans, splitting atoms and so forth. At some point in time, the hope is that humanity will crack the holy grail of sustainable energy.

And then what? How will sustainable energy sources impact economic and social structures? Will the fights of old continue or will abundance forever cure the human greed for more?

Followers of Jesus can joyfully engage in harnessing energy as a means of stewarding the earth—Adam and Eve's first mandate.

Sustainable Ecosystem

Can we sustain the ecosystem with relative stability? If the planet doesn't survive humanity, humanity will not survive on this planet. Doable, straightforward, scalable steps are necessary. The atmosphere and the oceans are at risk and without them we all are in peril.

We as Christians are designed to benevolently rule the earth. We are to steward it with care, compassion and wisdom. Our track record is less than stellar. That said, all our efforts to ensure a sustainable ecosystem are worthy efforts.

Sustainable Peace—Prevention of War and Poverty

Can we stop war and poverty and the link between them? The prospect of a nuclear dirty bomb going off in a city has never been greater. This would have such an avalanche impact on the world's economies and psyche. Our fragile global peace would be a dangerous peril.

A much slower and more hidden problem is systemic poverty in almost every country of the world. How we not only feed the world, but bring them up out of poverty, is a socialization issue as well as an economic and political problem.

Followers of Jesus long for world peace—and we believe at Christ's return that peace will truly be achieved. In the meantime, our efforts to ensure peace among people and nations is a natural extension of our Lord's command to love one another. Equally we should engage to eliminate poverty. This pursuit of justice will go a long way in ensure global peace.

PROBLEMS OF DIVERSITY

Harmonious Nations within a Diversity of Cultures

What is a healthy culture? How can multiple cultures live in nations in a healthy manner? Tribalism that can fuel elitism is a threat to a community of healthy nations with diverse cultures within and transcending a nation.

Christians can embrace diverse cultures and seek to build them through ethical behavior. When we demand these behaviors, we run the risk of persecution and destabilizing unhealthy nations. Sometimes that risk is needed. However, by in large, we need to seek the good and health of the nations and cultures that we called to live within as aliens.

Living with Spiritual Pluralism

How can we live with multiple religions and non-religious faiths? God is the One Who tolerates spiritual pluralism so that many can come to faith. The starting point for the Gospel is always the where a person is and spiritual pluralism is the starting point for most across the globe.

In order for Christians to not be written off as intolerant bigots, we much conclude that people can be "reasonable" and conclude something very different from us. The concept of "beyondness" provides that reasoning. And with kindness and patience God draws people to Himself. We need to not be overly defensive in our position of faith, but rather embrace people with love, goodness, beauty, and in time, truth.

Within our global plurality of spirituality, we fight wars to prove our "god" is right and that "he/she/it/they" favor us. Such fighting may only increase as fragmentation of meanings increases and our identities seek to cling to something beyond ourselves.

THE PROBLEMS OF COMPLEXITY

Decision Making for Complex Systems

Can we develop Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) to help solve complex natural and social systems using Big Data? Can AGI make better decisions than humans? AGI empowered by networks of quantum supercomputers linked to form an Internet mind is a pathway to these solutions. The race is on in earnest with Europe (mapping the brain), Canada (quantum computer) and the USA (Big Data algorithms and AGI) leading the way—and China may well be far into this process.

The issue for Christians is ethical AGI. Can we help develop a system of AGI that embraces ethics and mirrors the ethics of Scripture as it pertains across cultural divides? We need a meta-language for ethical reasoning. And we need to embed it within AGI programming on the front side of this unique human experiment to develop super-intelligent consciousness.

Science as Savior

Can science lead us into the future of humanity? Science, with the power of the human mind to solve complex problems, enhanced through artificial intelligence is the world's current best hope—and potential nightmare. Humans want control. Will we surrender control willingly or unknowingly to machines? How will that work out for us and for them?

Science is a terrible hope not because of the know gain through this process, but because the users of that knowledge are flawed and prone to evil while seeking their own advantage. Science will not save humanity. It may lessen some of humanity's suffering while increasing it through more efficient war technologies and unintended consequences of innovations.

Our only hope is in the presence of the Triune God and blessed return of Christ Jesus!

Manipulation of Time, Space and Gravity

Can we master time and space even as we have mastered the matter-energy dichotomy? As science “reveals” reality, we are unraveling the fabric of time, space and gravity—and with it altering our perception of eternity. If we control time, then we can manipulate consequences. Such is the false hope of our pursuit of mastering time-bound-space and gravity of mass.

Without a belief in eternity all meanings are altered and eventually lost. Only God is not bound by space and time. Though we may well master these basic constituents of the universe, we do not control our end-game or the universal end sequence.

PROBLEMS OF MEANINGS

Fragmentation of Meanings

Can we establish a sense of meanings as a global humanity? The hope of ever defragmenting the meaning of the human story is fading rapidly. Rather than integrating meanings into a commonly shared non-contradictory meta-story of life, we are learning to live with multiple, conflicting stories within our pluralistic global community.

Only Jesus is that integration of meaning! He is the central character in the meta-story of God. He holds all things in heaven and earth together—that is a radical story in today's times.

Ethical Goodness on New Fronts

Can we define in a fuzzy sort of way what ethical goodness is? How will we deal with ethics in bioengineering and the machine world?

Technology (from atom smashing to gene splitting) has pushed humanity to the brink of ethical insanity. If it is possible, does that make it ethical? Does controlled killing from drones weaponry make a better war—a better world? When machines make their own decisions will we approve of their ethical choices—will they care?

Religions as Optional Meanings of Consciousness

Can we override religion with a better awareness of the construct of consciousness? Spiritual pluralism can be seen as an integrated system of meanings that serve multiple consciousnesses' need for survival. Can humanity finally shed its addiction to religion and go forward with code shifting among and between various consciousness of humanity, animals, plants, machines, and universal perceptions?

The Triune God is Real, Personal, Loving and All-powerful. And He is so much more than a religion option or a Universal Conscious—He is the eternal Three-in-One Person.

Final Words

Though this agenda is necessarily inconclusive, the problems facing humanity are severe and global in their consequences. Unlike the localized problems of previous generations, the future of humanity and the ecosystem are now at stake.

We must choose well. We must trust well those we choose to decide so much for us all—be those human or machine. But ultimately we must trust and choose the Creator and Sustainer of us all—the Triune God of heaven and earth.

Written July 2013

The Mighty Clash of Kingdoms

What game are you in? The metaphor of “game of life” may be offensive to some. And yet life can be seen as a playground with players and viewers—props and adornments. A game played within boundaries and with rules and consequences.

From a Christian viewpoint, we live within the story or rather the clash between two kingdoms—the Kingdom of God overcoming the dominion of Satan. This play has a playground in heaven, one on earth and one in hell. The angelic host in heaven seems to see these three playgrounds simultaneously. We on earth are captives to this present world and only dimly perceive that heavenly play and the hellish one as well.

The clash of kingdoms is coming to a head. The God of Israel, Who promised that His Kingdom would rule heaven and earth someday, is alive and purposing His story into existence. And Satan, the first in rebellion, is raging as the end draws near and hell awaits him and the demonic host.

The Slain Lamb of Heaven, Jesus Christ Who is the Son of God, is praying for us and has sent the Holy Spirit among us. We humans are left with our limited free will to choose allegiances. Which ruler and kingdom will we serve? Who is worthy of our loyalty? Who offers us true eternal life in exchange for the temporal existence that is expiring in and around us? And as we are not worthy, who will mercifully exchange our decay for righteousness? Only Jesus can.

Play it forward before choosing. What will be the impact of willful or unknowing allegiance to Satan and his host? How will that work out for us? And what will be the impact of voluntary allegiance to the King of Kings and adoption into His kingdom? How will that play out for us for eternity?

Each of us has a choice to make. Choose which side of this mighty conflict you will play on. The default—unknowing allegiance to Satan—is not a good choice. Jesus will reign someday and He offers the only true hope beyond death and decay.

And if we choose Jesus’ Kingdom we may well suffer persecution for the dominion of Satan is not pleased. However, God Who redeems through the Cross will protect us and ultimately bring us home to the City of our God.

Written July 2103

Resources to Explore

CONNECT BIBLE STUDIES

GOD: Connecting with His Outrageous Love
IDENTITY: Becoming Who God Says I Am
SOUL: Embracing My Sexuality and Emotions
RELATIONSHIPS: Bringing Jesus into My World
LIFE: Thriving a Complex World
FREEDOM: Breaking the Power of Shame

MINI-STUDIES

The New Me
God: Can I Like Him
Finding Mercy
Relationships

IMAGE SETS

Searching the Ordinary for Meanings

BOOKS

The Shame Exchange:
Trading Shame for God's Mercy and Freedom
Worth a Thousand Words:
The Power of Images to Transform Hearts

INVENTORIES

Breakthru: Discovering My Spiritual Gifts
Breakthru: Discovering My Primary Roles
Personal Image Profile

For the above and additional resources see:

http://www.leadersandinfluencers.com/Store_P4UF.html

About the Authors

Ralph and Jennifer Ennis have served with The Navigators since 1975. They have ministered at Princeton University, Richmond Community, Glen Eyrie Leadership Development Institute, The CoMission in Russia, and in Raleigh, NC. In 2006 Jennifer co-founded JourneyMates, a ministry to help people grow in intimacy with the Triune God through Scripture, silence and solitude.

Unless otherwise noted, the essays of the WB Series have been written by Ralph. However, each work was crafted in the context our marriage relationship and with the editorial benefit of Jen's perspectives and unique abilities.

In 2013 Ralph and Jennifer celebrated 40 years of marriage. They have four married children and thirteen+ grandchildren.



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