

Jesus' Gospel of Essential Justice

The Human Order from Creation through Complete Salvation

T. Dave Matsuo

©2018 TDM All rights reserved

No part of this manuscript may be reprinted without permission from the author

Contact:

www.4X12.org

tdavematsuo@4X12.org

Contents

<u>Ch 1 The Sentinels of Human Life.....</u>	1
Getting Right to the Core	1
The Alternatives for Getting to the Core	4
Human Theories of Human Order	5
The “Holy Debate”	8
Transposing the Heart of the Gospel	9
Getting <i>Right</i> the Heart of Our Theology and Practice	12
<u>Ch 2 The Heart of Human Life & the Human Condition.....</u>	15
The Integral Heart of Human Life	15
The Heart of Creation	17
The Fragmentary Heart of the Human Condition	24
The Theological Anthropology Essential for Justice	29
<u>Ch 3 The Whole Transition to Justice.....</u>	37
Fragments of Justice	38
Relativism of Authority and Its Rule of Law	40
“I never knew you”	43
The Illusions of Righteousness, Peace and Justice	46
The “New” Normal	47
Completing the Transition to Justice	48
The Ongoing Fight in the Critical Battle	52
<u>Ch 4 The Bad News of the Gospel.....</u>	55
The Injustice of Tradition	56
The Integrating Dynamic of <i>Just-nection</i>	58
The Shame of the Status Quo	60
Shepherds of Inequality & Enablers of Injustice	65
The Embracing Church without Distinctions & Inequality	69

<u>Ch 5 The <i>Uncommon</i> Good of the Gospel</u>	77
Falling into the Common Good	78
Conventional Change or Redemptive Change	81
Premature Justice and Immature Peace	87
The Justice of Love	91
Default Love	94
Benign Injustice Common-izing Peace	97
<u>Ch 6 Proclaiming Jesus' Gospel</u>	101
The Truth of His Gospel versus Our Gospel	102
The Evangelism of Justice	104
The Being-Making Disciples Equation	107
The Nature and Culture of Gospel Faith	109
Face to Face Justice	115
<u>Ch 7 The Consecrated for Whole-ly Justice and Peace</u>	119
Consecrated in the Trinity's Image & Likeness	121
The Simplification of Uncompromising Change	125
Progressive, Non-progressive, or Radical	128
The Spirit of New Life Together	131
Glossary of Key Terms	137
Scripture Index (Primary Source)	143
Bibliography (Secondary Source)	145

Chapter 1 The Sentinels of Human Life

So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house, *people and kingdom of God*; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.

Ezekiel 33:7¹

Today, we are witnessing—more visibly through global media than ever before in human history—the reality that we live in divisive, fragmented and broken contexts of everyday life. How we adapt to this pervasive experience is one issue we all face. More important is the challenging issue of what all Christians need to do about it beyond merely adapting.

All of you have experiences (personal and/or family) with being wronged, treated unfairly, or simply relegated to less-than-just conditions. Or, at least, all of you have knowledge of others and such sociocultural contexts that experience these consequences, including all dimensions of human life at all its levels. Rather than my bringing up examples of these experiences, I encourage you to draw from your particular experience and knowledge in order to ongoingly relate the following discussion to your specific contexts of everyday life.

This study encompasses dimensions and levels of human life, the nature of which necessitate changes in existing conditions and practices. To embrace such change requires action on our part—specific action first to the particular contexts of our experience and knowledge, and then, hopefully, further action embracing the general contexts of others in all of human life.

As Christians, how we live in everyday life is challenged to act both congruent to God’s creation and compatible with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The heart of creation and the gospel may in reality be incongruent to how we live and may in fact be incompatible with the gospel we claim and proclaim. We are challenged to listen carefully to the communication of God’s words, which converge in the Word’s gospel, because all Christians have been established as the sentinels of human life. And if we don’t live in the world as distinguished sentinels, God holds us accountable for the wrongs in the human condition and the unjust actions by others (Eze 33:7-9). Therefore, as God’s words unfold in this crucial discussion, listen and act (cf. Isa 52:7-8; 56:10; 62:6).

Getting Right to the Core

Your experiences and knowledge of others’ unjust action are not abstractions; nor do they represent concepts and ideas. They reflect the existing reality of human life in the facts of its inescapable condition. As our existing reality, we are responsible to address

¹ Unless indicated differently, all Scripture quoted are from the NRSV; any italics in the Scripture quoted throughout this study signify emphasis or further rendering of terms.

this human condition not with an idealism (biblical or otherwise) but to act in human life right to its core. That requires us to go beyond the material aspects of life, deeper than the intellectual, and necessitates us to encompass the breadth and depth of life further than merely the spiritual, in order to get right to the heart of the (our) human condition and to get *right* the heart of all life. Getting right to this heart is the purpose of this study and getting *right*—the correct design and order of life as created only by God—this heart is its only outcome of significance; and anything less and any substitutes are insufficient to serve its purpose and inadequate to fulfill its outcome.

In the everyday reality of life, all human persons are faced with basic questions that we, consciously or subconsciously, have to take account of in one way or another. These basic questions define our identity and determine our everyday life, and they include: What is my background? Where did I come from? What am I doing here; and where am I going? Christians notably make assumptions about these questions, and thus we often allow surrounding influences to shape the answers defining our real (not ideal) identity and determining our actual (not virtual) practice. Yet, if we are to distinguish our everyday life from our above experiences and knowledge of others, then we need better answers to get us right to the core of these questions and the heart of their answers. Even philosophers, theologians and scientists must account for their everyday lives beyond the limits of their disciplines and further than the constraints of their thinking and practice.

Yet, the limits and constraints to which all of us are subject in our human condition are not readily recognized or usually acknowledged. This makes it essential for us to make our persons vulnerable in how we think and what we practice. That is, we have to relinquish control of how we commonly think and what primarily determines our practice, in order to get right to the core of these questions and to the heart of their answers. Being vulnerable with our persons is not an option but the only door that opens to our whole person, and that unfolds the path to the wholeness of human life.

Human life encompasses all persons, whatever their immediate background and current distinction (e.g. based on culture, race, class, gender, abilities or resources), in the breadth and depth of the human order. In the scope of the human order (whether perceived vertically or horizontally), each person needs to have a purpose and desires to have a satisfying life. The purpose and satisfaction for persons, however, are elusive when the human order has an ambiguous breadth and vague depth—that is, an order not constructed at its heart. Without definitive answers of everyday significance to our questions, the common distinctions of human construction borne (voluntarily or imposed) by persons in a specific human order thereby define their identity and what place they have in that human order (from the biological family to the cultural community to society-at-large and then to all of humanity). Bearing these common distinctions—inevitably forged in the human comparative process—determines the extent of their everyday lives and the level of satisfaction available for their life. Regardless of the value-level of distinctions in any human order, everyday life for all persons strains when it doesn't get right to the heart of its background and where it came from; and all human life suffers when its human order doesn't get *right* what it's doing here and where it's going.

Getting right to the heart of everyday life involves unavoidably getting right to the heart of our human condition—the condition initially witnessed in those experiences and knowledge of others. Yet, the extent of our exposure to our shared human condition will be determined by how vulnerable we become; otherwise how we see the human condition will be skewed and rendered by our biases. Without filtering, minimalizing or denying the consequences of this condition, our vulnerability leaves us open to clarification and correction about our human condition, namely from listening to God’s words, which may call for us to make necessary changes. We will neither be open to clarification and correction nor make changes without being vulnerable with our person. Moreover, getting *right* the heart of all life involves unmistakably getting *right* the source of all life and getting *right* the source’s order for all human life. When you examine your experiences and knowledge of others and consider what is wrong, unfair and unjust, we don’t get to the heart of this understanding unless we get *right* the true source of life and its essential whole human order. This is not an academic exercise but the basic process of life needed to live in wholeness and not in any reduced condition.

Getting right to the heart of everyday life and getting *right* the heart of all life are vulnerable processes that challenge who, what and how we are in life, which by necessity also involves facing where we are in our thinking and everyday beliefs. These heuristic explorations point to two historical contexts in the background of all persons—contexts which are mainly understood in a general way, as common knowledge that not all persons accept. Lack of consensus has been consequential for the human order. Even in the presence of consensus, however, the human order has suffered from the lacks in those composing the consensus. Hence, the need to face where we are in our thinking and not our ideals but our everyday beliefs.

This common knowledge tells us where we came from, what our make-up is, and how our human development has formed. These two historical realities are (1) the creation of life and (2) the formation of the human condition by the dynamics of reductionism—a condition commonly composed by the inadequate perceptions and misperceptions of sin. When understood only as common knowledge or perceived merely as doctrine, these historical realities are not accounted for in their full significance—often becoming only virtual realities in our everyday beliefs, perhaps becoming insignificant in our thinking. Their full significance, however, is essential to understand because they are irreplaceable to define our whole identity and to determine the wholeness for our everyday life. Getting right to the core issue: Without the essential understanding of creation and the human condition (to be discussed in the next chap.), human persons cannot adequately explain what we are doing in life and where our life is going.

Right at the very heart, even most Christians do not sufficiently understand the breadth and depth of God’s creation and of our human condition of sin as reductionism.² Therefore, other than general statements of doctrine, Christians typically are unable to define their full identity and determine the wholeness of their everyday life. And if Christians are unable to account for this essential breadth and depth, how can we expect the rest of human life to know and understand *what* is basic to *who* they are and essential for *how* to live every day?

² Jonathan R. Wilson presents a critical discussion on the consequences of neglecting creation in *God’s Good World: Reclaiming the Doctrine of Creation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

As you reflect on your experiences and knowledge of others, does it become apparent why God established you to be the sentinels of human life? As you consider your action as a sentinel throughout this study, I pray for your conviction about why God holds you accountable to be the sentinel of his words for the breadth and depth of creation, the human condition, and the human order for all persons, peoples and nations. Nothing less and no substitutes can fulfill the function of God's sentinels.

The Alternatives for Getting to the Core

In the spectrum of human life, who is good and who is bad? Who is considered better and who is considered less? Who is deemed right and who is deemed wrong? A survey of the human population would certainly yield a diverse definition of who they are. This would be expected in the global community; but a similar diversity of definitions also could be found in the Christian community. In the scope of the human order, *who* is easily replaced by *what*, since persons are objectified and thereby de-personed from their nature as subjects—rendered no longer in their created integrity. In the function of everyday life, alternatives have emerged and unfolded that have distorted, blocked or replaced what it means to be a person, what is primary for persons together, and how those persons and relationships need to be ordered. This includes alternatives promoted to serve optimal human function and the common good.

Most persons rarely get to the core of where they came from, and this includes Christians. Their background usually encompasses no more than a family tree. Yet, consciously or not, they make assumptions about their core—assuming answers to those basic questions with alternatives influenced by other sources (such as culture, philosophy, science and other worldviews). The competition to have this influence has been strong—notably emerging from ancient Greek philosophy and the Enlightenment of modernity—gaining a widespread influence with rationalized and objectified measures that are appealing if not seductive. Christians have not been immune from this influence and have become relegated essentially to a theological fog enveloping these basic questions of human life. We, first and foremost in our everyday life, need clarification and correction for our thinking and practice, which again requires our person to be vulnerable and open to feedback, if not pushback.

From no other source is the heart of human life and its order distinguished than from the Creator of life. Creation is the definitive context where all persons get their essential anthropology defining the identity of who and what they are in general, and where all Christians need to get our essential theological anthropology defining and determining who, what and how we are in particular.³ Furthermore, when not diminished, distorted or discounted, the historical formation of the human condition is the inescapable context where we get to the core of human disorder in general and where we need to get our complete view of sin in particular.⁴

³ I discuss theological anthropology more fully in *The Person in Complete Context: The Whole of Theological Anthropology Distinguished* (Theological Anthropology Study, 2014). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

⁴ I discuss the human condition in greater detail in my various studies listed in the bibliography.

Without fully understanding these pivotal contexts, we shape our anthropology and view of sin in reduced and fragmented human terms. The resulting interrelated shape then only reflects, reinforces or sustains the human condition. This subtle consequence is common to human life and is prevailing in human life, because underlying the human condition is a competing source, Satan. This is another source even more disputed, including by Christians, which this source promotes by design to divert attention with more appealing, compelling and seductive alternatives disguised in “positive terms” that mislead us from the existing realities of everyday life.⁵ In a not-too-apparent real sense in today’s world, we can say that Satan promotes virtual reality and augmented reality for everyday life, and also perpetuates artificial intelligence to embed us in illusion, delusions, and anything less and any substitutes of the wholeness of creation. Yet, in logical thinking, if not always appearing reasonable, this is what to expect from the Creator’s competition.

As we initially focus on the pervasive alternative for getting to the core, let me further get right to the penetrating point in this study and thus to the heart of my concern and purpose: A lack of justice pervades the earth and prevails in human life. I say “lack of justice” rather than “injustice” because what is perceived as injustice neither encompasses the breadth nor gets to the depth of justice as defined and determined by Creator God in the beginning. This lack of justice prevails even among Christians and not just other persons and peoples in human life, and it exists even in the church and not just other nations.

Stated simply without apology: We (individually and collectively) have yet to get *right* the heart of all life, and therefore still strain to get right to the heart of our human condition. Consequently, the virtual reality is that many Christians live a life of injustice under the assumption that they are ‘just in Christ’, when in *unaugmented* reality they have claimed an incomplete, revised or fake gospel in subtle contrast or contradiction to the whole gospel embodied, enacted and fulfilled by Jesus, the whole person in one wholeness as the Trinity. Herein is the gospel of essential justice that constitutes the human order from creation through complete salvation.

Human Theories of Human Order

The narrative of human life has been composed with variations of fact and/or fiction, ongoingly revised with optimism or pessimism, rendering plausible or implausible our prospects in life. Whatever narrative is embraced has far-reaching implications for all human life and immediate consequences for everyday life. Human life, in every narrative, comes with the infrastructure of a human order, which inescapably defines the identity of those persons in that order and inevitably determines their function by that order. The outcome can be good news or bad news, but the outcome is unavoidable for those occupying that human order of life. This raises the critical issue and vital question:

⁵ Richard Beck rightfully restores the attention of Christians to Satan in *Reviving Old Scratch: Demons and the Devil for Doubters and the Disenchanted* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016).

What is the specific (not ideal) human order under which you live life; and are you aware of the reality of this order defining your identity and understanding of the reality of how it determines your function?

If your experiences and knowledge of others haven't already informed you, whether we as Christians face it or not, the realities of the world shape the reality of our everyday life. How and when we react to or act on this reality will depend on the underlying basis that defines who and what we are and that determines how we are. Therefore, recognized or not, realities of the world challenge the reality of our life, and without an integral basis these realities will shape that reality and control the outcome of our everyday life.

We have to examine our background more deeply in order to understand how it has formed life as we experience today. Hopefully then, we will also understand how human life has been *deformed*, fragmenting who, what and how persons are. Throughout human history the defining order of human life has been perceived in various ways. In simple summary:

In the past and the present, or for the future, human order has been conceived by human theories, the practice of which at their core have not proven either to have deep significance for human life or to fulfill an order that meets the needs (not necessarily the desires) essential for human life.

What must be learned from what amounts to human experiments cannot elude our understanding:

What is essential for human life does not emerge from a theory, whatever its human source, but can be understood only from a full knowledge of human life. Any theories based on a limited knowledge (its epistemic field) cannot and do not grasp what is essential. Without this whole understanding, human theories can only make assumptions (plausible or not) about human order; and, where applied, such theories can only construct incomplete, insignificant or false human orders, the formation of which reduce human life to a fragmentary human condition needing at its heart to be made whole.

This theoretical process, experimentation and outcome are not a modern phenomenon and development. So-called human progress was proposed from the beginning (as in Gen 3:4-5) and has evolved ongoingly since ancient history—conceiving human order by prevailing human theories. One of our initial glimpses of this history emerged in Shinar (Babylonia), wherein the people wanted to build a city with a central tower of immense proportion never before seen by human eyes. This tower was constructed with the theory that this would establish a world order to unify all human life. The intention would appear good, but their theory was unfounded and thus their efforts ill-conceived. To clarify and correct human life, God intervened to expose their false assumptions and the hubris of their self-determination to construct the human order without a full knowledge of human life, and thus without understanding what is essential for its wholeness (the heart of human unity, Gen 11:1-9). God's intervention is crucial for

us to understand in this human experiment, demonstrating the integral purpose and concern of God’s ongoing presence and involvement in human life for its essential human order; and God’s communication clarifying and correcting this human theory is vital for us to take God’s words to heart.

The construction of the tower of Babel reflects two critical errors, which continue to be reinforced and sustained to the present day: (1) they underestimated the depth of the human condition, and then, logically following, (2) they overestimated the value of human effort.

Comparable human effort has been repeated through human history—failing to learn from human experiments—with refined variations of theories for human order still based on a lack of knowledge and understanding of human life. One example in church history was the construction of Christendom by Constantine in the fourth century, the remnants of which continue to shape various Christians efforts today for U.S. nationalism. This lack is consistently unrecognized, if not denied. This cycle has recurred within modern science and also among Christians with good intentions for the common good. And the cycle will continue as long as this lack of knowledge and understanding of human life is the basis for human theory, which in fact is the nature of human theory. Accordingly, the change essential for the basic order of human life will remain elusive, and thus all our effort will continue to be determined without deep significance for the human condition.

Hope for pivotal change, however, is not lost, although it requires a change first in our approach to the needs of human life into their full context, as well as how we perceive the human condition in its full context. Entering their full contexts requires our vulnerability to have our thinking corrected from our assumptions and our perceptual lens clarified from our biases. Then, without the dominant influence from the assumptions of our theories and our biases, as we openly examine the full knowledge of human life and increasingly gain its whole understanding, we can start to conceive *right* the change necessary for the order essential to all human life. An integral dimension emerges in this conclusion: **Any and all existing orders of human life will not be changed (i.e. transformed) until what exists in its full context is redeemed from the human condition.** As the full knowledge of human life reveals conclusively, redemption is the indispensable process for this pivotal change and is the irreplaceable means for the order essential to all human life.

To reemphasize, this pivotal change requires first a change in our approach to human life and the human condition—a paradigm shift at the core. Perhaps this change in our approach is analogous to a change occurring in modern science. The norm for scientists has been to formulate a hypothesis and then gather data to see if they can prove it wrong—the conventional scientific method. Today, however, a change in approach has emerged. Applied mathematician and statistician Emmanuel Jean Candes—who just won a MacArthur Foundation “genius” grant—informs us of this change. Researchers now typically reverse the above two steps. They first gather large data sets and then try to pinpoint their truly meaningful relationships. He concludes: “The way we conduct science has changed a lot...we need to rewrite statistical theory so that it is adapted to this big data world, where we collect data first and then we ask questions later.”⁶

⁶ Quoted in “Science File” by Amina Khan, *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 2017, B2.

The same must be said for theological theory, the task of which needs to be based on biblical data (i.e. God’s words) collected first and then pinpointing their truly meaningful relationships.⁷ This must be our approach to knowing and understanding human life, its essential order, and the change necessary to fulfill this irreducible and nonnegotiable human order for all of life.

The “Holy Debate”

We cannot be the sentinels of God’s words for human life if we have not carefully listened to God’s words and remain in ongoing communication with the Spirit in relationship together (as in 1 Cor 2:9-13; Jn 16:13-15). The alternative, of course, is to speak for God, which we often subtly engage in with our assumptions and bias rather than rightfully letting God speak for himself. This signifies the human voice of “holy debate,” which is heard in the narrative of Job—and commonly heard among Christians, notably in the academy—about human perception of God and the theories that emerge about human order. Such views are expressed and the one with the most convincing voice tends to be elevated with the most influence in this competition, whether its basis has significance or not. Job, for example, admitted his lack of knowledge about God (see Job 23:1-9), yet he still continued in this “holy debate” with his friends also speaking for God; his speaking was based clearly on what was Job’s theory, though many may call it using the euphemism ‘faith’. Fortunately for Job, God also entered this common debate to speak for himself, whereby Job was clarified, corrected and convicted about God’s uncommon relational context and process that communicates the full knowledge and whole understanding of God’s words (Job 38:1ff; 42:1-5).

How often do you, or do you hear others, engage this alternative to speak for God? The “holy debate” pervades all Christian contexts today, notably among evangelicals, conservatives and fundamentalists. It prevails when our theories displace God’s voice and thus lack the full knowledge and whole understanding from God’s words. The theological task has been populated by those (pre)occupied with getting a voice in the church and/or academy, and having their voice heard, recognized and even followed as “one who speaks for God.” Consequently, the significance of the theological task has consistently been obscured in a theological fog of its own making.⁸

Yet, at whatever level of Christian practice, our theology (explicit or implied) and its assumptions and bias are challenged, if not confronted even though God may not have intervened as above. If our theology and practice don’t emerge and flow from the breadth and depth of the biblical data (again, the primacy of God’s words and not secondary details) and their relationships—moreover, not selective data to support our theology (i.e. theories)—then our practice will not have the significance to change the human condition and make whole the essential order of human life. In other words—words contrary to God’s—we will not claim and proclaim Jesus’ gospel of justice essential for our creation and salvation; therefore, until we do, we will not and cannot get them *right*.

⁷ Nicholas P. Wolterstorff adjusted his theory of justice after further experience and knowledge of others in unjust contexts, yet with his assumptions of Scripture still in place, in *Journey toward Justice: Personal Encounters in the Global South* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

⁸ I discuss the theological task in-depth in “*Did God Really Say That?*” *Theology in the Age of Reductionism* (Theology Study, 2013). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

Transposing the Heart of the Gospel

The heart of the gospel is God's relational response of grace to the human condition. The whole gospel is not merely a gift consumed for human life but the heart of God's vulnerable presence in the human context and relational involvement in the depth of human life. The relational outcome of God's vulnerable relational response is salvation, whose good news is composed not only by redemption from our human condition but inseparably includes the new creation of human life and its essential order. This outcome, however, is only a *relational* outcome emerging directly just from the relational response of God's vulnerable presence and intimate relational involvement with those claiming this gospel.

In the heart of the gospel the heart of God engages the heart of the human condition and makes connection with the heart of human life—that is, relational connection in the depth of the primacy of relationship together, vulnerably heart to heart and thereby intimately face to face (as Paul made definitive, 2 Cor 4:4,6, and conclusive, 3:18; 5:17). Remember Moses' request to YHWH, "Show me your glory" (Ex 33:18). He never could have imagined how deep the heart of the gospel would unfold to reveal the heart of God, even though his reciprocal involvement with YHWH was face to face (Num 12:8).

When the heart of the gospel is transposed, the good news is revised and its outcome is incomplete, fragmentary or simply lost in insignificance, perhaps consigned to fake news. Consider what happens when God's grace is idealized by doctrine, rendered a concept by theological theory, or commodified by our prevailing assumptions and consumed by our common bias—the ultimate gift of grace with no strings attached:

First, the heart of God becomes elusive because the relational context of God's presence and the relational process of God's involvement have been transposed from their relational primacy by secondary matters such as above (cf. Job 23:8-9 and 42:4-5). Next, with the heart of God's presence no longer defining and God's involvement no longer determining for the gospel, its whole relational outcome is deconstructed and salvation is reconfigured, typically by merely being saved from sin (with a limited view of sin) without its essential outcome of being saved to the new creation of human life and its essential order. Then, with the heart of the gospel transposed by secondary assumptions and biases, the "holy debate" amplifies the voices of anything-less-and-any-substitutes in order to formulate theories for a gospel plausible for salvation, and to construct theories plausible for the church and its mission.

What happens from here, I pray, will be the intervention of the Spirit's vulnerable presence and relational involvement for our clarification, correction and conviction.

The whole gospel at its heart is constituted by who, what and how the Word reveals, speaking for himself (as Paul clarified and contrasted, 2 Cor 4:2,5). In contrast and conflict, the truth of the gospel is not composed by sources of anything less and any substitutes speaking for the Word. Contrary to common assumption, *sola Scriptura*

(Scripture alone) doesn't automatically encompass the Word's self-disclosures and related revelations, because the authority ascribed to *sola Scriptura* is not based completely on the Word but our selective bias and interpretation of Scripture. Therefore, as Jesus clarified about listening carefully to the Word (Mk 4:24, cf. Lk 8:18), we need to take his words as paradigmatic for our theology and practice: **The Scripture we use is the gospel we get; and this gospel we use will be the outcome we get for the human condition and thus for human life.**

What gospel do you use or do you see used by the church? Does that gospel go beyond yourself as an individual; does it embrace the church in the primacy of relationship together for new human life and encompass the church's mission in the breadth and depth of the human condition? That is to say unequivocally, does that gospel embrace the vulnerable presence and intimate relational involvement of the whole of God, the Trinity, and encompass the heart of the Trinity's relational response to make whole our human condition with the new creation of human life and its essential order? A gospel of anything less and any substitutes transposes the heart of the gospel that Jesus embodied and enacted *whole-ly*. 'Whole-ly' integrates whole and holy (set apart from the common and distinguished by the uncommon), whose integral integrity we commonly have revised, fragmented and conflated with our common terms speaking for the Word and shaping his gospel to fit into our assumptions and biases.

To keep this issue of transposing in perspective, the issue about Scripture is not about knowing all the content of the Bible, though that content is necessary and irreplaceable. Contrary to common practice, the issue is this:

If we carefully listen to the Word and truly understand the words of Scripture, at whatever level of content we know, then this understanding only has significance as integrally living the life and relationship of that content in our everyday life, in the church, and in the world—that is, living in relationship together with God the vulnerable life and intimate relationship that Jesus embodied and enacted to make whole our human condition in the image and likeness of the Trinity, whereby human life emerges and its essential order unfolds in the new creation (as Paul made definitive and conclusive above, and adds in Col 3:10-11).

Lacking this whole understanding was the key issue that Jesus experienced in his earthly encounters with those who knew extensively the content of the Scriptures (see Jn 5:39-40, cf. Jn 3:10; Mt 22:23,29). And this condition remains the key issue among contemporary church leaders and academics, just as Jesus' first disciples lacked the understanding of integrating the parts of the Word to see the whole picture (*syniemi*, Mk 8:17-18). For this reason, Paul made having whole understanding (*synesis*)⁹ essential for

⁹ Hebrew and Greek word studies used in this study are taken from the following sources: Horst Balz, Gerhard Schneider, eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990); Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975); R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce Waitke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980); Ernst Jenni, Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. Mark E. Biddle, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997); Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); Harold K. Moulton, ed., *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978); W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (New

all Christians, especially in order to be distinguished in our theology and practice from the influence of subtle and seductive alternatives pervading our surrounding contexts (Col 2:2-4).

The salvation of the gospel is indeed good news but only for the whole relational outcome constituted by the relational response of Jesus' whole person, not merely his teachings and acts. The person of Jesus encompassed the Trinity, who is vulnerably present and relationally involved for this new life and its *right* order of relationship together in wholeness according to the Trinity's likeness.¹⁰ The truth of the gospel is experiential truth of this Truth (as embodied in Jn 14:6), who cannot be constrained to the limits of propositional truth in referential terms. Thus this gospel is composed integrally only by the improbable trajectory of the Trinity's relational context and the intrusive relational path of the Trinity's relational process. This integral trinitarian relational context and process, underlying the heart of the incarnation, means definitively that the whole gospel is composed by the Trinity's relational language (not our common referential language). Relational language requires that the gospel and its outcome can only be interpreted correctly in relational terms, in order to fully understand the Word and thereby to receive the relational reality of the gospel.¹¹ Without this relational hermeneutical key, the language of the gospel is transposed to a diversity of dialects. And even critical studies or perhaps a modern interpretive algorithm will not uncover the heart of the gospel.

God's presence is not discovered and God's involvement is not experienced in anything less than and in any substitutes for relational terms. God's presence, for example, eluded Job because he looked for God's involvement in circumstances and not in relationship (as in Job 23:8-9). This circumstantial perception of God has been the pervasive, if not prevailing, practice among God's people throughout history, starting with the OT. Such reduced perception then necessitates relying on their assumptions and biases to maintain their faith in God—transposing faith into a virtual reality more often than not. The outcome of God's presence was transformed to a relational reality for Job when he vulnerably engaged God in relational terms (as in Job 42:3-6).

At the heart of the gospel is the vulnerable presence of the Trinity extended in relational response directly to us face to face, for only this whole relational outcome. To interpret, claim and proclaim the relational reality of this gospel with anything less and any substitutes hereby reduce knowing relationally the whole of God (not the content of Scripture). This relational outcome is precluded in spite of our boasts of theological knowledge and resources (see Jer 9:23-24). The subtle distinction of this lack reduces understanding the whole depth of the Trinity's relational response constituting the gospel, and consequently reduces experiencing its whole relational outcome for human life and its order to be whole.

Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1981); Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible* (Chattanooga: AMG Publ., 1996).

¹⁰ The Trinity and the wholeness for human life are integrally discussed in my study *The Face of the Trinity: The Trinitarian Essential for the Whole of God and Life* (Trinity Study, 2016). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

¹¹ There is broader discussion of this gospel found in my related study *The Gospel of Transformation: Distinguishing the Discipleship and Ecclesiology Integral to Salvation* (Transformation Study, 2015). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

Therefore, this good news emerges whole-ly only when the Word of God speaks for himself. Our theological theories, lacking whole understanding to determine our practice with significance, then intentionally or inadvertently speak for God to transpose the heart of the gospel. Like Job, “I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful [distinguished uncommon from the common] for me to know” (Job 42:3). Rather than deferring to God speaking in relational language and vulnerably responding to the Trinity on those relational terms, we typically prioritize our theological theories (as Job did, Job 38:2) over God’s relational communication. In this often subtle shift, our priority imposes our referential terms on God and redefines our relationship together to our shaping and determination. In this distinct yet shrouded process, the human order of justice and peace are also redefined by our reduced or fragmentary terms, with the relational consequence of not truly having significance in reality to bring the change necessary for our relational condition in the church and in the human relational condition of the world to be made whole—whole and uncommon (whole-ly) in likeness of the Trinity.

Getting *Right* the Heart of Our Theology and Practice

The lack of justice certainly has been the defining condition of the human order of life, past and present—and future if redemptive change doesn’t unfold in our efforts for justice. Not surprisingly, though arguably, current efforts for justice haven’t gotten it *right* to be of significance for the heart of the human condition. However well-meaning, the work of justice and peace—currently referred to as “kingdom work”—has lacked the significance to impact the human condition with redemptive change, in which the old order is not only deconstructed but the new order is constructed—not theoretically or ideally but at the heart of the human condition in everyday life.

For example, for over the past fifty years the movement to end racism in the U.S. has had to face the existing reality that racism is alive and well in the U.S. This effort demonstrates its lack of justice to get *right* what is essential to the human order, since it has failed to bring change to the heart of the human condition. Consider further the more basic issue of gender inequality. I say more basic than racism because gender inequality existed implicitly even among African Americans in the civil rights movement. The reality is that gender discrimination exists not only between races but also within a race and a culture. Since the women’s suffrage movement in the nineteenth century, how far has gender equality progressed in the U.S.? With increasing revelation about the explicit disparity in wages between genders and the implicit bias against women in the working world, with further documentation about the assumed roles designated in families and child rearing responsibility, not to mention the growing exposure about the ambivalent attitudes ignoring, reinforcing or sustaining sexual misconduct and abuse, all demonstrate the lack of justice in the human order and our pervasive tolerance of such disorder in everyday life—with Christians often at the center of such practice. So, what then can be said about the impact made by most of these efforts for justice and peace?

Ironically, if we account for the existing order beyond our hopeful assumptions and biases, likely the reality will emerge that our practices may simply reflect our own human condition, and thereby unknowingly reinforce the existing human condition, and

even inadvertently sustain the human condition for all life. The undeniable reality is that getting *right* the human condition has been a formidable problem at the very least. Inexcusably, to put it mildly, this problem is compounded for God's sentinels of human life, when we don't have *right* the heart of our theology and practice.¹²

To proceed in this study it is unavoidable for us to be vulnerable about what defines our theology and thus vulnerable about what determines our practice. We need to be vulnerable because the following discussion will likely clarify and correct our theology and practice, and inevitably challenge who, what and how we are—all at the heart in order to be *right* integrally according to both God's creation and salvation *to* the new creation of human life and its essential order. Perhaps this warning should be issued:

Caution!!! What follows will be hazardous to your common life and the status (quo) of your everyday living, whether at church or in the world.

At this stage, we are faced with the pivotal point and definitive issue in our own faith, which will test our assumptions and confront our biases:

Without equivocation of Jesus' words in Mark 4:24 and recourse to the limits of our awareness, it is axiomatic in our theology and practice that

1. the measure of the Word we use is the measure of the gospel we get,
2. the gospel we use is the measure of salvation we get,
3. the salvation we use is the measure of human life and order we get,
4. and the life and order we use are the measure of justice we get and the peace we experience.

Nothing more emerges from these outcomes, regardless of our ideals, values and desires, our expectations and hopes. What Jesus made paradigmatic is both definitive for our theology and determinative for our practice; and we cannot appeal to our ignorance of the truth.

For this reason and purpose, the basic questions raised at the beginning of this chapter are critical for us to provide core answers to, in order for our identity integrally to define the whole of who and what we are as well as to determine the wholeness of how we are in everyday life. In whole-ly words, this is essential (1) for our identity to be distinguished whole and uncommon from the common of human life and (2) for our function to be distinguished whole and uncommon in our everyday life from the fragmentary existence of the human condition. Nothing less and no substitutes can distinguish us, or else the heart of our identity and everyday life will not be *right*. Moreover, anything less and any substitutes cannot fulfill the whole-ly function of God's sentinels for human life.

Directly implied in these basic questions are questions of accountability that are inescapable for all God's people:

¹² Scot McKnight raises these issues for those engaged in so-called kingdom work and those in church mission in *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014).

“What are you doing and have done with my words?” (as in Gen 3:9)

“Why haven’t you acted to change the human order for the sake of wholeness of human life?” (as in 1 Kg 19:9-13)

Listen to the Word and act, you sentinels of human life—live distinguished as those who know and understand God at the heart, and therefore are distinguished uncommon from the common human order subtly defining the identity and determining the everyday practice of even many Christians (based on the contrast in Jer 9:23-24).

Chapter 2 The Heart of Human Life & the Human Condition

In the beginning was the Word. John 1:1

Then God said, “Let us make humankind according to *who, what and how* we are.”
Genesis 1:26

“Did God *really* say *that*?” Genesis 3:1

I recently saw a comic strip called “Half Full.” The image was cute: a mama and papa bear were tucked in a bed to go to sleep; the papa bear, however, was preoccupied, staring into a smartphone held in his paws. The message in this cartoon was profound: the mama bear tells the papa bear pointedly, “If you don’t put that thing away, we’ll never hibernate.”¹ Bears hibernate as a rule; it is in their nature and their natural way of life. And papa bear’s odd practice intrudes on their nature and interferes with their natural order. Indeed, mama bear got *right* their full identity and what needs to be “put away” for them to function *right* accordingly.

This cartoon symbolizes two essential issues for us and speaks profoundly to the heart of our practice in everyday life. The essential issues are:

1. What constitutes the human person and the integrity of human identity at the heart of its nature and natural order.
2. What contradicts the person and disrupts their natural order essential to the integrity of their basic human identity and function.

As mama bear did, we need to get *right* these issues in our theology and practice, in order to change existing conditions that reflect, reinforce and sustain the lack of justice and wholeness (peace) for all human life, all its persons and the human order of their relationships.

The Integral Heart of Human Life

In the global community, the reality is that human diversity continues to define our identity in human life and determine its order and practice in everyday life. Our human diversity sustains the fragmentary human condition of the past and maintains its fragmentation in the present. Diversity rules as long as we don’t go deeper to the underlying heart of all human life, and thereby get *right* what integrally defines each of us as a human person and determines the wholeness integrating all of us as those persons together. Fragmented thinking and practice do not and cannot determine this wholeness.

¹ Created by Maria Serivan, in *Los Angeles Times*, November 10, 2017.

In his fight against such fragmentation among Christians, Paul makes it imperative that “the peace [wholeness] of Christ *be the only determinant* [rule] in the heart *of your theology and practice*” (Col 3:15). As Paul made definitive, this integral condition of peace (not common peace) cannot be fragmentary, nor does the sum of diverse parts equal this wholeness (Eph 2:14).

When we examine our basic human background and what underlies who, what and how we are as a person and persons together, our diversity shrinks and converges into a more unified perspective. Such unity, however, has a bipolar variation, each with its own process and outcome: (1) human life from the outside in, or (2) human life from the inside out. While outer-in and inner-out may each have their own variations, each remains basically distinct in its process and outcome.

What is characteristic about an outer-in approach is that it routinely doesn’t go “in” very deep. Even recent discoveries in the human brain and revelations of human function made by neuroscience may claim to get to the center of the human person, yet their quantitative focus neither gets to the heart of the person nor accounts for the whole person.²

The heart of human life is not centered in physical life, though its heart is neither separated from the physical nor understood apart from it. Likewise, from an inner-out approach, its heart cannot be limited to the spiritual (e.g. soul) as has been tradition. Rather its heart integrates the physical with the spiritual—that is, integrating both the quantitative and the qualitative dimensions of the integral heart of human life and the whole integrity of human persons. What is this heart of human life from inner out that distinguishes it from outer-in human life, which is essential for any human unity to be whole?

Wherever and however human life emerged, the process of human life is constituted by a specific source. This source then defines what goes into human life and determines the outcome of that defined life. I assert that we only have two possible alternatives of human origin from which to select as the constituting source of the human person in particular and of human life and its order in general. Both sources may be arguable and not necessarily mutually exclusive, though any hybrid between them must be qualified. The two alternatives for this process are either evolution or creation.

Evolution is biologically based and thus is only physically conceived, so its material orientation yields merely a quantitative account of the process and its outcome. Accordingly, the basis for evolution is drawn from a limited epistemic field, albeit a valid field of information and knowledge; and any conclusions made about the interrelations within the data and made beyond this field are theoretical, not merely descriptive accounts of the process and its outcome. Therefore, any conclusions from this source about the human person, life and its order strain to be of significance and lack any definitive account constituting the depth of their heart. Ironically for evolution, mama bear really can’t tell papa bear what is basic to and essential for bears.

² See, for example, the useful studies by John T. Cacioppo and William Patrick, *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), and by Antonio Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010).

What evolution does describe dramatically, however, is useful for defining the human condition and its operation in everyday life.³ As evolution's defining modus operandi (MO), 'the survival of the fittest' (also known as natural selection) is a core process composing the human condition, whose narrative routinely evolves with those having the most power, resources and influence. These are the ones most fit to survive, who dominate or control to emerge on top of any human order. Moreover, the underlying motivation for this survival evolved, of course, from the adapting workings of the human condition, which selectively develops a selfish process of the human gene pool for what biologist Richard Dawkins aptly calls "the selfish gene."⁴ This adapting narrative (still evolving today) is what we gain from the source of evolution—nothing deeper, without the prospect of anything further than the evolving process of the selfish gene in an ongoing survival for the fittest, thereby leaving anyone and everyone *less* in a hopeless state needing to be redeemed, along with those in the illusions and delusions of *more*. Perhaps this state is highlighted by all the selfie photos dominating so much human attention.

Thankfully, yet circumspectly, we have an alternative source to get to the heart of human life. The process and outcome of creation, however, have been commonly rehearsed without their heart in our theology and practice. This also composes a narrative often without much more of significance to distinguish than evolution, and, like evolution, it typically reflects more our human condition than what is essential to the human person from the inner out and for the heart of human life. Either this essential has been ignored, as papa bear demonstrates, or it simply hasn't been understood as enacted by the Word in the beginning and later embodied for the new creation. Thus, as we engage this discussion on creation, be vulnerable with your person and whatever assumptions and biases you've had about creation and the Creator; and be prepared to be clarified and corrected as needed, and then to function as never before in our action as the *whole-ly* sentinels of human life only from inner out.

The Heart of Creation

We cannot get *right* creation without first having *right* the Creator. In order to have the Creator *right* we need to understand more than the Creator's identity and get to the heart of the Creator. The identity of the Creator is revealed generally in the physical world—as the psalmist declared (Ps 19:1-4) and as Paul explained the implications (Rom 1:20)—which is the basis for proposals of intelligent design identifying the source. But, since much more of significance has been specifically revealed deeply to us, we can't stop merely with the correct Source and then move on to creation itself. If we do, we will neither get *right* creation nor even the Creator in our theology and practice.

Beyond the general revelations in the physical world disclosing the Creator, we are further exposed to ongoing revelations directly disclosed by Creator God. These self-disclosures vulnerably open up the heart of God. How we perceive God's self-disclosures is critical to what we understand of God and thereby receive from God.

³ William T. Cavanaugh and James K.A. Smith, eds., engage this conversation in *Evolution and the Fall* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017).

⁴ See Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

The revelation of God and the Word composes the unlimited epistemic field—in contrast to evolution’s limited epistemic field—which doesn’t merely inform us of the improbable but vulnerably discloses God in the distinguished context and process of God’s designed purpose and outcome. That is, the improbable trajectory of God emerges on God’s intrusive path, yet this context and process of God are distinguished only on certain terms that are irreplaceable, irreducible or nonnegotiable with any other terms. Paradoxically, the unlimited epistemic field of God limits the perception of God and contains our understanding of God’s self-disclosure to just the terms used by God—outside of which the perception and understanding of God are not *right*. How so?

The reality facing us, and that we need to embrace face to face, is this: The words and actions of God are composed exclusively with relational language. This reality excludes the most common human usage of referential language. Referential language and terms in ordinary usage function merely to transmit information, which at best is only secondary to the primary function and purpose of relationship—God’s top priority that is the essential design of creation. Referential language was not formed (or “designed”) for the development of qualitative communication in relationship; in reality referential language went in the opposite direction, taking us away from qualitative relational connection (see later discussion). Relational language, in contrast and conflict, serves the function of only communication in relationship, whereas in prevailing practice referential language serves merely to make discourse about something—the common and ordinary usage distinct in human life. Consider what takes place in your everyday conversations and where the focus is.

The non-interchangeable terms composing the distinction between relational language and referential language is crucial to understand and maintain for our theology and practice. We need to ongoingly apply this distinction to identify the language used by God in self-disclosure and that used in common theological discourse—have you ever engaged in theological study?—because the two languages have distinctly different levels of significance, if not meaning. In other words, language matters and our working language will mean the difference between whole-ly knowing and understanding God and the process and outcome of creation, or merely having fragmentary knowledge and referential information about them. And we cannot boast of having *right* the former on the basis of grasping the latter, no matter the quantity we possess (as distinguished in Jer 9:23-24).

Moreover, language matters because language both forms thought and makes functional any thought (notably human consciousness) antecedent to language. It has become increasingly apparent to modern scientific research that the language we speak shapes the way we see the world and even the way we think (not necessarily producing thought).⁵ This points to the function of language not merely as a means of expression but also as a template imposing a constraint limiting what we see and the way we think. Consequently, the way we see and think theologically from the use of referential language can be and often is different from what God sees and contrary to what God thinks.

⁵ Reported by Sharon Begley in “What’s in a Word?” *Newsweek*, July 20, 2009, 31. See also neuroscience researcher Iain McGilchrist’s account about language in *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 105.

When God's words and actions are replaced by, reduced to or negotiated with referential language, as commonly composes doctrine, they lose the heart essential to distinguish those words and actions *person*-ally as God's. Our discourse about creation is the prime example of this lack or loss. Relational language, however, distinguishes God beyond a mere entity or quantity as an Object and reveals God as Subject. This irreducible and irreplaceable Subject was present and involved at creation with nothing less than the heart of God. Furthermore, the Subject is whole-ly (whole and holy-uncommon) in ontology and function, whose uncommon wholeness is constituted integrally with the Spirit (Gen 1:2) and the Word (Jn 1:1-3). The whole-ly Subject is distinguished in contrast to the common and ordinary, and thus contrary to the fragmentation intrinsic to referential language. God as Subject is vital for creation to be essential at the heart of human life; an Object reduces what is essential to God and thus essential for all humankind. Therefore, the reality of the language composing our theology and practice is this:

- **The God you use is the creation you get—nothing more but perhaps variably less.**

The emergence of human life is not detailed in the creation accounts (Gen 1-2). Yet, the origin of the human species clearly revealed that creation of the human person was conceived (contrary to evolution) by Subject God. This process of creation gives us an integrally quantitative and qualitative account, which doesn't automatically preclude some aspects of biological evolution. Any inclusion of the latter, however, must defer to and be qualified by the primacy of Subject God's creation words and actions in relational language.

As unequivocal Subject, God created human persons and their order of life to be inseparably (1) constituted irreducibly in God's qualitative image and (2) integrated invariably in God's relational likeness (Gen 1:26-27). The essential significance of God's words and actions is transposed when the Creator is *object*-ified. As merely a creating Object, this qualitative image is fragmented into informational terms that idealize the person without functional significance in everyday life; additionally, this relational likeness is absent, if not lost, relegating the primacy of relationship together to a functionally insignificant priority both for God and human persons. Object-ified, God is rendered to a presence and involvement of virtual insignificance; and deism (functional, if not theological) is the common consequence we get from a creating Object—a God whose presence and involvement are elusive, perhaps aloof, though pantheism and panentheism are possible alternatives. More likely, in referential language Object God is routinely relegated to doctrine, which composes words and teaching that appear truthful but lack the substance essential for the heart of God, and therefore are unable to distinguish the heart of human persons, their relationships and order together. With language shaping the way we see the world and limiting the way we think, in our corresponding theology and practice where does such a God leave the integrity of human persons (both male and female) and what is essential to human life? How do you think that affects your person created in this God's image and its outcome in in your everyday life?

When we relegate God to an object in our theology and practice, we distance or even detach the presence and involvement of God from their depth of significance as the heart of God. The revelations of God are no longer meaningful for the whole of who, what and how God is (the significance of God's righteousness); and, consequently, God's vulnerable self-disclosures are reduced and are no longer significant for relationship together in its functional primacy (not as ideals)—effectively reducing God to name only. Substituting functionally as an object, God becomes a symbol, becoming in effect like an idol we worship and pray to, and an ideal we serve.

Accordingly, from this God and language human persons are relegated to objects with or without the same image of Object God. Consider such persons in your experience and awareness. They function overtly or covertly with a presence and involvement of little if any substance in human life (e.g. as evidenced on the internet). Such persons are reduced subtly to a distant or detached involvement in relationships and a comparable relational position in the human order. In other words (notable referential terms), when God is object-ified and quantified to information, our person and other persons are object-ified and quantified. For example, how often do you see yourself merely from outer in, and look at others from this object-ified lens? Or, in quantified terms, have you ever been a statistic and viewed others as statistics, occupying a place without real presence and involvement?

- **The God you use is the measure of the persons you get and the relationships they have.**

In distinguishing contrast and not-always-apparent conflict, the heart of Subject God and the heart of human persons in their essential substance emerged integrally at creation. They only emerged, however, and could unfold by the *just* relational words and actions of Subject God. Only the Subject's *just* words and actions constitute *right* the qualitative image and relational likeness, which unfold exclusively in human persons as *subject*. The Subject celebrated only the creation of like subjects (Gen 1:31) for the primary purpose of relationship together distinguished in likeness (Gen 2:18). Relational terms in the primacy of relationship together (both with God and with each other) make *right* and thus *just* the integral relational process and outcome of the Subject. When our persons, relationships together and integrating order emerge from the Subject, then who, what and how they unfold can be distinguished (beyond the common) in their *right* and *just* condition—with their ontology and function whole-ly in likeness to the Subject, nothing less and no substitutes.

Along with the pervasive consequences of reducing God to an object with referential language and terms, when human persons are object-ified and quantified by anything less and any substitutes in everyday life, the human consequences prevail in two interlocking ways:

1. Persons are transposed from their primary identity (ontology) constituted from inner out to a secondary identity composed from outer in, which fragments their ontology created whole from inner out in God's qualitative image, thereby rendering the image of God without everyday significance for defining the whole person.

2. The primary function of persons is transposed from the primacy of relationship together to secondary areas of life, just as their identity is, such that their ontology and function can no longer be distinguished whole (namely from the existing common) but are further reduced from the wholeness constituted by the relational likeness of God (the uncommon Trinity).

Rather than the relational outcome distinguishing the primary ontology and function of persons at creation by Subject God, the relational consequence is the distinct reduction of human ontology and function from their primacy in the qualitative image and relational likeness of Subject God—a condition prevailing in all persons with anything less and any substitutes. Therefore, in the everyday life of persons in fragmented identity and reduced function, what is essential integrally for the whole person and at the heart of human life and order is lost; and the inescapable reality is that persons, human life and its order are relegated to the intractable human condition—the core condition which lacks justice and peace (defined only as wholeness) and underlies all situations and circumstances of everyday life lacking justice and peace.

- **The persons and relationships we use are the justice and peace we get.**

Before we discuss this human condition, we need to further clarify and correct the heart of creation.

The person created from inner out in God's qualitative image is and always remains a whole person in the ontology and function just as a subject. Traditional theological anthropology has rendered the heart of this person as the soul (e.g. *nephesh*, taken out of context from Gen 2:7). Soul, however, has typically been used to fragment the whole person into a dichotomy (body and soul) or trichotomy (body, mind and soul), with the qualitative soul the primary, if not only, substance composing the human person. This traditional language has become the reference point central to the person, with the soul as the object of God's focus. The referential reality is that Object God would create a fragmented person with a qualitative soul as primary in order to warrant detaching *who* is present and distancing *what* is involved in the condition of an object. The soul in its ethereal nature centers on the individual at its presumed heart, which creates both an ambiguous presence and a narrowed-down involvement discreetly lacking substantive connection with the non-spiritual elements of life, and thus subtly dismissing this soul-bearing individual of accountability in the everyday realities of the world. The primacy of the soul defines the object-person's identity and determines the object-person's essential function in these reduced terms.

At the same time, the person in the image of God cannot be centered on the quantitative—as valuable as neuroscience research has become. Nor is some variable hybrid between the qualitative and quantitative sufficient, since such a hybrid emerges from human theory speaking for God.⁶

⁶ Such hybrid views are found in nonreductive physicalism and supervenience. Discussed in Malcolm Jeeves, ed., *From Cells to Souls—and Beyond: Changing Portraits of Human Nature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). Also in Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer, eds., *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

If we use the epistemic field of creation, using the relational language of the Subject's words and actions, there is an integral process and outcome that unfolds for our theology and practice to be whole. This epistemic field encompasses the relational words and actions of the Word in the beginning, who thereafter embodied and enacted the image of God in its complete fullness (*pleroma*, Col 1:15-21; 2 Cor 4:4). What is revealed from this relational context and process is the Subject's whole ontology and function, which cannot be reduced or compartmentalized without transposing the Subject into an Object and thereby losing the essential depth of the image of God for our person, for other persons and for all persons.

In the beginning, Subject God enacted the relational context and process of creation for the relational purpose to create the human person also as a subject like Subject God. This subject was created from the inner out, constituted integrally by the qualitative heart of the inner person and the quantitative parameters of the outer person. The integration of the inner-outer person is irreducible and is invariable to any hybrid of the essential dimensions constituting the whole person as subject. Like Subject God, the integrity of this subject was created *whole-ly*:

That is, the person as subject is *whole* from inner out such that one is congruent with the wholeness of God; the whole person is also unlike the rest of creation such that this subject is *uncommon* and therefore compatible to the uncommon-holy God—the integral integrity of whole-ly that distinguishes the Subject-subjects of creation.

As a subject, the person was not created as a mere object controlled (perhaps like a robot) by the hands of God. As a whole-ly person, the only design and purpose of this subject is to live compatible to Subject God and congruent to the Subject's function for the integral relational process and outcome of relationship together in wholeness—with nothing less and no substitutes sufficient to live this design and able to fulfill this purpose.

The Subject's design and purpose further reveal two basic realities of creation that are essential for human life not to become virtual:

1. Subject God did not create the human person to have unilateral relationship with, which the Subject would determine and dominate—though the Subject does define the terms of the relationship but does not control the person as an object.
 2. As a subject distinguished like God (as Subject, not Object), the human person functions just in reciprocal relationship with God, in which any subject has reciprocal responsibilities to fulfill—relational responsibilities in contrast to mere obligations—by their relational involvement in this relationship; in reciprocal response, this subject also neither defines the terms for the relationship (as if to speak for God) nor determines how the Subject will function.
- **The Subject and subject we use will be the terms of reality for everyday life we get.**

At creation the Subject communicated the relational terms essential for reciprocal relationship together. The Subject's terms were composed only in relational language for

the specific relational purpose of communication with the subjects in relationship together; and the Subject's relational terms cannot be transposed to referential language merely to transmit commands for their information to fulfill their duty and obligations (Gen 2:15-17)—which commonly defines how we see and think about God's commands. The Subject's relational terms were later expanded (notably as the Ten Commandments), which were directly communicated only to subjects in relationship together. The sum of God's commandments, laws, statutes, decrees and stipulations serves the sole purpose of relationship together (as summarized in Ps 119), and their reduction reduces the recipients to objects lacking wholeness (*tāmiym*, 119:1) that constituted the basis for covenant relationship together from the beginning (Gen 17:1).

Pause now and examine how you see and think about God's commandments. Do they inform you of your duty and obligation to God, or do they bring you face to face with the Subject in reciprocal relationship? Remember, the language we use is how we see and think.

The presence and involvement of the Subject (and all subjects) are revealed only face to face in relational language (as in Num 12:6-8; Acts 9:4-5, cf. 2 Cor 4:6). Distinguished whole-ly in the beginning, the integral relational process and outcome of creation reveals to us the ongoing relational words and actions of the Subject, whom we need to get *right* in our theology and practice. Though the heart of God is qualitative, Subject God encompasses the quantitative, notably embracing physical creation without rendering it as *bad*, as some in tradition have seen and thought. The Subject is *different* (uncommon) and needs to be seen and thought of accordingly, because the whole of God as Subject is present and involved with all the quantitative and qualitative of life in order to distinguish *right* the whole who, what and how of creation, and then to integrate their subsequent reduction and fragmentation into the wholeness of the new creation (cf. Rom 8:19-21).

This *wholeness* cannot be reduced to merely the spiritual because it integrates all the dimensions of life into the ontological image of God's heart and according to the functional likeness primary to Subject God. The primary function of Subject God is constituted with the Spirit and the Word (as in creation) in the primacy of relationship together as the Trinity. The whole of God (whole-ly God) is the Trinity, whose heart is constituted by the primacy of relationship together. Only the Subject functions in this primacy, which can be neither spiritualized nor idealized—moreover, neither quantified nor object-ified. I'm not sure what the Object does here but it's not to function in this primacy. Examine deeper how you see and think about God. What does God's function signify to you, and how does that function define what is primary to you and thereby determine your practice in everyday life?

On the reality of this primacy alone, the Subject created human persons to have this primary function in the relational likeness of the Trinity. No other function has primacy for human persons according to creation. This primacy, however, eludes what is primary in most theology and practice, though information in referential language and its terms may allude to it. In relational language and terms, the heart of creation distinguishes explicitly the following:

1. Defines the essential identity of the human person beyond a mere individual, yet never losing the integrity of the individual as a whole person.
2. Necessitates by this whole nature the vulnerable involvement of persons with each other in relationship together, in order to fulfill their created ontology to be whole, and their created function in wholeness (as constituted in Gen 2:18 and demonstrated in 2:25).

Nothing less and no substitutes can define the whole person in the qualitative image of Subject God and can determine the wholeness of persons together in the relational likeness of the Trinity.

Therefore, the irreducible and invariable reality essential to distinguish all persons, without exception or distinction, is this: The heart of their created image and likeness is human ontology and function “according to *who, what and how the Trinity is.*”

When we fail to get *right* the heart of creation in our theology and to have *right* its heart in our practice, we fall into the prevailing condition of human life that has only one solution to restore it *right*. This human condition disables persons from functioning as subjects, unable to be *right* in their created integrity. As a further consequence, disabled Christians functioning in everyday life commonly serve as *enablers* of this condition, subtly enabling others (whether in the church or the world) to live without their created integrity—namely without their whole person in the primacy of relationship together; those so enabled thereby reflect the human condition instead of the image and likeness of God, whereby such enablers reinforce and sustain the human condition rather than function whole-ly as the sentinels of human life. Consider further: can enablers function in evangelism and/or social action when they are in reality enabling others to continue in the human condition?

The reality of the human condition has been skewed in human thinking and practice. Urgently then, we need to get *right* the heart of this prevailing condition in order to understand the change necessary for the essential justice and peace of human life in its full scope at all its levels.

The Fragmentary Heart of the Human Condition

Many consider the existing human condition to be a result of the evolution of human life. This result can be considered natural and to be taken in stride, or as a condition needing further human adaptation. Either conclusion has only exasperated the condition and amplified the human desire to fill a void, to fulfill an insatiable need. While most Christians don't subscribe to this account of the human condition, they live everyday with similar desires and need. This raises another basic question that all of us need to face:

Where do we *live*? That is, do we live in the created world of God or the evolving world of human development and so-called progress?

Part of answering this question involves knowing what the human condition is and understanding how this condition subtly envelops our life and infects us to determine our condition. The everyday reality of human life is that its unavoidable condition is intractable, and that this condition by its nature disables human persons from being whole and functioning in wholeness. If this indeed is the reality of our condition, what is at the heart of this condition and how does it pivotally affect the heart of human life?

The modern awareness of how the language we speak shapes the way we see the world and even the way we think (as noted above) points back to human origins. This critical awareness provides us with some understanding of the dynamic of referential language—how it works and what effect it has—that was set in motion from the primordial garden (or “the garden of Eden,” Gen 3:1-5). The origination of referential language unfolded when God’s relational language was narrowed down and God’s command (*sawah*, Gen 2:16-17) was redefined from communication in God’s relational terms to the transmission of information in referential terms. Detaching the command from Subject God (or *de*-relationalizing it) removes God’s words from their primary purpose only for relationship together. The command was clearly God’s communication for the wholeness of their relationship together, not the mere transmission of information (the purpose of referential language) for humans to know merely what to do (the focus of referential terms). This inaugural referentialization of God’s words (command) was extended later by the people of Israel whenever they transposed the commandments from God’s relational language to referential language, and consequently shaped the covenant in narrow referential terms—essentially *de*-relationalizing the covenant from ongoing relationship with Subject God.

The shift to referential language opened the door to shape, redefine or reconstruct this so-called information transmitted by God to narrowed-down interpretation implying what God really meant by *that* (“your eyes will be opened”). That is, this subtle shift transposed God’s relational message to reduced referential terms, which implies speaking for God on our own terms (signified in “to make one wise,” 3:6). When referential language is the prevailing interpretive framework for our perceptual-interpretive lens, then this shapes the way we see God’s revelation and the way we think about God’s words—as modern science is rediscovering about language. Conjointly and inseparably, referential language also puts a constraint on our lens, thereby restricting what we see of God’s revelation and limiting how we think about God’s words (“you will not...”). In other words, there is a relational disconnect with God that now centers the focus on us, even as we make reference to God and God’s words.

When we examine the dynamic unfolded in the primordial garden much deeper, what emerges gets into the heart of the human condition. Satan challenged the relational words of Subject God by raising what appeared as a reasonable question: “Did God say...?” His purpose was neither to clarify nor correct what God commanded, but rather to transpose God’s words, redefine their meaning, and to construct a subtle alternative with appealing information. The underlying outcome in his purpose was to distance or detach said subjects as inner-out persons from their reciprocal relational involvement with Subject God, and thereby relegate these persons to objects now redefined subtly from outer in. How so?

First of all, this pivotal exchange in the primordial garden is interpreted by many in the theological task as allegory over history. Yet, that allegorical narrative points to the underlying reality that invaded human life. Whether seen as history or allegory, the significance of the reality depicted remains undiminished and both views present the unavoidable reality at the heart of the intractable human condition.

Any discussion of the narrative of this encounter in the primordial garden must take place in the full narrative of the relational context and process of creation. To understand the depth of what transpired in this encounter and its consequence requires keeping in clear focus the relational outcome of the Subject's creation in relational language and terms: whole persons, from inner out, distinguished in ontology and function by the Subject's image and likeness, involved whole-ly as subjects in the primacy of reciprocal relationship together both with Subject God and with each other. Who and what emerged from this relational outcome must be in juxtaposition throughout this encounter in order to understand its significance and get to the heart of its consequence.

By asking "Did God say *that*?" Satan introduces the inaugural persons (and us today) to a compelling alternative for their lives. Along with transposing Subject God's relational language to referential language, Satan interjects alternative terms to the relational terms already communicated definitively by the Subject. The relational terms for the primacy of reciprocal relationship are unequivocal, as those persons knew (Gen 3:2-3). What is transpiring, however, goes deeper than the terms for relationship, which we need to understand beyond the mere issue of disobedience commonly ascribed to those persons as their sin.

When God said, "*Function by my relational terms*, or you shall die" (Gen 2:16-17), as noted about the commandments earlier, it is crucial to examine how we see and think about death. Here again, we have to keep this pivotal encounter in the relational context and process that already constituted whole persons and relationships in wholeness. Satan counters God's words with "you will not die"—a relative proposal, whose significance commonly eludes most Christians (even church leaders and scholars) because of how we see and think about death. In this narrative, did the inaugural persons die after they partook? No, that is, unless you see and think about dying and death in the full context and process of creation.

In fact, Satan proposes in his alternative that persons will see and think with the perspicacity of God, going beyond merely being in the image of God, and further having the revered resource of "knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:4-5). How appealing is this resource for those seeking justice and working for peace? It appealed to the inaugural persons also, since it "was to be desired to make one wise" (3:6), a better person, one better able to serve God—or so the thinking goes. Consider becoming such a person. Would you consider that person disobedient, much less a person who dies?

What evolves in this encounter is the ongoing dynamic at the heart of the human condition. God certainly wants us to be wise, to know good and evil, and to flourish to the full capacity of our person—and obviously not to die. Yet, that is not what is offered in Satan's proposal. Who and what were these inaugural persons already from creation? As whole persons, what more could they *be* than those subjects? And what could they gain as persons from inner out by consuming an outer-in alternative for an inner-out resource? In the relational language of what solely is primary, nothing. In the referential

language of what is at best secondary, a qualified *something*; and it is this *thing* that has subtly appealed to those in the primary and seduced them into anything less and any substitutes. This pervasive influence needs to be exposed.

The consequence from this prevailing dynamic only has significance as it collides with the heart of creation. First, Subject God is reduced to Object, shaped by human terms regulating (not denying) who, what and how God is. Next, the whole human person from inner out (as in Gen 2:25) is reduced to outer in (as in 3:7), typically functioning merely as an object shaped by surrounding influences and alternatives. Then, these reduced persons no longer function whole-ly in their primacy of relationship together, but they resort to and become preoccupied in secondary matters that reduce their presence and involvement in relationships down to common fragmentary ways (as in 3:7-10). This often subtle dynamic has only this common consequence:

The reduction of creation at the heart of human life, which compromises the essential integrity of the whole person and fragments the wholeness of persons in their primacy of relationship together.

What we need to understand about the inaugural persons is the alternative they fell for by choice and thus fell into as a consequence. Their sin in the garden was solely and nothing less than **the sin of reductionism**, which set in motion the human condition. Our view of sin has to go beyond merely disobedience and encompass *sin as reductionism*, and nothing less in our theology and practice. Otherwise we have a weak view of sin—a view that lacks the scope of injustice because it lacks understanding justice, a view that doesn't serve for the depth of peace because it lacks wholeness. Reductionism is at the heart, the fragmentary heart of the human condition. The human condition that emerged from the primordial garden composes sin, but only the sin of reductionism. A weaker view of sin neither gets to the fragmentary heart of the human condition nor gets *right* our human condition and our own sin, even as we seek justice and work for peace.

In all the ways noted above, with all their subsequent refinements and evolving progress, reductionism has composed all persons, peoples and nations with the human condition lacking the justice and without the peace created for human life by the Subject. Reductionism quantifies persons (e.g. by the quantity of their knowledge of “good and evil”) by transposing their inner-out qualitative image of God to quantitative measures from outer in (e.g. having resources like God), and thus reductionism *object*-ifies the integrity of persons as subjects and fragments their wholeness (both individually and collectively).

The evolving reality of reductionism disables the whole person by quantifying their essential identity, for example, with physical characteristics/distinctions from outer in (as with color, sex, appearance), with the development of their intellect by knowledge and information (as in idolizing education), or simply with the extent of their abilities and resources (as the primary source defining human identity and determining human function). Quantifying the person based on such measures basically *object*-ifies the person created as subject by the Subject; and this reduction disables the person by fragmenting the whole person into variable parts of who, what and how the person should be in the qualitative image and relational likeness of the Subject. This quantification and

object-ification of persons happens in multiple ways in human life and its order, and each reduction generates a lack of justice. When the integrity essential to persons is compromised and their wholeness together fragmented, there is no justice and peace in which all of human life was created by the Subject. And no matter how many variable parts of this fragmentation can claim to make one a better person, wiser, and even better able to serve others and contribute to humanity, the sum of those parts does not, will not and cannot add up to enable the person to be whole and persons together to live in wholeness. The synergy of life cannot emerge from reductionism but only from creation by the Subject. Therefore, the reality that we need to embrace at its heart is unmistakable:

Reductionism and wholeness are incompatible, an object and a subject are incongruent; and any effort to conflate the latter with the former will disable the latter and render it without its essential significance.

When we don't understand sin as reductionism, we don't get to the fragmentary heart of the human condition, our human condition. How we see and think in this condition lacks justice and disables us from getting *right* what is wrong, unfair, and/or unjust in everyday life. How we live in this condition every day lacks peace, even in the absence of conflict, because our wholeness is fragmented. And the sad fact compounding this existing reality is that we commonly fail to realize this dynamic of reductionism in our theology and practice.

The measure of reductionism in all its variations is anything less and any substitutes for the whole person as subject from inner out, and for those persons in the primacy of reciprocal relationship together in wholeness. This is the common measure found in anything less and any substitutes for persons in the qualitative image and relational likeness of the Subject. The genius of reductionism is that these variations are composed in referential language. Referential language can make these variations appear to be the same as if from the Subject's relational language by using similar terms (such as whole person, relationship, wholeness, image of God), but with distinctly different meaning. Falling for and into whatever variation of reductionism involves such persons unavoidably in a process of fragmentation, otherwise described as **the process of dying in the loss of wholeness**.

In so many ways of everyday life, Satan falsely assures us with alternative facts that "you will not die"—even as reductionism pervades human life at all levels to compromise our essential integrity, and prevails in the human order to compose the fragmentary heart of the (our) human condition. One enveloping example where all this converges for the global community is on the internet, namely as follows: By how this technology is quantifying our everyday life, and how social media is object-ifying our persons in our identity and fragmenting our relationships in our function, and on and on in cyberspace. Would you call this pervasive condition injustice? This is less about expanding the parameters of injustice and more about getting to the heart of justice, and thus about getting *right* persons and relationships in everyday life. (Recall the cartoon at the beginning of this chap.).

The context and process of the internet unavoidably quantifies human life into bits and additively (by design) object-ifies persons and relationships in a virtual reality.⁷ When the integrity of human persons is damaged, and their identity and function are fragmented and thus disabled, if this is not a condition of injustice what do you consider it? So, what else don't you see or think of as injustice?

In whatever context, form or operation the dynamic of reductionism is found, that condition lacks justice whether we call it injustice or not. Inseparably, that condition lacks peace whether there is apparent conflict or not, and whether or not we call it wrong, unfair or unjust. In that condition, fragmentation in one way or another takes place as the prevailing consequence that determines the fragmentary heart of the human condition. Given the breadth and depth of what pervades human life today and prevails in its human order, the unavoidable reality facing us is that the human condition is inescapable.

But, the reality also staring at us face to face is that our human condition is not irreversible. In whole-ly presence and involvement, the Subject continues to communicate to us face to face, and heart to heart, with the clear direct relational message: "Function in my whole-ly relational terms, and don't fall for and into reductionism or you will die"—keeping mind that whole-ly (whole and uncommon) can be neither fragmented nor common-ized, or that person is no longer whole-ly.

Therefore, listen carefully and act accordingly, you sentinels of human life.

- The measure you use for the person will be the human condition you get.
- The measure of the human condition you use will be the measure of injustice you have.

Indispensably then, along with our view of sin, our theological anthropology is pivotal for getting *right* our human condition. This will require further vulnerability from us about our existing theology and practice.

The Theological Anthropology Essential for Justice

All Christians have a theological anthropology (TA) whether they are aware of it or not. We use our TA to define our basic identity and function as a human person—that is, unless our TA has been coopted by a secular anthropology. Furthermore, theological anthropology is directly interrelated to the human condition, which is directly correlated to our view of sin that shapes and is shaped by our TA. Of course, theological anthropology is primarily interrelated with creation, or at least that's how its theory unfolds. The issue emerges, however, when the (our) human condition not only interrelates but more so interrupts the *right* formation of theological anthropology in general and our TA in particular by interfering with theological anthropology's primary interrelation with creation. That is to say, our TA becomes shaped (unintentionally or inadvertently) by our human condition, thereby rendering how we see and think about creation to a secondary role in the theology and practice of our person and relationships. As discussed above, the consequences from this dynamic are far-reaching.

⁷ Consider how Jaron Lanier, the father of virtual reality technology, now views this existing condition in *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

The pivotal issue in theological anthropology (past and still present) has been the language composing it. This unfolds or evolves in the paradigm that Jesus made definitive for our theology and practice (Mk 4:24):

- The language we use will be the measure of theological anthropology we get.
- This measure of theological anthropology we use will measure how we see and think of persons and relationships.
- The measure used for how we see and think about persons and relationships will define who, what and how persons (ours and others) are in everyday life, and determine their function as those persons in relationships.

Referential language and relational language are the competing terms underlying the composition of all theological anthropology in general and our TA in particular. Reductionism is at the core of this process, therefore the issue pivots on the rigorous conflict between the fragmentary heart of the human condition and the integral heart of creation. This faces us with the reality that composing theological anthropology is a battle, which we should not take lightly if we want our TA to be *right*.

What emerges from this pivotal process is the crucial issue revolving around the most basic question for all persons in everyday life: ***Who is present in that context and what is involved in that moment?***

In the cartoon, papa bear was present with mama bear alone together, yet *who* was present wasn't papa bear's whole presence and *what* was involved with mama bear wasn't his natural function. In other words, only papa bear as an object was present and involved, which reduced his nature and function to a fragmented condition. As a divided or partitioned (fragmented) object, papa bear was neither present as a subject in his natural identity, nor involved as a subject distinguished by his natural function. An object merely *re-acts* in contexts and moments by receiving whatever first acts on them, going along with whatever is happening, and allowing that to influence, shape or control how they will act. Whereas a subject *responds* to all that based on the integrity of who, what and how they are without being defined and determined by all that as a re-acting object is.

The distinction between an object and a subject is critical to maintain for persons in everyday life in order to distinguish the essential from the insignificant, the primary from the secondary, the good from the bad, the right from the wrong, the just from the unjust—that is, the whole from the reduced and fragmentary. For persons, the most basic question centers on their presence and involvement as reduced object or whole subject, with fragmentation an ongoing issue for *who* and *what* to account for in *how* they live in every context and moment. Mama bear points us to who and what are essential and how to get *right*.

The human condition is composed by lies, alternative facts and their related reality (Gen 3:4-5; Jn 8:44), and enhanced by human persons promoting these lies with illusions of truth. In common fashion, we (individually and collectively) then readily believe these illusions of truth to define who and what we are (our basic identity) and to determine how we are (our basic function)—the who is present and what is involved. Now before you simply dismiss this as applying to your belief system, consider the matter of **life lies** competing in our everyday life. In your early formative years or still

present today, what did you hear about yourself and/or related others that you believed as truth, when in reality it was only an illusion or lie? Messages such as:

“You are not good enough, or no good, unworthy or bad” versus “you are better, good, worthy, the best.” “You can’t do it, can’t think, not smart enough” versus “you can do anything, can solve anything, can outsmart anyone.” “As a female, you are less, weak in resources, limited in ability” versus “as a male you are more, stronger in resources, the sky’s the limit for your ability.” Add your own messages that you both received and gave to yourself or others.

How do you think life lies have impacted your life and others? Vulnerably examining who is present and what is involved as a result of life lies provides us vital feedback for the human condition of our person and relationships.

This list represents explicit and implicit life lies that to whatever extent we have internalized to define our person and determine how we could or couldn’t function. We all have had, and perhaps still have, life lies shaping our everyday life. And our practice of such lies and illusions of truth unavoidably reflect, reinforce and/or sustain our human condition and thus the fragmentary heart of the human condition, which inescapably reduces the created integrity of whole persons and fragments their wholeness in the primacy of relationship together. Only the integral truth of our TA rooted in the heart of creation will counteract the lies and illusions of this human condition and reverse its consequences in all our everyday lives.

Along with personal life lies, the human condition composes an encyclopedia of lies and illusions of truth. The explicit or implicit belief in any of them reinforces and sustains the human condition and its consequences for human life; and that in unaltered reality is the consuming purpose by the author of reductionism. When we address the scope of reductionism’s dynamic in the breadth and depth of the human condition, there are three major illusions (or delusions) that emerge:

1. **individualism**, giving primacy to the individual person over persons together in whatever formation—starting with the family, and including the church.
2. **culturalism** on the social level, and **nationalism/tribalism** on the political and economic levels, which single out, elevate, prioritize, aggrandize, and/or glorify one group at the cost or exclusion of others.
3. **exceptionalism**, the ultimate outcome that evolves from the second illusion to construct this delusion about the group, which others must defer to or be controlled by.

These illusions and delusions are not mutually exclusive but could readily interrelate and overlap in the subtle dynamics of reductionism. For example, the U.S. has been entrenched in all three, which many (including Christians) are either in a fog about or simply accept as truth, even actively promote with biased assumptions.

The first illusion emerged from the primordial garden and has since adapted and been refined into a delusion. Ironically, this illusion is not recognized in a collectivist context, but the individual effectively determines the extent to which collective norms are performed. Certainly, this doesn’t mean that individualism exists in collectivist settings

as in Western contexts (led by the U.S.); nevertheless, the individual's self-determination shouldn't be overlooked.

The second delusion emerged with the tower of Babel and overlaps into the illusion of Israel as nation-state; the latter reduced its true identity in covenant relationship with God, which caused its individuals to differ in their practice with conflicting identities (notably "the remnant," vs. the majority, cf. Isa 11:11; Zec 8:12). The second illusion-delusion falls into the third delusion and evolved into Babylon, which then evolved into the Greek and Roman empires—eventually evolving into the delusional exceptionalism of the U.S, which most of its individuals explicitly or implicitly believe.

Underlying the lies, illusions of truth and inevitable delusions from the human condition is fundamental **self-autonomy** (the ability to choose the priority of self), which invariably is adapted by **self-determination** (the *re-course* for surviving or succeeding in everyday life). Or the converse dynamic, the *re-course* of self-determination provokes the priority given to self-autonomy. In either process, *self* can be individual or collective, but the process for all of the above centers on the secondary over the primary, at the expense or even the exclusion of the primary. Christians typically don't affirm the illusion of self-autonomy (seeing it as disobedience); they routinely, however, don't acknowledge the existing self-determination deluding their practice in its *re-course* for succeeding, if not surviving, in everyday life (thinking of it as necessity to supplement God's grace). This *re-course* (from common notions about grace and faith) requires making the choice to give priority to one's self (whether individual or collective such as family, church, culture, nation).

The issue of priorities is usually glossed over by our assumptions; of course God is the top priority. But when it actually comes to distinguishing the primary from the secondary in everyday life, many Christians don't get *right* living accordingly, even in serving God and the church. We have it *right* as we practice the following process:

Integrating the secondary (any and all) *into* the primary—without reducing or renegotiating the primary—rather than fitting in the primary *into* the secondary as we are able or as is convenient.

The latter process centers the self on situations and circumstances, whereby they are given priority in the interest of self. Consider various situations of injustice that must have immediate priority in our thinking to fulfill our duty. This good intention is concerned about others while also centered on what self should do. Even with the urgency of situations, this focus reduces the person to outer in by such quantitative terms, revolved around well-meaning self-interests, who has been rendered to an object by and in the secondary. The consequence is analogous to "the injustice tail wagging the dog of justice," which fragments the whole picture of justice by preoccupation in the secondary parts of injustice.

The former process, in contrast by integrating the secondary *into* the primary, maintains the integrity of a subject—the dog wags the tail. By not letting the surrounding influences determine their action (as the above object), this subject-person's identity and function from inner out serve the *right* purpose and outcome for all persons and relationships to be whole. This **process of integrating priorities** (PIP) is crucial for

getting *right* and vital for living *right* who, what and how we are as the subjects of creation in the qualitative image and relational likeness of the Trinity.

- The priorities we use will determine how we live every day.
- How we live every day will be the measure of the person we get—both for our own person and for other persons.

How *right* would you say that your TA is in how you see and think in practice?

How we see and think about the person throughout human life—in all its contexts and at all its levels—and thereby define and determine persons, condenses down to either a **simple object** or a **complex subject**. Reductionism simply simplifies things by breaking things down to make things simpler. More simple sounds good, doesn't it? Well, that's the "good and evil" from the primordial garden that has seduced how we see and think. Accordingly and subtly, reduced persons are simplified by being broken down into the various parts (i.e. fragments) of an object. Evolution, for example, simplifies the emergence of persons to natural selection, with those surviving simply better objects of this determining process. However appealing all the fragments of an object may appear, the person's identity and function have become a simple object—even though the person is entangled in complicated dynamics. Complicated and complex are not synonymous and thus not interchangeable for the person.

A complex subject is neither complicated from the inner out nor fragmented by the outer in, yet the person created by the Trinity is a complex subject in the image and likeness of the Trinity. And this complex subject has been simplified, even oversimplified, in our TA and practice down to a simple object—with appealing parts from outer in and quantified attributes to define the identity and function of all persons, who inevitably are entangled in a complicated comparative process of human order. When persons lose being distinguished as complex subjects, the consequences on who, what and how they are simply are disabling. That will only become apparent when centered on the person from inner out over the secondary aspects of persons from outer in.

Reconsider the above life lies and examine how they have rendered your person and other persons; what have they relegated your persons to and thus motivated you to do? We cannot escape the quantifying of human life to the outer in, and the object-ifying of persons and fragmenting of relationships to the outer in—all reduced from the primary to the secondary or the tertiary, or to *less*. We may be able to ignore this reality, or even deny it with alternative facts and augmented reality. But the existence of quantifying and object-ifying inescapably imposes itself on us to influence, shape, determine or perhaps control the answers to the basic questions of where we *live*, and *who* is present and *what* is involved.

Nevertheless, a person treated as an object has a choice. A person capable of exercising volition doesn't have to allow that mistreatment to define one's person from inner out, even though this person may not be able to resist it overtly in that situation.⁸

⁸ For example, what was at the heart of many slave-based churches in the early U.S. was African American rejection of object-ification and quantifying to a deficit condition, thus they didn't let that mistreatment determine their persons in the innermost. This perception of the early African American church can be

Whenever persons defer to the influence, shaping, determination or control of reductionism's quantifying and object-ifying, they defer as objects both lacking justice from inner out and functioning in injustice from outer in.

In defining contrast and determining conflict, subjects resist treatment as an object and respond in their primary identity and with their whole function from inner out. As long as we live everyday not distinguished as a complex subject—the whole person from inner out distinguished in the qualitative image and relational likeness of the Trinity—we have by default chosen to live simply as an object. This default condition exists more than we currently see and think; and its consequence among us pervades our everyday life simply down to the core. The decision to quantify our primary identity and function, for example, by physical attributes, mental resources and abilities, and other comparative parts and conditions all relegate our person to an object of these fragmentary parts from outer in. Although intertwined in a complicated process, the choice by default remains centered on a simple object—made without awareness of or attention given to the consequences. The dis-illusioned reality, however, is this basic (not simple) truth:

Consciously or subconsciously, rehearsed or coerced in this choice, the condition of a simple object inescapably lacks the justice of one's primary identity and thus functions unavoidably in the reduced condition of injustice, no matter what the situation and circumstances are.

This unavoidable condition is critical to understand and vital to get *right* in our TA and practice, which are essential for the complex subject of who, what and how we are. Until then, the sad reality is that a person who chooses to be an object cannot seek justice when treated as an object, no matter how wronged, unjustly treated and simply reduced by the secondary. This person has already chosen the secondary and compromised their integrity, so they cannot cry injustice at the hands of others. Any call for justice or cry of injustice from this default condition is dissonant, a contradiction to what is essential for justice. As a further consequence for those object-ified and quantified, such persons also cannot work for the justice of others, when in reality they are part of the problem and disabled to help with the solution. Stated succinctly without simplification:

- **A simple object is incompatible with justice, and only a complex subject is congruent with justice and peace to be the sentinel of human life.**

Reducing and fragmenting the person(s) to a simple object versus maintaining and growing the person(s) in the whole integrity of a complex subject is the ongoing tension, conflict and battle that the fragmentary heart of the human condition amplifies for the integral heart of human life. Reductionism simplifies by breaking things and persons down to make them simple. This has evolved at all levels of human life—from

gained from Cornel West and Eddie S. Claude, Jr., eds., *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

individualism, culturalism, tribalism, nationalism, to exceptionalism—even subtly developed under the scientific method and more subtly adapted in our theology and practice of the gospel (e.g. with Manifest Destiny, in a colonial mindset, and their variations, or simply by traditional evangelism).

Contrary to common Christian thinking, God doesn't simply extend grace to us; only God as Object does that. That is to say, God doesn't give grace simply to an object. The whole who, what and how of the Subject relationally responds with grace only to the subject, who doesn't merely receive grace as an object but reciprocates congruent in relational response as a subject—in a reciprocal response compatible with the Subject. The relational outcome for an object and a subject are substantively different, though it may appear similar. Objects have associations to simulate relationship (e.g. as on the internet and social media), but only subjects make relational connection in the primacy of relationship—distinguished by face to face, with intimate connection made only by heart to heart.

Simplifying the complex Subject and complex subjects in likeness down to objects is the intensive work of reductionism, whose genius is beyond the human *self(s)* to solve, resolve and determine its *right* outcome. Given this prevailing yet subtle reality, what does this tell us about common efforts for justice and peace (and all related services), whose good intentions are motivated by Christian values and ethics but whose underlying impulse or ostensible impetus is generated effectively by self-determination?

If our view of sin is unable to see the object-ification of persons (both others and ours) in everyday life at all levels, along with exposing the quantifying of persons' identity and function, and if our TA does not distinguish the complex subject of all persons without quantifying them, then we are faced with this unavoidable reality:

How we see, think and act will reflect, reinforce and sustain our human condition. Consequently, where we *live* is indeed domesticated in the common, *who* is present will continue to be reduced, and *what* is involved will further be fragmented.

How essential having this *right* is to our theology and practice cannot be overstated, nor can the consequence of not having it *right* be overestimated. If we hang onto our assumptions and biases, under the presumption of “knowing good and evil” and having the means “to make one wise,” we prevent the redemptive change of the gospel to emerge that will unfold the transformation of our immediate human condition, and the breadth of the human condition and the depth of its fragmentary human order. And the transposing of nothing less and no substitutes to anything less and any substitutes will continue to pervade our theology and prevail in our practice, therefore relegating us to objects determined in our everyday identity and function by the secondary over the primary.

So, here we are in the twenty-first century of the embodiment of the gospel. And whole-ly Jesus, the Subject of creation and the gospel, still wants to know from us: “Where are you in your person and relationships—*who* is present and *what* is involved?” and further pursues us for “What are you doing here with the subjects of creation and in the gospel?”

After all these years, the Subject grieves for the heart of creation to unfold (as in Gen 6:6; Lk 19:41-42; Eph 4:24,30)—the heart of which are the persons and relationships created in the image and likeness of the Trinity. Nothing less and no substitutes of this integral relational context and process will get *right* the Subject of who, what and how the Trinity is at creation's heart and thus will have *right* the whole relational outcome of all persons as subjects and their integral order of relationship together—which the Subject further embodied and enacted for the whole gospel and its outcome. We have to account for anything less and any substitutes in our theology and practice.

In retrospect, we either hear the Object or listen to the Subject. In everyday life today, we either at best merely look at the face of the Object (even as idealized or idolized) or come face to face with the Subject. From this, *Who* is present and *What* is involved both ongoingly either simply exist in referential terms, or are embodied and enacted in relational terms with the heart of their whole Person. This reality pivots definitively for us as follows:

- The 'who, what and how God is' that we use will be the theological anthropology we get defining persons and relationships.⁹
- The measure of the TA we use to determine persons and relationships will be the measure of justice we get.
- The measure of justice we use will be the measure of injustice we see in everyday life and that we act on accordingly.

Listen only to the Subject face to face, and then relationally respond as subjects in reciprocal relationship. Nothing less and no substitutes compose the Word by whom the sentinels of human life are distinguished, with whom the sentinels of human life live whole in the primacy of relationship together, and for and to whom the sentinels of human life are accountable. Therefore, *Who* is ongoingly present and *Who* is irreducibly and nonnegotiable involved in order for the reciprocal *who* to be present and involved in likeness, so that the who, what and how persons and their relationships are can get *right* in the essential heart of human life and its integral order from inner out.

⁹ An expanded discussion of this theological anthropology and its theological task is found in my study *The Person in Complete Context*.

Chapter 3

The Whole Transition to Justice

I was afraid, because I was *reduced*; and I hid myself.

Genesis 3:10

I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?

Genesis 4:9

**Blessed are the peacemakers *who fight for wholeness*,
for they are *distinguished as the daughters and sons of God*.**

Matthew 5:9

The inaugural persons made the choice for self-autonomy and exercised self-determination under the assumptions of reductionism. In their choice, they exchanged the heart of their whole persons created from inner out for a reduced person fragmented from outer in, whereby they shifted from the created justice of their persons and relationship together to the condition of injustice. This self-determined condition generated fear that revolved around the quantified issues of their persons from outer in. With the fear of exposure in this condition of injustice, they simply hid behind a protective image (i.e. illusion or delusion). Their protective image symbolizes the images that humans construct from outer in (like an acting role or façade) to present a more favorable self. It was this protective image that set into motion the complicated process for persons and their relationships to minimize their vulnerability, so that they would not be exposed in any condition of injustice.

The shift from creation justice to any condition of injustice has been shrouded with protective images, which remain secured from exposure as long as persons and relationships are not vulnerable or made vulnerable. This complicated process minimizing vulnerability has ongoingly compounded the transition back to creation justice. And the most subtle aspect of this process has been the protective illusion of individualism that shrouds engaging in self-autonomy and efforts of self-determination. Such a condition lacking creation justice is commonly not made vulnerable, because vulnerability would expose the prevailing priority given to *self* that underlies individualism and its cunning normative practice—crafted notably by Christians in the practice of faith, even by those working for justice and peace.

Our first glimpse of the protective illusion of individualism took place with Cain (Gen 4:1-9). His brother Abel essentially responded to Subject God in relational terms to get *right who* was present and *what* was involved in his offering to God. This is implied when Subject God “looked with favor” (*sha ‘ah*, v.4) on Abel’s person and relational response (as in Ps 40:6-7; Hos 6:6; Mk 12:33). In contrast was *who* was present and *what* was involved for Cain, which are implied in Subject God’s rejection of his action (v.5, cf. Isa 1:11-13). Cain in effect used referential terms (contrary to God’s relational terms) to quantify his offering to Object God, which didn’t get it *right (yatab*, v.7). Later in his

anger and depression about not measuring up in a comparative process centered on self, Cain killed Abel. When God asked Cain where Abel was, Cain's protective illusion emerged: "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" Yet, even before his gross act of injustice, Cain already had embraced the priority of self and protected his self from being vulnerable to his accompanying fear of being exposed in his condition of injustice by assuming the illusion of individualism. His illusion reinforced and sustained the injustice of the human condition, in which persons have no primary involvement in relationships and thus nor responsibility for each other.

Yes indeed, the human heart experiences a spectrum of emotions, and most of these feelings are screened, pushed away from consciousness, or denied existence by outer-in measures. In a process amounting to virtual reality, the protective images, illusions and delusions that we assume for our self (individually and collectively) today all keep us from vulnerably facing injustice in everyday life. We may not avoid such blatant injustice as Cain enacted, nevertheless we do not face the breadth, and depth of injustice composed everyday by the human condition. Whenever we explicitly or implicitly exchanged the heart of our persons and relationships created from inner out for their reduced condition fragmented from outer in, we have shifted distinctly from the justice of creation to the consuming condition of injustice. And our subtle attempts to guard our vulnerability to this injustice impede, misdirect, or simply prevent the necessary transition back to the created justice of all persons and their relationships.

Since creation constituted what is *right*, this justice *of* life is the only determinant for justice *in* life. Reductionism, however, countered *right* to redefine justice in life with anything less and any substitutes, and thereby constructed the injustice of life. These opposing dynamics are ongoingly interrelated, and thus they are not always distinctly separated, and at times are either conflated or confused as the other. Therefore, the reality facing us to get justice *right* cannot be avoided:

The transition back to justice goes through injustice—and this includes our own condition of injustice—which then requires that all protective images, illusions and delusions be made vulnerable in order to face the injustice in everyday life, so that we will get *right* the fragmentary heart of the human condition and thereby have *right* the created justice of all persons and the order of their relationships together.

The transition to justice will not unfold until we are vulnerable both with our human condition and to the human condition existing, pervading and prevailing in everyday life.

Fragments of Justice

Recently, the right to free speech has been an issue of intense debate in the U.S., which has caused even traditionally liberal universities (e.g. University of California, Berkeley) to rethink their open policy on public speech (and all dissent). Of course, in many parts of the global community this right is not even an issue, where freedom of the press is not even allowed. This issue overlaps into the right to practice one's own religion. What is your position on these rights?

Who has these rights certainly is relative in today's world, converging with the relative status of human rights in general that partially composes the human condition and the variable justice of the human order. In this existing context and process, how do Christians get *right* the rights of human life that are applicable to all persons, peoples, tribes and nations? For the moment, let's focus on the right of free speech.

Free speech, obviously, is never expressed in a vacuum, and more often than not it targets the opposition in its dissent. This has been consequential and yet perceived as part of a natural byproduct in exercising the freedom to dissent; thus, this right is assumed as necessary in order to participate in life and must be preserved whatever the fallout. And injustice is considered for any who prevent or are prevented this right. Even though the expressed speech may lack justice and its consequence also perpetrates an injustice, this right is considered basic to human life. We have to examine, however, if this right in reality becomes an obstruction to justice in human life and its essential order—not to mention how this right has fragmented the U.S. and balkanized its diversity into increasingly homogeneous contexts (notably in churches). We have to be vulnerable to this reality pervading our everyday life, which will require the recognition of an existing **protective illusion of tolerance** that presumes to accept others different from self.

The right of free speech is one of the fragments of justice that are labelled a basic human right. Such a fragment and the sum of all fragments of justice, however, do not add up to the essential *whole* of justice at the heart of human life, nor do they get *right* the fragmentary heart of our human condition. That is to say, such rights by themselves don't get to what basically underlies human rights and encompasses the whole of justice that is essential to all human life and the primacy of its relational order.

The right of free speech as simply a fragment of justice emerges when seen in the whole context and process of justice. There are different layers of justice that must be understood, and the deeper the layer the less fragmented justice is that provides a fuller picture of justice for human life. At the outer layer—which is the most visible and has the most attention—there is justice revolved around *human rights*. As important as such rights are, they neither get to the roots of justice nor resolve the cause of injustice. Yet, unless you are part of those opposed to using the language of rights for one reason or another, rights are central to the call for justice.¹

How do we need to see rights and to think in their use in everyday life? As discussed earlier, how we see and think are shaped by the language we use, which must be understood in the language of rights. Nicholas Wolterstorff has this view of rights:

A right is always a right *to something*. Having the right consists of standing in a certain relation *to that something*.... Specifically, to stand to something in the relation of *having (a) claim-right* to it is to stand to the “something” in the normative relationship of *having (a) legitimate claim* to it. ...Rights are normative *social* relationships; that to which one has a claim-right is always to the good of being treated a certain way. It takes at least two to have a right—with the exception of those cases in which one has a right to being treated a certain way by oneself. Rights

¹ Nicholas P. Wolterstorff discusses those opposed to rights talk in *Journey toward Justice*, 37-41.

have sociality built into them. ...Primary justice is present in society insofar as the members of society stand to one another in the normative social relationship of being treated as they have a right to be treated.²

By at least using relational terms, Wolterstorff composes the language of rights in a deeper context and process of justice. This points to a deeper basis by which rights can claim legitimacy. He comments on this:

My own view is that rights are grounded in the worth, the value, the dignity of human beings. We all have worth on account of some achievement on our part, some capacity that we possess, some property that we have, some relationship in which we stand.³

On the basis of this theological anthropology, he continues:

Rights represent the interweaving between, on the one hand, ways of being treated that would be a good in our lives, and, on the other hand, the worth that we ourselves have. The recognition of rights requires the recognition of ways of being treated that would be a good in our lives. But it requires, in addition, recognition of the worth, the dignity, the estimability of persons and human being themselves. Any ethical theory that works only with life-goods, and not also with the worth or dignity of persons or human beings, is incapable of giving an account of natural rights.⁴

Unfortunately, Wolterstorff's estimate of the worth or dignity of human beings is based on a reduced theological anthropology, which defines persons by the quantity of what they do and have. This reduces persons to a fragmentary condition, persons who may have rights but not the *right* basis for justice in the primacy of relationships. Moreover, this compromises the relational language of rights with referential terms that may appear the same as relational terms (e.g. the term social justice), but which have neither the presence of persons from inner out nor the involvement of *subjects* in reciprocal relationship. The transition to justice needs to go deeper and not stop at even compelling fragments of justice as presented by Wolterstorff, in order to get *right* what is essential for all persons and their relationships in everyday life—without the distinctions of what they do and have, and the inevitable *comparative process* stratifying their relationships (as experienced by Cain).

Relativism of Authority and Its Rule of Law

The rights of human persons, being and life emerge from a deeper layer of justice; and this layer reveals some authority granting rights by using its set of laws, precepts, stipulations or commands. Such authority and its laws have operated with relativism in human life, composing a fragmentary basis influenced and shaped by the human

² Wolterstorff, 43-44.

³ Wolterstorff, 47.

⁴ Wolterstorff, 49.

condition. Stated simply: While any rule of law may prevent anarchy, it does not guarantee function *with* justice and thus *for* justice. The basis on which rights are based commonly signifies further fragments of justice at best that are insufficient for how to see and think about rights and justice. The most common and encompassing fragment is **social justice**, which is an insufficient lens and inadequate mindset yet what prevails for justice. Social justice is a generic term that is neither whole nor unifies all aspects of justice. Moreover, the sum of all these fragments still doesn't add up to the essential whole of justice necessary for human life in order to get *right* the human condition.

When we go down to the roots of justice, the authority of the Word is revealed in relational language—whose commands, precepts and stipulations only in relational terms composed the irreducible and nonnegotiable rule of law for all creation from the beginning. In the Word's rule of law, the depth of human life is reciprocal relationship involving the heart of the whole person at the innermost. This person is not a **simple object**, shaped by the surrounding context and who re-acts to situations and circumstances by the obligations of the law. Rather, this person is a **complex subject** whose presence and involvement respond according to the relational terms of the law in the complexity of relationships together. How do these two persons differ in how they function? Let's go back again to the right of free speech.

Persons are free to discriminate against others, and they may have this freedom in their speech, but do they have the right to do this? Persons also are free to choose to be abusive with words and may have this freedom in their speech, but do they have the right to such action? That is, persons have free will to decide to lack justice but do they have the right to be unjust, the right for injustice? For Christians, this question also applies to the freedom of religion and their practice of faith. The answer—which applies to all rights—depends on the authority base used and its rule of law practiced.

Consider the reality that racism is alive and well in the U.S. (the leader of the free world); and recent high-profile accusations have exposed the prevalence of sexual abuse in the upper levels of government and culture in the U.S. Both these pervasive conditions in the U.S. are reinforced and sustained by the complicity of a majority practicing its rule of law—which, on the one hand, promotes a culture of exceptionalism (or exclusivity and entitlement) while, on the other hand, strains under the illusion of tolerance. Christians are not only a major part of this complicity and at the center of this practice of the law, they also thrive in this culture with their protective illusions and delusions. This practice of rights reveals the relativism of the authority base and its rule of law that prevail in human life and that fails to get *right* the human condition, no matter how much justice is claimed and injustice is contended. At best, what justice is claimed is only the fragment of social justice, and any injustice contended is a simplification (as in reductionism) lacking justice. All this calls for the depth level of justice at its roots.

The prevailing relativism opened the door to relative interpretation of a rule of law and its variable practice. This door has been open from the beginning, even when the authority Source was not relative; yet the original rule of law was relativized. Later, the authoritative Subject formalized the rule of law, which was composed only in relational language and terms for subjects in covenant relationship together. Judaism, however,

simplified (as in reductionism) God's law to quantified terms from outer in, which led to variable practice of the Subject's irreducible and nonnegotiable rule of law essential to the wholeness of persons and their primacy in relationship together. The law became an end in itself and its practice a means for self-determination (individually and collectively), and the consequences fragmented the wholeness of persons and relationships. The authority of the embodied Word, however, clarified and corrected this often subtle relativity from reductionism in order to get *right* the roots of justice at the heart of human life—which we cannot ignore or avoid to get *right* our own theology and practice.

Jesus summarized this clarification and correction in his Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). For now, we will limit our discussion focused on the right of free speech. In his focus on God's rule of law, he brings out the rights of justice and what is essential for its practice. He first clarifies the law against murder and this blatant abuse of human persons. Encompassed in this physical abuse, however, is also verbal abuse transmitted by speech, which discriminates against the integrity of others and/or abuses their dignity (Mt 5:21-22). In the created justice of God's authority and under its rule of law, persons are free to speak but do not have the right of speech that discriminates and abuses. Furthermore, Jesus also made unequivocal that persons who presume to have this right are accountable for overstating the law and will be prosecuted for violating God's rule of law. The freedom of speech, and related freedom of religion, is always qualified by the roots of justice that cannot be relativized, or else the rule of law undergoes variable practice.

As a further example of the relativism of the rule of law and its related rights, Jesus turns to the law of sexual misconduct (Mt 5:27-30). Relative interpretations of this law have opened the door either to ambiguity about misconduct or to complicity of such misconduct. Yet, what Jesus clarified is that few could be guiltless of sexual misconduct. Adultery, for example, is conducted both in the physical act and merely as a desire conducted in the mind, and both are consequential of sexual misconduct. This includes reducing persons to physical objects in our mind, which we are free to conduct but no one has the right to this misconduct or is guiltless in it. Critically then, Jesus grounds the rule of law in the complete view of sin, which an incomplete (weak in understanding and application) view of sin allows for variable practice. Thus, if the rule of law were enforced on all those guilty of the true depth of sexual misconduct, who would remain without the burden of injustice (cf. Jn 8:3-7)? The roots of justice expose the relativity of those implicit in or complicit with any form of injustice.

With the irreducible and nonnegotiable authority of God, Jesus clarified and corrected any relative rule of law with the invariable rule of God's law. At the heart of God's authority is the wholeness of God, by which all human persons are constituted irreducibly from inner out and their relationships are composed in nonnegotiable primacy. Whole persons from inner out are complex subjects who cannot be reduced to simple objects from outer in. Objects simply function as those *subject to* and re-acting in their situations and circumstances, which reduce *who* is present and fragments *what* is involved in relationships—contrary to their inherent wholeness. Accordingly, **Jesus establishes this whole theological anthropology at the root of justice and makes it essential for the rule of law to unfold *right*.**

Therefore, the wholeness of persons is central to the invariable rule of God's law; and this wholeness must not be compromised, for example, by oaths that redefine a person's integrity from inner out to outer in (Mt 5:33-37). The primacy of relationships in wholeness is at the root of justice, thus must not be engaged relative to situations and circumstances by giving them priority, or justice is reduced and the rule of law is relativized to a fragmentary practice of relationships (5:38-44). Social justice falls into this relativism because it is not composed by the roots of justice. The unavoidable consequence for all this relativism is injustice—the inescapable condition of reductionism at the fragmentary heart of the human condition.

In contrast and conflict with reductionism and its pervasive yet subtle relativism, the relational purpose and outcome of Jesus' definitive terms for justice are "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48). That is, be complete, whole (*teleios*) in your persons and relationships, because anything less and any substitutes for justice and the rule of law fragment your person and relationships—a condition lacking justice and living in injustice. Accordingly, by his relational purpose and outcome the authority of Jesus continues to integrate all rights into God's rule of law, whereby they are rooted in the whole relational context and process of justice as created by its Subject Source.

In the "therefore" then:

Jesus clarified and corrected that the transition to justice is *whole*, and only the wholeness of persons and relationships constitute the roots of justice and its invariable outcome for everyday life in uncommon peace distinguished from any common peace found in the world.

"I never knew you"

The innermost depth of human life is relational, and in this relational context and process the Subject created subjects in likeness to live together in nothing less and no substitutes of this relational primacy. The whole transition to justice unfolds only in the Subject's irreducible relational context and nonnegotiable relational process. Any variation fragments the transition to redirect it to injustice, which could be composed subtly by fragments of justice (including social justice). The name of justice has less significance the further it is removed from the relational context and process forming the roots of justice. This distinction certainly is critical for those calling for justice, and is indispensable for the sentinels of human life.

When the inaugural persons constructed outer-in barriers between their whole persons in relationship together from inner out, and then between their outer-in selves and Subject God, they set in motion any and all secondary matter (notably quantified by situations and circumstances) to substitute for *who* is present and *what* is involved in the primacy of relationship. To substitute such barriers (e.g. as in social media today) prevents a depth of relational connection beyond merely an association together (e.g. as in many churches today), the connection which establishes the relational involvement necessary to truly know and understand each other.

Subject God vulnerably revealed his wholeness in this relational context and process in order to be known and understood in the primacy of relationship together (e.g. Jer 9:23-24; Jn 14:9). Yet, the Subject disclosed can only be distinguished by subjects vulnerably involved in reciprocal relationship, which cannot have barriers for this relational involvement and outcome to unfold in its primacy. Likewise, the converse is true for subjects to be distinguished by the Subject. In contrast to an omniscient God in referential terms, in relational terms the Subject only knows other subjects based on what they vulnerably reveal from inner out in relationship together, without substituting secondary matter for *who* is present and *what* is involved. This is crucial for those in particular who work for justice and peace, who thereby focus on what they do and their related resources as subtle secondary substitutes for the *who* and *what* in relationship together. And the Subject's reciprocal experience in the primary relational context and process is "I don't know you—no matter what you have done in my name and however you have been associated with me" (Mt 7:22-23; Lk 13:26-27).

The transition to justice is incomplete until it converges in the outcome of wholeness for both persons and relationships. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus clarified and corrected the self-autonomy (in Mt 5), the self-determination (in Mt 6) and related self-justification (in Mt 7) that interfere, interrupt and prevent the whole transition. Why and how so? Because these self-revolving efforts (both individually and collectively) signify, promote and sustain the injustice composing the human condition. These human practices need to be transformed in order for the outcome of wholeness to emerge as experiential truth (not merely doctrinal truth) and unfold in invariable reality (neither virtual nor augmented). The existing reality facing us, however, is that such human practices pervade Christian practice and shape many efforts for peace and justice—if not directly then indirectly by complicity with the status quo. His Sermon on the Mount is the key to countering our existing reality.⁵

In relational terms, persons who distance themselves in relationship—explicitly or more subtle ways of not being vulnerable—lack the justice intrinsic to the primacy of relationship together at the heart of both Subject God and human life. This relational distance could be even unintentional merely by practicing the *common* norms for relationship. Thus, such persons increasingly live in injustice as they are removed from the relational context and process forming the roots of justice. Such distance is often not apparent to persons helping others, and any further appeal to their work in the name of justice merely reinforces and sustains their reduced persons and fragmentary relational condition. They cannot claim to be doing 'kingdom work' when their identity is not rooted in the invariable authority of God's kingdom and his righteousness involved in its primacy for relationship (as in Mt 6:33). Jesus clarified the pivotal juncture between the secondary and the primary, between the variable and the invariable, between the fragmented and the whole (Mt 7:13-14). The former must not be considered lightly because it has heavy consequences for the latter, all of which transition either to injustice or justice. Jesus doesn't provide subjects the latitude of a both-and option, or else they are rendered as objects by the former and thereby disabled to live *right*, much less be the sentinels of human life.

⁵ I discuss the complete Sermon on the Mount in *The Gospel of Transformation: Distinguishing the Discipleship and Ecclesiology Integral to Salvation* (Transformation Study, 2015). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

This pivotal juncture directly relates to the gospel we claim and proclaim. Consider, how have we claimed the gospel when Jesus says “I don’t know you”? The experiential truth and reality of Jesus’ gospel is that (1) it emerges only from the “narrow gate,” and (2) its trajectory unfolds just on the “difficult road.” This irreducible relational context and nonnegotiable relational process composing the gospel are essential for its outcome to get *right* the human condition and to restore the created justice for all persons and their order of relationships in wholeness. Jesus’ gospel constitutes “the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15), whose wholeness Paul made imperative to be the only determinant for our persons from inner out and our relationships together as church family (Col 3:15). Anything less and any substitutes prevent the essential outcome of justice from Jesus’ gospel—with far-reaching consequences. Consider further, how do we proclaim the gospel of peace that has no wholeness?

First of all, we must understand that peace as *wholeness* is inseparable from righteousness—they “kiss” (Ps 85:10). God’s righteousness is more than an attribute; it defines the whole of who, what and how God is, whose wholeness can be counted on by others to function in relationship together because “righteousness will go before him and will make *the integrity of his presence and involvement*” (85:13). Righteousness is always a relational term involving a relational context and process; yet, without this wholeness, righteousness has no relational significance worthy of response. How would this lack affect God’s authority? The integrity of God’s authority is grounded unequivocally in “righteousness and justice *as the foundation of your throne*” (Ps 89:14). There is no justice without righteousness, since there is no wholeness that God’s authority constitutes for persons and relationships, and that the Word enacts for the gospel and its outcome. In what condition does this render the gospel and those who claim such a gospel?

“I don’t know you” is an indictment of injustice, yet the relational distance, disconnect or separation composing this relational condition has become **the “new” normal**—in contradiction to the new wine and new creation. This so-called new signifies life not only on the internet but in our churches—among those who “prophesy in your name, and *drive out evil* in your name and do many deeds of *empowerment for the common good* in your name,” not to mention who “*had table fellowship with you*, and you taught in our *midst*.” The gospel they presumed to claim amounts to a different gospel on a different trajectory and path, composed without righteousness and its integral partners peace and justice—which is consequential for not having *right* their relational condition. This injustice will continue until it returns to the roots of justice by its transition “through the narrow gate...and on the difficult road that leads to *the heart of human life*” (Mt 7:14).

The return to the roots of justice requires a turnaround from the variable paths (“wide gate and easier road”) our theology has defined and our practice has determined for our persons and relationships. Without this turnaround, the transition to justice cannot be completed, leaving the existing condition of injustice unchanged at its fragmentary heart. Yet, this turnaround doesn’t emerge from self-determination (in all its variations by works), nor is it a singular moment (notably by faith). The Subject is present and involved to bring the redemptive change necessary, so that the *old* can be reversed (notably from the “new” normal) and transformed to the truly real *new*—otherwise called

salvation but not always known and experienced in its whole relational context and process of the Subject.

There is no essential justice without salvation. There is no salvation when we are relationally distant, detached or disconnected from the whole relational context and process of the gospel of peace. The only outcome that unfolds from this variable relational condition is “I don’t know you”—and “you do not know me” (Jn 8:19; 14:9).

The Illusions of Righteousness, Peace and Justice

In Jesus’ definitive manifesto for his followers (outlined in the Sermon on the Mount), he continues to put into juxtaposition the either-or condition engaged in everyday life. This either-or process should not be confused with a Hegelian dialectic because the two conditions cannot be synthesized for a whole outcome.

A critical either-or is between a good tree and a bad tree, which will determine the outcome in everyday life (Mt 7:15-20). This critical disjunction is the basic either-or of good-bad, a distinction which became ambiguous in the primordial garden with the illusion of “good and evil” and the deluded hope of “knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:5). From this basic good-bad disjunction are the either-or extensions of right-wrong, fair-unfair, just-unjust, each of which may have variable definitions relative to their root source or authority base. Jesus’ metaphor of a tree makes unequivocal that a tree’s fruit depends on its roots. Bad roots yield only bad fruit and cannot be expected to yield good fruit, though good fruit is not always distinguished from bad fruit. This is where the disjunction with a good tree becomes unclear, because it could be made ambiguous with variable alternatives from a bad tree constructing illusions and cultivating delusions of good fruit.

Jesus clarified and corrected the disjunction between the trees and the outcomes their roots determine. Critical to the outcome are those “trees” who augment or hybridize the “fruit” to create illusions about reality, such as false prophets who whitewash the reality of peace (as in Eze 13:10) and promote false hopes for justice (as in Jer 23:16-17). These false narratives (or ones lacking justice) continue to be advocated today by Christians operating under illusions, a condition which grieved Jesus about God’s people in the past and still today (Lk 19:41-42). After over two millennia since the Word embodied the gospel of peace, here we are still apparently lacking his gospel’s relational-language composition for our theology and practice—even when the gospel *appears* referentially right in our theology or practice. This faces us with the uneasy reality of Jesus’ “difficult road” and his gospel’s “narrow gate.”

Whenever we live explicitly or implicitly with subtle illusions, we are in a critical condition needing urgent care. Unknowingly living in and promoting such illusions could be shocking feedback for those working for peace and justice. Hopefully it is uprooting feedback, since the issue here goes down to the roots and the potential delusion of either evolving from bad (false, variable or incomplete) roots under the assumption of being good, or thinking a hybrid of roots is a good basis to work from. How can we know the specific roots of the tree from which we are working?

If we are willing to suspend our assumptions and biases, we can exercise a *hermeneutic of suspicion* (an honest examination of our views and actions) about the so-

called fruits of justice and peace in order to get to the roots of their tree. This is the indispensable purpose and outcome for Jesus putting into juxtaposition the either-or disjunction composing the reality of everyday life and related illusions and delusions. Central to his relational process to distinguish his whole-ly followers, Jesus dispels such illusions and exposes any delusion by getting to the heart of our identity and function.

The “New” Normal

Who, what and how we are emerge from and unfold with the state of our righteousness. Righteousness is not an attribute, which is how Christians usually think of it. Rather righteousness is the constituting root that bears the fruit of our identity (ontology) and function, determining the reality of who, what and how our person is in everyday life—the ontology and function in likeness to the God of righteousness. Thus, righteousness is integral for the integrity of our person and our involvement in relationships—just as it is for God’s presence and involvement—which produce the underlying basis for justice and its outcome of peace. Accordingly, the state of our righteousness is crucial, and any illusion about its roots or its fruit is deeply consequential for the nature and extent of justice and peace we can engage in. This is the basis for the psalmist declaring for the LORD that “righteousness composes the wholeness of his presence and involvement” because “righteousness and peace kiss” (Ps 85:10,13) and “righteousness and justice are the foundation for your authority and rule of law” (Ps 89:14, cf. Isa 11:3-5).

Righteousness, however, has been one of the key terms whose understanding has eluded much theology and practice, with direct consequences for peace and justice. The central either-or disjunction around which Jesus’ manifesto for his followers revolves is this:

“Unless your righteousness exceeds [goes beyond to be full] *the so-called righteousness of the reductionists*, you will never *be whole* in God’s kingdom, *be right with God’s authority and just by his rule of law*” (Mt 5:20).

The reductionists (segments of Judaism) simply constructed a *new normal* for righteousness, which reduced the wholeness of God’s authority and fragmented the justice of God’s rule of law. This “new” normal righteousness emerged from a reduced theological anthropology that objectified persons to the outer in by fragmenting the law to simplified identity markers, by which they quantified their practice in secondary matters for their self-determined function in what amounted to self-justification (sound familiar?). The relational terms for the primacy of covenant relationship together in wholeness (as in Gen 17:1; Ps 119:1) no longer were the basis for righteousness as defined by God (as in Gen 15:6; Rom 4:1-3). Notable in this reconstruction of righteousness to the “new” normal were the administrators of God’s law (priests, Levites), who lived in and promoted their selective bias shaping the rule of law in human terms for peace and justice—all contrary to and in conflict with Levi (Mal 2:5-9). YHWH dispelled their illusion and exposed their delusion, subsequently replacing them with the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (king of Peace) to constitute the true righteousness of the new covenant relationship together (Isa 11:3-5; Heb 6:19-20).

Yet, a “new” normal for the identity and function of who, what and how we are subtly prevails today—quantified by the internet and amplified by social media—and perhaps is more embedded with our illusions and entrenched in our delusions of peace and justice. Along with its adaptation by technology, this so-called new normal evolves in one way or another by the selective bias (1) expressed in reverence of status and prestige, (2) exercised with idolization of power and influence, and (3) demonstrated by the glorification of wealth and resources. In all their forms at all levels of human life, this composition of an assumed new normal has reflected, reinforced and sustained our human condition and has interfered with its redemptive change—shortchanging or retarding the basic outcome of Jesus’ gospel.

Illusions and delusions from the “new” normal have seduced Christians and preoccupied us with the secondary over the primary in our everyday priorities (as Jesus outlines, Mt 6:19-32). But, Jesus counters any “new” normal for righteousness, peace and justice with “seek first and foremost his kingdom and his righteousness” (Mt 6:33). That is, not to “strive” (as in NRSV) for an attribute called righteousness but “pursue” (*zeteo*) the whole presence and involvement of who, what and how God is and can be counted on to function in relationship together. If God’s integrity is not accountable in relationship, what significance does “his righteousness” warrant to pursue? Likewise, in this primacy of reciprocal relationship composed by God’s authority and rule of law, the who, what and how we are can also function in likeness to God’s righteousness; and in this mutual accountability, the relational outcome will include the secondary necessary for wholeness of life in its created justice. Those who pursue his righteousness “will be filled with satisfaction” (*chortazo*, Mt 5:6)—not necessarily happy in their outer-in secondary matters but satisfied with the whole integrity of their person from inner out, enacted integrally in the primacy of relationship.

This is the only righteousness that distinguishes the whole ontology and function of who, what and how we are as his followers—those who belong relationally (not referential members) in his family and thus “I know you.” Furthermore, contrary to common priests of the “new” normal, from this High Priest also emerges “a holy [uncommon] priesthood” to constitute the whole identity of all of us in his likeness to function as “a royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:5,9) in order to be *right* as his whole-ly sentinels of human life. This is the uncommon righteous priesthood of followers who administer justice only by the nonnegotiable relational terms of God’s rule of law and thereby who make the irreducible peace of wholeness.

Completing the Transition to Justice

True righteousness in likeness to the Trinity’s is indispensable for completing the wholeness of peace and having *right* the justice of the invariable rule of law from God’s authority. We can neither replace this righteousness with a variably new normal nor substitute for it with any form of self-determination, and then expect to discern any illusions of peace and justice. Righteousness is essential to distinguish the integrity of the whole who, what and how we are, by which others can count on to be whole from inner out and thus who will be *right* and bring wholeness to relationships. Without righteousness in his likeness this relational process doesn’t emerge and its relational

outcome doesn't unfold—only illusions and delusions of them, which Jesus dispels and exposes for the redemptive change necessary to be transformed from these ontological simulations.

Ongoingly, he challenges his followers to understand their roots from their theological anthropology and to know the basis for their everyday practice, so that they can be distinguished whole from any subtle new normal of reductionism. He faces his sentinels with this unavoidable reality:

The transition to justice is complete when it is made whole by the Subject's salvation—the salvation composed just in relational terms for subjects in likeness to live *right* in the primacy of reciprocal relationship together in wholeness.

In the manifesto definitive for his uncommon followers, Jesus begins by outlining the essential process of identity formation, by which our person and relationships will be transformed—known as the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-10). The pivotal step in identity formation from inner out is the fourth beatitude: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled *with satisfaction*” (5:7). This life-essential pursuit of righteousness goes beyond pursuing character and a code of ethics, even so-called Jesus ethics or kingdom ethics.⁶ Righteousness is the integral integrity of the person from inner out that defines *who* is present and determines *what* is involved, which is essential for the everyday function of human life at its *right* depth and *whole* capacity. These persons are fully satisfied as the “blessed” (*makarioi*) only because the ontology and function of *who*, *what* and *how* they are is made whole from the innermost; and this emerges and unfolds from the previous three beatitudes in this essential process.⁷

The full satisfaction of persons from inner out was first observed with the inaugural persons in the primordial garden. In the relational context and process of creation, “the man and *the woman* were both naked, and were not ashamed” (Gen 2:25). That is, they were neither ashamed of their whole persons nor disappointed (*bosh*) with the other person and their relationship together; and the relational outcome was that they were fully satisfied. Why? Because in God's created justice (1) the integrity of both persons was defined by their whole person as subjects from inner out and not reduced to objects fragmented by outer-in distinctions, (2) whereby the gender of each person was equalized as a subject without a false distinction for the other gender—which would render them to objects in fragmented relationship (demonstrated in Gen 3:7)—and therefore (3) their whole persons were involved *right* in the just order of their relationships, the relational order which was created to be integrally equalized and intimate together.

Who wouldn't be fully satisfied if this were the condition of their person and relationships? Only those who compromise the integrity of *who*, *what* and *how* their person is, and consequently engage in illusions of “good and evil” and labor with delusions of knowing good-bad, right-wrong, fair-unfair, just-unjust. Sadly, this was the

⁶ For example, see Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003).

⁷ I discuss the complete identity formation from the Beatitudes in *The Gospel of Transformation: Distinguishing the Discipleship and Ecclesiology Integral to Salvation* (Transformation Study, 2015), 204-225. Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

compromise initiated by the inaugural persons and perpetuated by those whose life-sustaining pursuit is not righteousness in God's likeness. For them the full satisfaction of the created integrity of their persons and relationships in wholeness continues to elude them, and it will remain unfulfilled until redemptive change brings transformation.

This is the critical junction at which theological anthropology and sin as reductionism converge. Our theological anthropology should be at disjunction with reductionism, but having the *right* theological anthropology depends on our view of sin. How we view sin defines what salvation encompasses, whereby our persons and relationships are determined. A truncated salvation does not save us *from* the depth of sin composed by its roots of reductionism, consequently this limited salvation does not make *right* our persons and relationships by saving us *to* wholeness. This consequence impacts the peace and justice of our everyday life, and it likely promotes a variably new normal for how we see and think about them.

Therefore, we are faced with this **unavoidable reality**: Justice is never *whole* without the full salvation that conjointly saves us *from* reductionism and saves us *to* wholeness. This reality interfaces with this **inescapable reality**: The roots of justice definitively emerge in creation, but because of the invasion of reductionism in human life to construct its human condition, justice unfolds only with this full salvation.

The irreplaceable key that unlocks the transition from reductionism to justice is Jesus' gospel of peace. The gospel's wholeness was enacted by his righteousness (they kiss) in order to constitute our righteousness in likeness to his. However, a new normal has pervaded theology and practice with an incomplete Christology and a truncated soteriology—notably composed by an interpretive lens of Scripture in referential language and terms (demonstrated by most evangelicals, as in Jn 5:39). Not surprisingly, this has left many persons in churches without the full satisfaction of true righteousness, and thus without its integrally connected peace in a condition lacking justice. In contrast, condition of justice is not whole merely from redemption (or deliverance), that is, being saved from sin. If we are indeed saved from the injustice of sin as reductionism, we can only be saved *from* reductionism at the point when we are also saved *to* the justice of wholeness for persons and relationships. Injustice always remains as long as its reductionism is not transformed to wholeness. This transformation emerges only from what Jesus saves *to*; and from just this whole relational outcome of his gospel is the transition to justice complete, and can the whole of justice unfold for persons and relationships in their new creation of wholeness. This outcome *already* (not just in the future but in the present) is the whole and just condition of righteousness in his likeness; and this new condition (not new normal) of righteousness constitutes the primary identity and function of his followers as subjects who counter the “new” normal of righteousness shaped by reductionism.

For those whose righteousness is in his likeness, their full satisfaction in the primary frees them from any self-concern (or self-autonomy) about the secondary or from the need to secure some benefit from their achievements (or self-determination). This freedom opens up opportunities for more vulnerable relational involvement, for example, to extend compassion to others in relational terms and not merely to do things for others (the 5th beatitude for identity formation, 5:7). Most important, this freedom clears the person's heart from the distraction of the secondary in order for the vulnerability of one's full involvement to be in the primary of relationship together, foremost with God; these

vulnerable persons are the blessed (fully satisfied) who “will see God” face to face and thereby intimately know each other (the 6th beatitude, 5:8). It is from the primacy of intimate relationship together that persons are transformed into the new creation of God’s family, from which emerges the wholeness of persons and relationships—the relational outcome from the gospel of peace. Those claiming this wholeness are the persons completing the transition to justice—whose whole ontology and function distinguish them to be “the peacemakers of wholeness, for they will be *known* as the daughters and sons of God” (the 7th beatitude, 5:9). This is the *right* and essential outcome of the whole identity of Jesus’ uncommon followers.

Therefore, as Jesus made conclusive in his paradigm for all his followers:

- The measure of righteousness we use will be the extent of peace we get.
- The measure of peace we use will be the extent of justice we get.
- The measure of justice we use will be the extent of wholeness we get in our persons and relationships.

The transition to justice is incomplete without wholeness; and peace is inseparable from righteousness. Without the integrity of righteousness and its full satisfaction in his likeness, true righteousness cannot be distinguished from any assumed new normal. Accordingly, peace will not emerge and justice will not unfold. This integral process further reveals the roots of all rights, which then distinguishes the good tree from simply a variable bad tree.

Underlying all rights in human life is the inherent need to fulfill and to be fulfilled in the created make-up of the human person, functioning in the primacy of relationship together in likeness of the Creator. Contrary to the theory of evolution, persons don’t merely survive as their fitness warrants. Rather persons thrive as their created make-up is fulfilled. This **integral human need** basic to all persons is at the heart of justice—the justice by which the human person is created, the created justice of all persons and their relationships. The need for fulfillment is the basis for the rights that all persons (individual and together) have legitimate reason to expect to experience in human contexts of interaction. Stated differently:

The inherent worth (neither ascribed nor achieved) of all person constitutes the justice required for all persons (without distinctions) to experience their equal position in the human order; and the rights of the persons belonging to the human community are determined by the fulfillment of their integral human need.

Therefore, the integral human need—invariable for all persons (both individually and collectively)—composes the rights (**the human need-rights**) for all persons to have their inherent need, which is invariably designed by God and created in God’s image, respected, honored and allowed to be fulfilled. The inherent human need antecedes what is considered ‘human rights’ and forms the irreducible and nonnegotiable basis for human need-rights.⁸

⁸ Wolterstorff also comments on confusing human rights with the rights that human beings have. “But...human rights are just a species of the rights that human beings have.” *Journey toward Justice*, 129.

Human need-rights emerge from the inherent human need in this relational dynamic:

1. **Vested rights** from God that are inherent to all persons created in God's image, irreducible rights which cannot be revoked to prevent fulfillment of the human need.
2. **Privileged rights** unique to all persons created in God's image, who can claim these nonnegotiable rights just in their created uniqueness, unless the rights are withdrawn or denied only by God.
3. **Permissible rights** available to all persons to the extent that their enactment either doesn't disrespect, abuse and prevent the fulfillment of their and others' human need, or that isn't allowed access to that fulfillment by the normative enforcement of others.

Only permissible rights support a measured autonomy for the individual, which some nations, cultures and even families don't even allow. It is within the sociocultural and politic-economic contexts of the human order that the scope of human rights is pursued in order to enact permissible rights. Whether human rights lead to privileged rights, however, depends on the created uniqueness of persons' identity; and human rights should not be confused with privileged rights. Only privileged rights can be claimed as an entitlement by persons identified in the image of God, which cannot be renegotiated by human terms or reduced by human distinctions. Only vested rights provide the authority to empower and enforce the human need-rights of all persons for the fulfillment of their integral human need. The relational outcome from this relational dynamic unfolds the whole transition to justice in the everyday life of persons and relationships, which ongoingly involves nothing less and no substitutes for their wholeness in likeness of the Creator, Subject God, the Trinity.

The Ongoing Fight in the Critical Battle

Justice unfolds from the defining theological trajectory since creation and it continues unfolding on its determining relational path. Being compatible with this defining theological trajectory and congruent in this determining relational path are essential for justice both to maintain its integrity to be whole and to assert its uncommon wholeness (whole-ly justice) to the common world. In the relational purpose of this wholeness and for its relational outcome, this theological trajectory and relational path integrally converge in the critical battle against reductionism. The depth and scope of this battle is more comprehensive than spiritual warfare, thus it should not be constrained to the limits of spiritual warfare. Why is this battle not optional? Because reductionism ongoingly seeks to reduce persons and fragment relationships, typically in subtle or seductive ontological simulations. This is the ongoing fight that justice's relational path must engage ongoingly and intrusively in order to get *right* the human condition.

Whole-ly justice is neither a concept nor an ideal but the relational reality that is subjected to the invasive workings of reductionism—subtly even rendering justice subject to it at times (past and present). Therefore, in this ongoing fight both for justice and against the injustice of reductionism, our justice must not be passive, deferring or apologetic, because reductionism certainly is not as it seeks the advantage at every opportunity—the advantage gained in everyday life more than is recognized in our theology and practice.

Fragments of justice are the prevailing way most see and think about justice. This lens and mindset have evolved variably to compose authority and the rule of law in relativism. Christians may not have relativism in their theology—though variable theology certainly exists between Christians—but have this relativism in their practice. Relativism is found both in their understanding of injustice and in the lack of justice in *who* is present and *what* is involved in their practice. This widespread condition leads to inconsistency and contradiction, the dissonance of which we’ve managed to ignore, drown out (even by the volume of our worship), or simply displace with an appealing “new” normal. However, any illusions we have about justice are dispelled and their delusions are exposed when we get to the roots of justice, and thereby are able to distinguish the good fruits of justice from the bad fruits—that is, that which emerges from the bad tree of injustice.

With the theological trajectory from creation, God defined the parameters for human life, and these relational terms set limits for the function of the human person—notably limiting self-autonomy but not precluding it (Gen 2:16-17, cf. Ps 119:73). Self-autonomy has become an illusion that counters the created order of human life. Yet, humans have the free-will to construct their own human order, and this order by self-determination counters the social order of human life constituted by God. This often subtle countering constructs a biased order quantified by the achievements (as in “knowing good and evil”) and related distinctions (as in “you will be like God”), all centered on the primary priority of self (as an individual or a collective). This certainly has biased how we see and think about justice.

Revolved explicitly or implicitly around self, social justice becomes only relative if based on a social order constructed by a biased human order such as above and not the created order by Subject God (including the order of the whole universe, Ps 147:4, cf. Gen 15:5). When social justice is not based on the roots of whole-ly justice, it is a variable fragment that in reality may lack justice and may in fact serve the injustice of self-autonomy and self-determination. This is what Christians need to listen for carefully in any call for social justice; or else the sentinels of human life may not be distinguished by their compatibility to the defining theological trajectory and their congruence with the determining relational path essential for justice to be whole and distinctly uncommon from the common composing the human condition.

The integral whole of justice unfolds from the integrity of righteousness, which is inseparable from the irreducible nature of peace. Any compromise of peace compromises righteousness, and conversely, with their compromise directly compromising the flow of justice. The main issue in any compromise is not injustice, though injustice is certainly the unavoidable consequence from compromise. What compromises the integrity of righteousness, the nature of peace, and the whole of justice is simply reductionism. The dynamic of reductionism encompasses the following:

Starting with reducing the theological anthropology defining the primary identity of persons and determining their primary function, and then subtly obscuring the view of sin at its roots, reductionism has promoted, propagated and prevailed with ontological simulations, epistemological illusions and functional delusions to compromise persons, relationships and every level of human life in order to pervade, entrench and enslave us in the human condition.

As the sentinels of human life, we cannot be misled by the common of our surrounding contexts and their influences shaping human life. Our critical battle is not with injustice but targeted solely against reductionism and its workings constructing the common. From the beginning, reductionism has been the sole cause of injustice. Therefore, in our ongoing fight conjointly for justice and against injustice, we must first and foremost engage the battle against reductionism in all its subtle forms and at all its explicit and implicit levels. If we don't, we (1) cannot ensure the integrity of *who* is present and the depth of *what* is involved in *how* we live, thus can (2) neither have assurance of being compatible with the defining theological trajectory and congruent in the determining relational path essential for justice to be whole and uncommon, (3) nor have confidence that our work for justice and peace has not been compromised by the common (even as the common good).

Accordingly, in this critical battle the fight for justice unfolds *right* only as **the fight for wholeness**.

“Blessed are the peacemakers who fight for wholeness, for they are distinguished as the daughters and sons of God,” and “Fully satisfied are these persons who suffer reaction in this fight because of the integrity of their righteousness, for this is the whole-ly identity of the subjects belonging to God’s kingdom family—the complex subjects uncompromisingly embodying and enacting his justice” (Mt 5:9-10), whose identity formation as his whole-ly followers has emerged and unfolded *right* just as Jesus outlined in irreducible and nonnegotiable integral terms.

Let the sentinels of human life fight ongoingly in the critical battle—with nothing less and no substitutes in clear disjunction with anything less and any substitutes!

Chapter 4

The Bad News of the Gospel

**He will proclaim justice to *all persons, peoples and nations*
...until he brings justice to victory.**

Matthew 12:18,20

Do you love me more than the *secondary*...feed my sheep.

John 21:17

God, who knows the human heart...has made no distinction between *all persons*.

Acts 15:8-9

In Chicago, I grew up in a Christian home as a minority person surrounded by a garden-variety of white ethnicities, many of whom were Roman Catholics (notably the Italians and Irish). At the time the distinction between a Protestant and Catholic wasn't apparent to me; we all seemed to believe the same gospel. Yet, growing up I also wasn't aware of how the gospel was good news for my parents in their daily life, even though church activities occupied much of their schedule. More significantly, as a teen I didn't see the gospel as good news, because I felt my way of life as a non-Christian was more enjoyable than what my Christian friends experienced. Later, in the U.S. Air Force I became a Christian at age twenty; and after nearly two enjoyable years growing intimately with Christ mainly outside the church, I was introduced to church teaching about what a Christian should "be". This dominant view shifted my journey of faith unknowingly to trying to be essentially a white Christian for nearly ten years, since that (i.e. a Western gospel) seemed like the definitive model for Christians.

What this narrative points to is that the witness of the gospel is not always good news. In reality, the good news is often bad news, yet in Jesus' gospel the two should not be confused because they are both integrally distinguished. We need to understand the bad news of the gospel in order for the gospel's good news to disclose what is *right* and to grow what is *whole* for all human life and its human order for all persons. Thus, the reality facing all of us is inevitable:

The gospel we use in our theology and practice is the justice and peace we get.

The gospel was born in the OT as God's relational response to the human condition (Gen 17:1-4; Isa 42:1-4). The Word in the beginning composed the good news only in relational language, the relational terms of which need to be understood in order to embrace the gospel as good news for all human life. When the Word was embodied, Jesus enacted the relational terms that clarified the gospel and also corrected any misinformed news and fake news by exposing them with *bad news*—the bad news of the gospel.

The Injustice of Tradition

The good news of the gospel has been reported in various ways, with selective facts, and with nuances of its truth. In this historical process, the gospel has even become variable good news composed by alternative facts and virtual news that have augmented the gospel outside the boundaries of its theological trajectory and relational path (as in Mt 7:13-14). For example, popular today is the good news composing forms of a prosperity gospel. What is rarely reported in these contexts, however, is the bad news of the gospel. Obviously, no one wants to hear bad news, especially if we have good news to focus on. As a counter-alternative to such a selective gospel, some would consider a social gospel as reporting the difficult part of this news. Yet, the bias of a social gospel also has distorted or fragmented the whole gospel in a similar way with its reduced theological anthropology and weak view of sin, such that it too is not on the same theological trajectory and relational path as Jesus (as in Mt 7:21-23).

The conflation of the gospel with variations in one way or another has either rendered the primary significance of the gospel to a secondary significance (by inflating or reducing it), or has revised the truth (embodied Truth) of the gospel to a fragmentary reality. Either consequence lacks the *whole* theological trajectory and the *uncommon* relational path of Jesus' gospel of peace, which are irreducible and nonnegotiable (Num 6:26; Jn 14:27; 16:33; Eph 6:14-17).

It is within this historical process that our traditions have formed. Thus, the traditions of God's people have been variable in significance, the state of which should be neither routinely accepted nor rejected using a bias. The critical issue for tradition has been to blur the distinction between God's relational language and human referential language—the former only for communication in relationship by Subject God and the latter merely to transmit information about Object God. Referential language is composed by the information formed (not necessarily created) from defining efforts of self-determination, which transposes God's relational terms for relationship together (i.e. God's rule of law) to an end in itself (e.g. Mk 7:1-4). This quantified information then loses its relational purpose and process by (1) being reduced to doctrine with assumptions about God's authority, and (2) being observed (or conformed to) under the protective image, illusion or delusion as God's rule of law, with a variable bias composing its related Rule of Faith (as in Isa 29:13; Mk 7:5-9,13).

In the manifesto summarizing his teaching that distinguishes his followers (Mt 5-7), Jesus clarifies his relational language and corrects the referentialization of God's rule of law (5:17-48) and the *object*-ifying of their Rule of Faith (Mt 6-7). His teaching in relational language and his face-to-face interactions enacted the gospel also in this bad news. For Jesus' gospel, the good news emerges with the bad news, and the good doesn't unfold without taking to heart the bad. Simeon, who embraced the whole gospel as the Spirit revealed to him, clearly distinguished the gospel's good and bad news, and he anticipated its impact on those in the tradition of God's people:

“This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in *God's kingdom*, and to be *the significance* that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too” (Lk 2:25-35).

Indeed, the relational path of Jesus' gospel intruded on the tradition of God's people, "and his own people did not accept him" (Jn 1:10). Even though their tradition included enough similarity to accept Jesus, their theology and practice were incompatible with Jesus. The incompatibility of prevailing religious tradition was ironic but not surprising, and should alert us to existing traditions today. The gospel Jesus embodied was *right* for the heart of human life, and he enacted integrally the bad and good news to make *right* the human condition. His gospel is incompatible with injustice, and their tradition (and those today in likeness) lacked justice as defined by the relational terms of God's authority and rule of law—regardless of their conformity in referential terms. Therefore, their Rule of Faith could not embrace the whole gospel enacted by Jesus, which exposed the injustice of their tradition. In his gospel, accordingly, Jesus clarified any misconceptions and corrected any illusions with the undeniable paradox:

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring *common* peace, but a sword...." (Mt 10:34-36)

The bad news of the gospel not only antecedes the good news but necessarily qualifies what the good news is that is essential for *whole* justice and *uncommon* peace—the whole-ly relational outcome of Jesus' gospel.

In the beginning of human history at creation, Subject God defined the parameters for human identity and function (Ps 119:73). These relational terms were designed for the wholeness of human persons to be in likeness of Subject God, whose likeness could not be achieved by self-determination. In God's subsequent relational response of grace to their human relational condition for the sake of covenant relationship together in wholeness, God made definitive the relational terms (again not referential) for covenant relationship by composing the nonnegotiable rule of law (Dt 4:7-8; 6:4-6, the Shema; Neh 9:13-14). These relational terms were not for our mere conformity to constrain our person to objects (e.g. as the Shema became); rather they defined the irreducible terms for covenant involvement to be whole and not fragmentary (as in Gen 17:1). At the heart of God's relational terms is the Subject's desire for relationship together to be experienced in likeness of how the Trinity experiences relationship (as Jesus prayed, Jn 17:20-23).

When these relational terms are not clearly distinguished by relational language, they are rendered by referential language and thereby are transposed to quantified referential terms to be observed by those *object*-ified in preoccupation with the secondary over *subject* involvement in the primacy of relationship together; for example, which Judaism reduced to identity markers to conform to over covenant relationship. As objects preoccupied with their tradition, therefore, these outer-in actors (*hypokrites*) presented the image, illusion or delusion of those who dutifully fulfill their obligations:

"This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me *in the primacy of relationship*; in vain do they worship me *with all their secondary efforts*, teaching human precepts as doctrines *for the Rule of Faith*. You abandon the *relational terms* of God and *embrace the referential terms* of human tradition. You have a *subtle* way of *substituting for* God's *rule of law* in order to keep your tradition" (Mk 7:6-9).

In their Rule of Faith, the referential terms of their rule of law revolved around laws of purification and keeping the Sabbath, which centered their identity on the monotheism of Object God and not the whole of Subject God. These were the core issues encountered ongoingly with Jesus (see also Mt 12:9-14; Mk 2:23-28; Jn 5:1-8; 10:22-39) that precipitated the bad news of the gospel.

Jesus' gospel enforces the bad news of persons whose identity and function are reduced to outer in—that is, anything less and any substitutes of their whole persons created from inner out. He confronts any reduced theological anthropology and exposes the shame of those reflecting, reinforcing and sustaining the sin of reductionism—the shame that emerged from the primordial garden (Gen 3:7-9), which set into motion the injustice of the human condition. The shame of persons reduced from the whole of who, what and how they are (as in *bosh*, Gen 2:25) is the penultimate injustice that violates the *vested rights* from God inherent to all persons created in God's image, thereby preventing the fulfillment of their inherent human need. Furthermore, the reduction of persons precludes the just claim to the *privileged rights* unique to all persons created in God's image, because reduced persons do not function in their created uniqueness and thus lose their privileged rights by default. As discussed in chapter three, vested rights are irreducible and privileged rights are nonnegotiable. And persons denied these rights or squandering them are put to shame in the human condition of reduced ontology and function.

The Integrating Dynamic of *Just-nection*

In the formative tradition of God's people, the Sabbath has been a key identity marker to distinguish them from other persons, peoples and nations. What should have been integral, however, for who, what and how they are as persons and in relationship together became fragmenting of their created ontology and function. Consider carefully the Sabbath in God's rule of law, which constituted the climax essential to creation (Gen 2:1-3). The Creator enacted the Subject God's righteousness in what is *right* and whole, and this is how human persons are to function in likeness—function contrary to the pressure and demands of self-determination to measure up and succeed, and that preoccupy us with secondary matters at the expense of the primary. This contrary function from the primordial garden got embedded in human tradition and became entrenched in the status quo of human life. As a consequence, the Sabbath has been converted into a mere day lacking justice.

Whatever variable practice of the Sabbath we've encountered or engaged in, the Sabbath is integral to justice as constituted by creation. As the whole ontology of God converged in the Sabbath ("God blessed the seventh day and *distinguished* it *uncommon*") and the function of the Creator was integrated whole ("God rested from all the work that he had done in creation," Gen 2:3), likewise the Sabbath integrates human life. That is, integrated in what makes human ontology whole and how to function whole, notably in a human context that defines persons by the extent of what they do (whether or

not in self-determination). Human life and function are fragmentary without the integration of the Sabbath, which is why the Sabbath is imperative for persons to be in created likeness to God's ontology and function. If we observed God on the seventh day of creation, we would not know that he had just created the universe and all life; this observation is critical to make because God's whole ontology and function is neither defined by nor reducible to what God merely does—even as immeasurable as creating the universe (or multiverse). When the Sabbath eliminates the human distinctions of what we do, it equalizes all persons before God and thus with each other just as persons created in God's likeness. Otherwise these distinctions become defining in life.

In the created justice of God's rule of law, the Sabbath is the central privileged right (discussed in the last chap.) that must be claimed in created uniqueness (only in the image of God) in order for the vested rights of persons to unfold to fulfill our inherent human need. Thus, the Sabbath demands from us that anything less and any substitutes in our ontology and function must cease (cf. *rapah*, Ps 46:10), in order to restore us to the wholeness of our person and our relationships (Dt 6:12-15; Eph 2:8-10, cf. Mt 9:13; 12:7-8). Yet, the Sabbath became and remains variable in theology and practice, observed today with a "new" normal. Variants range from a day without distinction like any other day in the week, to a day off to do anything else, to a rigid religious day as an end in itself. In spite of our traditions, the reality of the Sabbath continues to be the culmination of creation and the key essential to define what is primary and necessary for the created order to be whole. In this created order, the human person was not at the top but at the center, in order to integrate all of creation in its wholeness (as Paul highlighted, Rom 8:19-21)—not to dominate or misuse creation. God's justice emerging from the Sabbath is the outworking of the created order for its wholeness in likeness of the whole-ly Trinity.

Therefore, the Sabbath we use will lead to the human need-rights we get, which will determine the justice or injustice we practice (see Isa 56:1-2; 58:13-14).

The Sabbath signifies the most transparent stage in the creation of all life, in which we see God being God. In the context of the world, God's whole ontology and function just *is*, without any other action or activity in this moment. On this unique day, God's relational message is "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10). At this perspicacious point of just being God, God constituted whole-ly the relational context and process of what is primary *of* God and who is primary *to* God for the whole-ly relational outcome of all persons coming together in the primacy of face-to-face relationship. Subject God blessed the Sabbath with the definitive blessing of the Subject's face (Num 6:24-26)—the primary *of* God for the primacy of face-to-face relationship with the persons primary *to* God. Only this relational outcome is the **just-nection** of creation, that is, the *right* order of relationship together created by the Subject for subjects having the right relational connection in his likeness. Accordingly, Subject God made the Sabbath holy in order to perspicuously distinguish the uncommon from the common prevailing—and notably preoccupying us in the secondary—so that all persons and relationships would be whole-ly (integrally whole and holy/uncommon) in everyday human life.

Therefore, God's justice is distinguished and God's peace is experienced just in the *relational dynamic of just-nection*: The relational connection required for justice of the human order in the created whole-ly likeness of God (as created in Gen 2:18).

Just-nection, then, is the unequivocal and irreplaceable antithesis that distinguishes justice from what encompasses **the common denominator of injustice**:

The relational distance, separation or brokenness that fragment the human order and reduce persons to outer-in distinctions, and thus to any and all relational disconnection contrary to their created likeness to God, which is consequential for preventing fulfillment of the inherent human need (as experienced in Gen 3:7-8).

Since Jesus came to fulfill God's rule of law for justice to be whole (Mt 5:17-20), he didn't make the Sabbath optional for persons to use as they wish. That would make justice optional also—shaping it by variable thinking and practice as demonstrated in truth and norm gymnastics—which would render human-need rights to relative enforcement, even if permissible rights allowed for such practice. In the created justice of God's irreducible and nonnegotiable authority, the Sabbath constitutes a privileged right that we must claim in just our created uniqueness in order for the vested rights of justice to be enforced—irrevocably both for ourselves and others.

Therefore, Jesus made it essential that his gospel is embodied and enacted as follows, and imperative to be claimed and proclaimed accordingly:

The bad news of the gospel unfolds on an intrusive relational path to expose the injustice of tradition and similar conventional practices, in order that the good news emerges 'whole in justice' and unfolds 'uncommon in peace'; and the gospel's intrusive relational path encompasses exposing the shame of the status quo composed by the dominant views of theology (or related ideology) and the prevailing norms of practice, both of which are under the shaping influence of the common.

The Shame of the Status Quo

The status quo in many sociocultural contexts is maintained by an honor-shame code of behavior that controls persons to function mainly by avoiding shame. The shame, however, in an honor-shame framework has primarily an outer-in focus and thus revolves around secondary matters. Though this focus assumes it has primary consequences of being considered bad, wrong, unfair or unjust, it is insufficient shame to get to the roots of the human condition. The depth of shame (*bosh*) from the primordial garden is what has composed and will always compose the status quo of human life at all levels of its human condition. *Bosh* signifies the primary consequence from reductionism that is intrinsic to the common denominator of injustice. This depth is the shame of the status-*ing* in quo that the bad news of the gospel exposes in the status quo's oft-subtle lack of just-nection.

The status quo represents the existing state of the human relational condition in general and our human relational condition in particular. In our surrounding contexts,

there emerges a conventional thinking (wisdom) that establishes (formally or informally) a collection of normative values and practices, which explicitly or implicitly maintain the existing state of our human relational condition with this collective conscience. These norms define the parameters for how to think, see human life, and act daily. Since they are based on limited knowledge or biased information, however, *status-ing* in quo limits how we think, distorts how we see, and constrains how we act. (Recall my experience with a Western gospel.) Depending on the surrounding context, that particular status quo enforces *permissible rights* to the extent that its normative framework allows. The shame of the status quo emerges when vested rights are denied and privileged rights are prevented—in spite of the extent of permissible rights—which is consequential for persons fulfilling their inherent human need, including even being seduced by illusions of virtual fulfillment (as in Gen 3:6). This variable condition is the consequence whenever vested rights are reduced and/or privileged rights are renegotiated—both of which evolve from persons in reduced ontology and function, those comprising the status quo. Whatever the variant state of this existing condition, the status quo consists of the (our) human condition needing to be made *right* and thus of persons (individually and collectively) needing to be transformed at all levels of human life.

The good news of the gospel alone is insufficient to address the status quo. The reality is that the proclamation of the good news has made little change (if any) on *status-ing* in quo—likely because an existing cultural-political bias doesn't perceive the status quo as needing change. Only the bad news of the gospel exposes the shame of the status quo and its need to be changed at its core. This is the whole gospel that targets the common denominator of injustice to raise up the just-nection required to fulfill the inherent human need. The gospel's relational outcome enforces the vested and privileged rights of all persons, all of which elude the *status-ing* in quo in practice if not also in theology.

This was Nicodemus' awakening when he pursued the gospel as a key member of the status quo (Jn 3:1-15). His affirmation of God's authority and rule of law was composed by referential language, so he was shocked by Jesus' relational language that he needed to be transformed in order to be *right* under God's rule. Yet, his normative framework limited how he thought and distorted how he saw Jesus' imperative for him to be transformed, making the gospel incredulous for him: "How can these things be?" Jesus shook up the status quo with the bad news to expose his shame: "You are a teacher of *the status quo* and yet you do not understand these things?" The bad news opened Nicodemus to his shame so that he could receive the good news to make *right* his human condition and be transformed to the whole justice and uncommon peace of the new creation. In that relational outcome of Jesus' gospel, Nicodemus experienced the just-nection of his vested and privileged rights for the fulfillment of his inherent human need; therefore, now the whole person "who trusts in him *in relational terms* will never be dismayed and put to shame" (Isa 28:16; Rom 9:33).

The status quo involves the most subtle extension of the original shame of the inaugural persons in creation. They shifted from the primacy of their whole persons in relationship together in likeness of Subject God ("both naked and were not ashamed," Gen 2:25) to the secondary of their persons from outer in, which thereby reduced them to human distinctions in fragmenting comparative relations ("they were naked and *covered the primary with the secondary in order to hide their shame*," Gen 3:7,10). This shame

breaks the just-nection created in God's likeness and thereby disables persons from fulfilling their inherent human need. Any yearning for its fulfillment or dissatisfaction from being unfulfilled is readily distracted or suspended by the preoccupation with normative values and practices of the status quo—ongoingly rendering persons and relationships in virtual illusions.

The shame of the status quo is subtle and rarely acknowledged, because its normative framework is advocated, supported or sustained with complicity by the majority (notably a moral majority). Yet, the prevailing shame of persons in reduced ontology and function, who lack justice in the human order of relationships, is always consequential for denying or squandering the vested and privileged rights of God's rule of law. And the bad news of Jesus' gospel always holds status-*ing* in quo accountable and intrusively exposes its shame of broken just-nection, so that the good news of the whole of justice can emerge and its uncommon peace will unfold—with nothing less and no substitutes in our theology and practice as the sentinels of human life.

The reality of the status quo facing us, and hopefully the reality challenging us to change, is the normative framework shaping or even composing our theology and practice. For example, what forms the identity of persons and their function in daily life (not just at church), and where do we get our model for everyday relationships? Conventional sources for these shape how we see and think about right-wrong, good-bad, fair-unfair, and just-unjust. Reexamine your personal experiences and knowledge of others that I asked you to relate our discussion to; what shapes how you see and think about them? The reality unavoidably facing us and challenging us is this: How we live everyday either falls within the normative framework of the status quo or claims Jesus' gospel—the latter then countering the status-*ing* in quo of the former, which Nicodemus would testify shakes up the status quo at the core of its theology and practice. In other words, we cannot claim Jesus' gospel without the bad news, and to only assume we have claimed the good news is to live within the status quo of our theology and practice—which can be the status-*ing* in quo's spectrum encompassing both conservatives and liberals.

Jesus' gospel distinguishes the depth of just-nection and, conversely, just-nection distinguishes the heart of Jesus' gospel. This just-nection was constituted by the Word in the beginning, and the Word embodied and enacted by the gospel in relational response to the common denominator of injustice to transform its shame to just-nection (Jn 1:1-3,14). Those of the status quo, however, could not claim the good news because they wouldn't receive the bad news (Jn 1:4-5, 10-11). Again and again, status-*ing* in quo involves the subtle ongoing extension of the recurring shame from the primordial garden.

Therefore, Jesus' gospel challenges how we think and see in our life, and it requires us to have the mindset to interpret daily life and the perceptual lens to see everyday life in its true context. This mindset and lens involve having the following understanding of the human person and the sin of reductionism that emerged from the primordial garden and evolves today in the status quo:

Human persons and their reductionism extend from the primordial garden in a **pseudo-dialectic** that constructs the normative thinking, perception and action composing the status quo, which unfolds in three steps.

1. The pivotal juncture when persons in just-nection become disconnected from their primacy in *right* relationship together as whole persons from inner out (as in Gen 2:18,25; 3:7).
2. The point of disjunction when persons take an opposite (contrary, counter or conflict) recourse in simulating relationship merely by *association* rather than depth of relational involvement, whereby they substitute virtual connections to blunt or divert the shame of relational disconnection (extending Gen 3:7-10).
3. This pseudo-dialectic, however, doesn't reconcile the first two steps in a new synthesis but results in a different human order from creation, a mutating variant difference in which (1) persons are reduced from the inner-out primary to the outer-in secondary of life and (2) relationships are fragmented by persons' outer-in distinctions and stratified according to the order's inescapable comparative process that consigns persons to a scale of better-less, desirable-undesirable, good-bad—all of which converge to form the normative values and practices framing the status quo in human inequality with human inequity.

The normative framework of the status quo—which pervades (if not prevails in) our theology and practice—biases our mindset to interpret daily life and distorts our lens to see everyday life in its existing context, so that it keeps us from the true context of human life and its essential order integrally (1) created by the Word, (2) embodied by the Word in relational response to the (our) human condition, and (3) enacted by the Word with the gospel to reconcile persons to the primacy of just-nection. Just-nection is the only relational outcome from the intrusive relational path of Jesus' gospel, without which is a different gospel having no significance except for the status quo.

Anything less and any substitutes for just-nection simply fall into the common denominator of injustice. This is the irreplaceable reality of creation, which cannot be reduced to variant ontology and function for persons and their relationships without fragmenting their wholeness created in likeness just of God. The Creator created human persons in just-nection, because the human person by the nature of God's image cannot be in any condition of *being* alone but is constituted whole only in reciprocal relationship together in likeness of Subject God, the Trinity (Gen 1:27; 2:18,25, cf. Jesus' gospel prayer, Jn 17:20-23). From this irreplaceable reality in the primordial garden, the created order of relationships in wholeness was reduced and fragmented, thereby implementing a pseudo-dialectic that reorders the *right* relationship based on God's justice with simulated relationships lacking just-nection—all of which then render persons to be essentially alone in the company of others (even at church, among friends and family). These reordered relationships subtly no longer give primary worth to the whole person from inner out, subject persons who are directly involved in the primacy of whole relationship together at the vulnerably intimate level of hearts joined together without shame, and thus who belong to each other as family in the image and likeness of the Trinity.

The image of God is a common reference found in the conventional theology of status-*ing* in quo. A major problem for most Christians in their understanding of God's image, however, is that God is usually perceived foremost by only some "image" (virtual or imagined) they have about God rather than knowing and understanding God from the relational outcome of direct involvement in relationship together (the just-nection of

creation). Such a virtual or imagined image of God is ironically analogous to the so-called “clothes” the emperor is wearing in classical narrative, when in reality the emperor has no clothes on. This image assumes (in a leap of faith) who, what and how God is and constructs a bias of how humans are created in that image.

Consider carefully the normative patterns for everyday life that evolved from the primordial garden and extend into the status quo. Human gender was skewed to side with the male, and the female found worth in relation to the male while in a subordinate position (Gen 3:16). Human actions cause the fragmentation of physical creation and the deterioration of the natural environment, and humans will suffer from its abuse (3:17-18). Work becomes the primary identity for persons and the basis for their self-worth, all while human labor strains, struggles and is controlled by a context lacking just-nection (3:19). Human relations are embedded in the secondary and entrenched in their shame blunted by protective images, illusions and delusions composed in reduced ontology and function (3:21). These are just some of the normative patterns that extend into *status-ing* in quo to comprise everyday life. Certainly, truth and norm gymnastics keep evolving variants.

These normative patterns generate assumptions about human life that form cultural and political biases for how we see and think about justice in everyday life. Since these biases are shaped without just-nection, what emerges for justice is variable, virtual or simply lacking any significance for the *right* human order—perhaps shrouded with diversity. Yet, out of this process emerges the conventional meaning of **social justice**. Jesus’ gospel clarifies that social justice is inadequate for human life and its *right* order, and corrects the use of such a notion (especially by his sentinels) as a reduction of the inherent **whole-life justice** created by God. Whole-life justice is irreducible and its human-need rights are nonnegotiable, but social justice is the pervasive substitute for them composed variably and enforced with relativity. Thus, social justice becomes the normative shaping of life in the image of God, which then is relative to the cultural and political biases of the status quo. In Jesus’ gospel, for all persons in the image created by God, justice is not merely social but comprises the whole of life from inner out— involving the whole person and the breadth and depth of all their relationships, without the limits and constraints of human bias (as in Mt 5:22,28,37,46-47).

Social justice revolves around permissible rights, and this enforcement of permissible rights becomes a variable process relative to the normative patterns of the surrounding context’s status quo. The pervading reality is that *status-ing* in quo evolved from the break of just-nection, and its shame adapts subtly in surrounding contexts with the construction of virtual reality simulating justice (as in social justice). Whole-life justice centers on the vested and privileged rights of all persons—none of which can be subject to human bias and shaping—and, therefore, by necessity it counters the status quo and exposes its shame occupying the common denominator of injustice. The challenge of Jesus’ gospel is to change the *status-ing* in quo in our theology and practice. This indeed is the bad news of the gospel that his sentinels of human life are called to proclaim, and to claim as needed for any lack of just-nection.

Shepherds of Inequality and Enablers of Injustice

The theology and practice from tradition and/or the spectrum of conservatives and liberals (including the related politics) comprising the status quo raise this pivotal question: What is reinforced and sustained in everyday life, and what in life itself is being changed? Without much conscious thought, the first half of the question would be answered with the assumption that the existing norms are either neutral enough to reinforce (explicitly or implicitly) or positive enough to sustain. The latter half calls for consciously examining existing norms without assuming the false distinction of neutrality, and then challenges negative norms to be changed. For example, technology itself may be neutral but the use of technology is not, and negative norms of technological usage (demonstrated on the internet and in social media) need to be changed rather than reinforced or sustained (recall mama and papa bear in chap. 2). Jesus' whole gospel raises this pivotal question and ongoingly holds accountable all who claim the gospel, notably those who proclaim it—accountable namely for not first claiming the bad news before proclaiming the good news.

The early disciples demonstrated the influence that the status quo's norms had on them. This emerged distinctly in the tension between them over their dispute about which of them was the greatest (Mk 9:33-34; Lk 9:46; 22:24). Like most Christians, the early disciples used a reduced theological anthropology to define their identity and determine their function by what they do and have from outer in. In our Christian contexts, we may not be asking which of us is the greatest (or first and foremost), but if we use such a reduced theological anthropology, we embed our persons in an inevitable comparative process with others (notably about resumes). This comparative process measures persons on the basis of their achievements, successes and accumulated resources, or potential thereof, and makes distinctions of persons accordingly (e.g. consider an academic vita or a ministry portfolio). These distinctions construct a human order between persons to stratify them to a level justified by the comparative system, which unavoidably fragments their relationships to an inequality that cannot experience just-nection, even at the upper strata.

When the early disciples focused on who was the greatest, they didn't understand the shaping influence on their theology and practice exerted by the prevailing norms of the surrounding status quo. Assuming that the norms were either neutral enough to reinforce or positive enough to sustain, they simply functioned accordingly in daily life and thereby by default also absorbed the bad news into their existing way of life. What we need to understand about this norm gymnastics is that its practice disables the just-nection of its participants by rendering them as mere *objects* under its influence. Therefore, Jesus was concerned that his followers would be **disablers of justice** and become **enablers of injustice**, which would certainly counter the bad news and obviously contradict the good news of his gospel.

How Jesus addressed the issue has been misperceived and thus misapplied. Jesus' face-to-face response to them didn't reverse the desire "to be first or foremost" with a competing human order in which one "must be last of all *persons* and servant of all others" (Mk 9:35). Rather he challenged them:

“Unless you change *by turning around* [strepho] *from defining your person from outer in and become vulnerable persons from inner out* like children, you will never have *just-nection* in God’s kingdom. Therefore, whoever *honestly defines their person* like this *unpretentious person is equalized among all persons* in God’s kingdom” (Mt 18:1-4)—reinforcing the relational outcome of the Sabbath.

The disciples, however, didn’t undergo that turn-around change (transformation), but continued to define themselves by the prevailing norms, even up to their last table fellowship with Jesus just prior to the cross (Lk 22:14-24). Here again, Jesus’ face-to-face response to them wasn’t to reverse the prevailing human order with serving as the highest position (Lk 22:25-27). What Jesus exposed with the gospel’s bad news was the existing stratified order enforced by power relations. These power relations also function covertly, for example, by the paternalistic actions of “so-called benefactors” who control others by their subtle manipulations under the illusion of the common good. This inequality is the expected consequence for those engaged in the human comparative process; this evolves for any of Jesus’ followers from both (1) their theological anthropology reflecting and reinforcing reduced ontology and function and (2) their shallow understanding of sin without its roots in reductionism and thus sustaining reductionism—each in contradiction to his gospel. Such persons are subtle disablers of justice who become misguided enablers of injustice.

So, where does this leave his followers as church leaders and as those working for justice and peace?

This brings us back to the crossroad of the narrow gate-road and the wide gate-road, to the junction of Jesus’ uncommon path and the common path, to the disjuncture between the irreducible and nonnegotiable just-nection and the common denominator of injustice. The bad news of Jesus’ gospel always brings person to this critical intersection of life, which is why proclaiming the bad news is indispensable and not optional. One of the critical problems facing us at this crossroad is that each alternative may have a similar presenting appearance, and the distinction between them will not become apparent until the roots of each are exposed by the depth of reality in everyday life. This critical problem is addressed by Jesus in his manifesto for his followers (Mt 7:24-27). There are common illusions about the construction of a human order, about building conventional structures in a society, community and family, even about the development of churches and ministries, whose foundations appear to be on the right basis until the hard realities of life expose their shortcomings (e.g. about persons, relationships and sin), bring down their bad assumptions (e.g. about the common good), and crumble their misplaced (false) hopes and practices (e.g. about peace and justice).

The Word enacted the created justice of God’s rule of law, which embodied the nonnegotiable Way, the invariable Truth and the irreducibly whole Life from inner out for the primacy of reciprocal relationship together with the whole-ly Trinity (Jn 14:6-7). Based on this relational process, his sentinels are to (1) listen carefully to “the word from my mouth” (Eze 3:17, cf. Mk 4:24) and (2) “act on them *in your daily practice*” (Mt 7:24) and (3) “you shall give *others* warning from me” (Eze 33:7), thus (4) to function as shepherds of God’s flock (as in Jer 23:3-4). This relational process became the functional model for church leaders to grow both in their own development and for the church as family in the primacy of just-nection. This growth requires redemptive change from the

prevailing norms of the status quo and related tradition, in order for that old to die and the new to emerge truly as new (as in Lk 5:33-39; 2 Cor 5:16-17; Eph 4:22-24). This relational process and outcome of the gospel is predicated on claiming the unredacted bad news, contrary to being absorbed by its redaction.

No one knew the need for personal transformation more profoundly than Paul. The misguided passion of Saul was transformed into his enlightened response to the whole of God (i.e. the *pleroma* of God, Col 1:15-20; Eph 1:22-23). In his integral fight for the whole gospel and against all reductionism, Paul gathered the leaders of the churches in Ephesus to make irrevocable the imperative of their calling: “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the **whole saving purpose** [*boule*] of God. Keep watch over, *pay close attention, devote yourself vulnerably* [*prosecho*] to your *whole person* and all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of

God” (Acts 20:27-28). Since Paul was well schooled in his religious tradition (Acts 22:3; Phil 3:5-6), he was aware of previous shepherds of God’s flock who took care of their self-interests and engaged in making distinctions among persons (as in Eze 34:1-6; Jer 50:6, cf. Jude 11-13). This oft-subtle lack of just-ness was the status quo condition that Jesus ongoingly encountered while proclaiming the gospel (Mt 9:35-36). Contemporary shepherds also encounter this condition in the church, whether they recognize it or not, which makes Paul’s imperative for their calling a valid source of bad news composing the gospel.

The urgent question facing the sentinels of human life is: Will we be shepherds reflecting, reinforcing or sustaining the common denominator of injustice, or will we be shepherds of justice in likeness of the Shepherd (Jn 10:14-16, cf. Eze 34:11-16)?

As evolved from the primordial garden, the pivotal shift of persons from inner out to outer in formed **the critical distinction for human persons** that constructed human identity and function. From this defining distinction evolved related formative human distinctions (such as race/ethnicity and class, besides gender), which have adapted into the prevailing norms of everyday life such that they pervade even the theology and practice of God’s rule of law and its order. Human distinctions were the critical issue underlying the problems in the church that Paul faced, fought against, and worked for transformation. Fighting intensely with the bad news of the gospel, Paul confronted Peter face to face for distinction-making in the church that disabled justice in the church and enabled Christians to practice injustice. This was necessary because Peter had yet to turn around from his contradiction of the gospel, even after Jesus corrected his theology (Gal 2:11; Acts 10:13-16). Similar outer-in distinctions fragmented the church, much to Paul’s grief and frustration (1 Cor 1:10-13; 3:1-4, 18-22; 4:6-7; 2 Cor 10:12); and this practice countered the bad news and contradicted the good news of the gospel (Gal 3:26-29; Col 3:9-11; Eph 2:14-22).

From creation the whole-ly God did not make distinctions of persons—“both naked and were not ashamed *of the whole who, what and how they were*” (Gen 2:25). In God’s rule of law for human life and its order, the Subject made no distinctions in the ontology and function of persons in likeness of the Trinity, which distinguishes the church in its whole identity and function that is fulfilled only in the primacy of relationship together vulnerably equalized without distinctions (as in Acts 15:9).

Christian leaders who practice anything less and promote any substitutes are shepherds functioning as disablers of justice as created by God and enablers of injustice composing the common norms of everyday life—the distinctions of those “naked from outer in and covering up the whole who, what and how they are” (as evolved from Gen 3:7,10). Those with such distinctions become mere objects shaped by the prevailing norms, rather than subjects fighting against their reductionist influence.

This then raises key questions needing our urgent response: “Where are you *in this human condition?*” and “Who tells you that you are naked?” (Gen 3:9,11). The vested and privileged rights for fulfilling the inherent human need of all persons are at stake in our response.

On his intrusive relational path Jesus ongoingly responded to persons denied their human-need rights, yet he was countered by leaders serving as sentinels of the law, shepherds of the flock, who functioned as disablers of justice and enablers of injustice (e.g. Mt 9:1-13,27-34; 12:9-25; Lk 7:36-50; 13:10-17; Jn 5:1-15; 9:1ff). The inequality of their rule of law and related Rule of Faith converged in the temple, which had become reconstructed with a comparative system of inequality that fragmented their relationships in a stratified order. Their distinction-making process of inequality denied persons their vested and privileged rights for access to God’s house for the fulfillment of their inherent human need. Later, of course, Jesus exposed this injustice, deconstructed the inequality, and reconstituted God’s house for the just-nection of all persons, people and nations (Mk 11:12-18); John’s Gospel records this pivotal action near the beginning of Jesus’ intrusive relational path in order to clearly distinguish both the bad news and good news of Jesus’ gospel (Jn 2:12-22). Human distinction-making has always been the underlying issue at the roots of injustice and a prime symptom of absorbing the bad news. Christian leaders need to recognize the presence of this in their theology and practice or be subject to subtly falling into becoming shepherds and enablers of injustice—those who are disablers of justice even with their good intentions.

Until his transformation, Peter was one of those leaders with good intentions who simply reinforced and sustained the core norms explicit to his tradition and implicit to his surrounding context’s status quo. This made evident his use of the status quo approach that masqueraded the bad with his truth and norm gymnastics. By design or default, this entailed having a theology and practice that countered the bad news and contradicted the good news of Jesus’ gospel (e.g. in his theology, Mt 16:21-23, and in his practice, Jn 13:5-8). In anticipation of this condition for Peter and to distinguish the pivotal alternative for his leadership function, Jesus asked Peter face to face:

“Do you involve your whole person with me in the primacy of reciprocal relationship together in likeness of my involvement with you?” “Yes...yes, indeed...of course I do.” Then, “Feed my sheep my words...shepherd them with justice...grow their persons without distinctions so that their vested and privileged rights will be enacted to fulfill their inherent human need to be whole as family together” (Jn 21:15-17).

As the *right* Shepherd, “I feed and shepherd the flock with justice” (Eze 34:16) and “proclaim justice to *all persons, peoples and nations*” (Mt 12:18). And he expects

nothing less and no substitutes from leaders for their ontology and function in his likeness.

For those in likeness of Jesus, their righteousness and justice must be integrated (just as “righteousness and peace kiss,” Ps 85:10) and be the defining basis for their function (“the foundation of your throne,” Ps 89:14). In other words, the whole of who, what and how they are must be in just-nection in order to “go before *them* and make *the intrusive relational path for their steps*” (Ps 85:13). Subject God “loves righteousness and justice” (Ps 33:5) but only in the invariable terms of relational language, just as God’s righteousness and justice are invariable and thus are nonnegotiable for those in likeness (cf. Jer 9:23-24).

Therefore, as Jesus’ whole-ly followers, his shepherds cannot function as disablers of justice and his sentinels cannot function as enablers of injustice. They “must follow me *in the primacy of reciprocal relationship together in wholeness*” (Jn 21:19,22). And Peter evidenced as a defining harbinger for church leadership that the underlying reality surrounding all of us is the pervasive dynamic of *distinction-making*, which evolves in a comparative system to fragment just-nection for persons and their relationships, both in the church and in the world. If this bad news is not claimed as the hard reality, then it unavoidably, inescapably and inevitably is consequential for absorbing the bad news in one’s own life and therefore reinforcing and sustaining the bad news in all human life.

The Embracing Church without Distinctions and Inequality

On his intrusive relational path, Jesus was vulnerably involved with persons at all levels of everyday life: “When he saw *these persons*, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and *fragmented [rhipto]*, *wandering* like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9:35-36). When he came to the main collective context of the status quo establishment, “he wept over it, saying, ‘If you, *all of you*, had only recognized on this day *what makes for peace!* But now *that depth* is hidden from your eyes’” (Lk 19:41-42). In his heart the depth of his feelings stirred: “How often I have longed to *embrace your persons* together as a *just shepherd* gathers her *flock* under her *care*, but you were not willing to *enter into the primacy of relationship together in wholeness*” (Lk 13:34).

What Jesus essentially responds to is the prevailing condition of **relational orphans**: persons who are *alone* in the company of others because of relational distance, separation or disconnection in contradiction to their created likeness of God (Gen 2:18), thus who live in a state lacking just-nection. Relational orphans are not a metaphor but the existing reality of our human relational condition in everyday life. The breadth and depth of this inescapable reality is that the lack of just-nection simply results in relational orphans. The global church today following Jesus on his intrusive relational path is faced with the same conditions he faced, both in the church and in the world. Any and all situations or circumstances lacking just-nection mean the presence of relational orphans; and in the context of the church the presence of relational orphans occupies much of church space—persons obscured by the normative practices of the church. These

practices need to be exposed as Paul did in order for these persons to be embraced as *relationally belonging* to Jesus' church family—not belonging as merely church members but vulnerably embraced in the primacy of intimate and equalized relationship together (the wholeness Paul made definitive for the church, Eph 2:14,19-22; Col 3:15).

When the identity of Christians is examined, for example, it is defined more by the secondary over the primary; and their relationships typically lack just-nection, despite their simulation of fellowship and community. Both conditions expose the fragmentary ontology and function of those associated within the church, which are not dissimilar conditions of those surrounding the church. Jesus' gospel, therefore, challenges the global church in how it thinks and sees in today's life, and it requires the church to have the mindset to interpret daily life and the perceptual lens to see everyday life in its true and full context. This indispensable mindset and lens involves understanding the make-up of human persons and the pervasive influence of reductionism, which evolved from the primordial garden in a pseudo-dialectic that has adapted into the prevailing normative thinking, perception and action shaping the church today.

We need to review this three-step pseudo-dialectic (discussed earlier) to understand how we and the church need to change according to Jesus' gospel. We need to know unequivocally (1) the pivotal juncture when persons in just-nection become disconnected from their primacy in *right* relationship together as whole persons from inner out—the created justice constituted by Subject God for human persons to be subjects (in contrast to objects) in the Trinity's likeness. Next we need to clearly understand (2) the dynamic point (neither static nor singular) of disjunction when persons engage an opposite (contrary, counter or conflict) alternative of simulating relationship merely by association rather than depth of relational involvement, whereby they substitute virtual connections to minimize the subtle condition of relational disconnection as relational orphans (e.g. the dominant experience of social media). Then we need to honestly recognize that (3) rather than reconciling the first two steps into a new relational outcome, this pseudo-dialectic is typically engaged to reflect, reinforce and sustain a different human order from creation—that is, some form of the common's human order that conjointly reduces persons from the innermost primary to the outer-in secondary of life, and fragments their relationships by persons' outer-in distinctions that become the measure to subtly stratify them in their association together.

If churches, ministries of justice and peace, and their leadership don't unequivocally know when persons become disconnected from just-nection, how do they know when persons are relational orphans and need to be pursued face to face in order to relationally belong to Jesus' church family (just like “my lost sheep,” Lk 15:1-7)? In contrast to common use, **belonging** is not a mere identity marker or an inscription worn by those merely in association together but the relational process and outcome of deep involvement in reciprocal relationship as family—determining belonging only by these relational terms. This vulnerability of relational belonging is the reason that the persons Jesus longed to bring together in his family relationship were unwilling (Lk 13:34). Further, if churches, ministries and leadership don't understand clearly when persons substitute for relational connections with mere simulations of relationship, how do they respond to the underlying reality of their condition as relational orphans (“like sheep without a shepherd,” Mt 9:36)? Relational disconnection is the (our) human relational condition that prevails in everyday life in the world and pervades weekly church life.

Moreover, if they don't willfully and vulnerably recognize a human order contrary to creation that exists in their midst, how do they know, understand and recognize when persons are reduced to their distinctions and relationships are fragmented accordingly—which are indispensable so that they can help bring redemptive change for their wholeness?

Apart from acute symptoms presented by persons and/or their bad situations and circumstances, the underlying human relational condition identifying relational orphans is only known, understood and recognized from this pseudo-dialectic.

A remaining issue, however, still needs to be exposed. The above three steps converge to form the normative values and practices framing the status quo. This normative framework has been adapted to pervade our theology and practice, which has biased our mindset to interpret daily life and distorts our lens to see everyday life in its existing context. The far-reaching consequence keeps us from the true context of human life and its essential order created by the Word, enacted by the embodied Word integrally with the bad news of the (our) human relational condition and the good news of reconciling persons from relational orphans to the primacy of just-nection. This exposure—as witnessed in Peter—demands the redemptive change to transform persons and relationships to wholeness (as signified by the “new wine,” Lk 5:36-39). The relational outcome from this transforming change involves the peace that Jesus grieved over his flock for not knowing, understanding and having (Lk 19:41-42). Therefore, in order for the transformation needed for his church family to embrace all persons without distinctions, Jesus cleaned out the old (“wine and wineskins”) so the new can emerge as “a house of *just-nection* for all *persons, peoples and nations without distinctions*” (Mk 11:17). His invasive action should raise concern for the global church about how many churches today also need to be cleaned out of distinction-making practices that disable just-nection.

In his intrusive relational path, the truth of the whole gospel emerges as nothing less than Jesus' *uncommon gospel of wholeness*, distinguished by no substitutes for this relational process and outcome: The bad news of the gospel is always action (not merely words) integral to the good news, without which redemptive change is incomplete and how we think, see and act don't really turn around (as demonstrated in Lk 22:24, contrary to Mt 18:1-3).

When distinctions were made in the early church, persons were left out (Acts 6:1), and were disparaged (1 Cor 1:12; 3:21; 4:6), and were considered dispensable (Col 2:16-19), thus necessitating Paul's clarification (1 Cor 12:21-22). This explicit or implicit discrimination was consequential for the church not growing in wholeness just as Jesus promised (his uncommon peace, Jn 14:27) and prayed for to be in likeness of the Trinity (Jn 17:20-26). Paul fought against this fragmentation by extending the bad news that Jesus initiated with the gospel. This correction was essential for the church's wholeness. Therefore, in order to counter the fragmenting distinctions in the church, Paul made Jesus' uncommon peace imperative as the only determinant for the integral identity and function of the church in wholeness (Col 3:11,15).

At the same time, Jesus' presence and involvement through the Spirit further extended his correction also of the church's reduced identity and function. This was evident in Jesus' post-ascension critique of churches (Rev 2-3). Along with the Spirit, he exposed the distinctions that were the basis for various church identities. The church in

Ephesus (Rev 2:1-3) made primary the distinction of doctrinal correctness, for which they fought rigorously at the expense of having primary involvement in relationship together—perhaps like the new Reformed emphasis in some churches today. With preoccupation in the right doctrine, they “abandoned the *primary relational involvement* you had at first” (2:4), and thus without the *right* relationship they lost just-ness to become relational orphans. The church in Thyatira (2:18-23) was a different activist church with the distinction of being tolerant of surrounding practices, a subtle bias whereby they based their identity on a hybrid theology and an inclusive practice—both of which Jesus rejected upon his underlying examination that “searches minds and hearts.” The distinctions of these two churches represent competing segments of the spectrum of activist churches today, which have also subtly fallen from just-ness in spite of good intentions to serve the cause of Christ with well-meaning efforts to compose the integrity and witness of the church.

Further critiqued by Jesus, the church in Sardis (Rev 3:1-2) was a popular church with an esteemed reputation based on a distinction of being lively—much like mega-churches and emerging churches of millennials today. The distinction (or brand) of their identity didn’t go deep, however; and when the underlying reality of their real (not virtual) condition was exposed by Jesus, the simple fact was “you are dead.” They needed to “wake up” and face the reality that their outer-in distinctions revealed their ministry not to be “complete [whole, *pleroma*] in the *lens* of my God.” The church in Laodicea (3:14-18) was a typical church, which based their identity on the distinctions of their abundant resources. In their thinking, their economic wealth, financial security and medical well-being made them self-sufficient and *special*, when in reality they were indistinguishable from the common and even distasteful to God for primary function. The distinctions used by these churches biased how they thought, perceived and acted. The consequence was to be in a theological fog with a skewed practice, which unavoidably shaped the church without just-ness as a gathering of relational orphans needing wholeness.¹

Ever since human distinctions emerged from the primordial garden to reduce persons from their whole ontology and function, the human order has been deconstructed from its relational likeness to the whole-ly Trinity and reconstructed in inequality, intentionally or inadvertently. The same counter-relational dynamic of reductionism evolves in the global church, while adapting (subtly or not so subtly) to its variable theology and practice to promote, justify and sustain explicit or implicit inequality in churches and among their persons and between their relationships. One subtle indicator of inequality in the church, for example, has evolved from a “separate but equal” doctrine. Whether based on racial or economic distinctions, this approach to church growth and ministry may ostensibly claim equality of persons in its theology, but its practice discriminates to cause and sustain inequality. This pervasive approach has been the justification for the church growth principle of ‘the homogeneous unit’. The reality, however, is that ‘separate but equal’ promotes disablers of justice and develops enablers of injustice.

¹ I discuss Jesus’ post-ascension critique of churches in greater detail for the global church in *The Global Church Engaging the Nature of Sin and the Human Condition: Reflecting, Reinforcing, Sustaining or Transforming* (Global Church Study, 2016), 26-36. Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.

The unavoidable discrimination intrinsic to the inequality from all such distinctions (including even highlighting spiritual gifts) is consequential for the church not being transformed to the new creation. The new creation church emerges only from the relational outcome of persons without distinctions (Gal 3:26-28; 6:15, cf. 1 Cor 12:4-7), who are reconciled in *right* relationship together with the whole-ly Trinity (1 Cor 12:12-13; 2 Cor 5:16-18) as the embracing church without distinctions and related inequality (Eph 2:19-22; Col 3:10-11). These are the consequences facing the global church today in its distinctions. As Jesus made paradigmatic for all his followers and definitive for the church:

- The human distinctions used in the church will be the inequality the church gets.
- The inequality working in the church will be the discrimination lacking just-nection that the church gets.
- The lack of just-nection operating in the church will be the relational orphans the church gets in its midst.

Therefore, such churches are accountable for serving as disablers of justice and as enablers of injustice—thereby responsible for countering the bad news and contradicting the good news of Jesus’ gospel.

From the beginning, relational orphans have needed an embracing family without distinctions and inequality for them to relationally belong to. In the Trinity’s relational response of grace to the (our) human relational condition, the church was constituted in relational likeness to the whole-ly Trinity in order to be whole and uncommon—thus distinguished from the common and fragmentary—as **the embracing church family without distinctions and inequality**:

The relational dwelling of the Trinity’s vulnerable presence and intimate involvement for the just-nection of all persons, peoples and nations to be reconciled in wholeness of relationship together—the whole-ly relational process and outcome definitive for the church (as summarized by Paul, Eph 2:14-22).

If churches, their persons and relationships are not to counter the bad news and contradict the good news of Jesus’ gospel, then we have to change our assumptions and biases in our theology and practice. These misguided assumptions and misleading biases have transposed the primacy of intimate face-to-face involvement in relationship together without distinctions, and have substituted hybrid alternatives, plus have become preoccupied with the secondary lacking wholeness, and have depended (even boasted about) on our resources and abilities to define our identity and determine our function. That is to say unequivocally and without apology, we need to change our theological anthropology and view of sin, and be transformed in how we think, see and act in everyday life, both as subject persons and collectively as family (as in Rom 12:2).

In your honest opinion, answer these three interrelated questions:

1. How many churches today don’t really know what will bring them wholeness, still causing Jesus to weep?

2. How many churches today need to be cleaned out in order to be the relational context and provide the relational process for the just-nection of all persons?
3. How many churches would be unwilling to be vulnerable for being embraced together as family in intimate and equalized relationships, no matter how much Jesus longs for this relational outcome?

Jesus continues to “proclaim *the bad news and good news of justice to all persons, peoples and nations...* until he leads just-nection to victory” (Mt 12:18,20). He calls his followers to join him on this uncommonly intrusive and narrowly whole relational path to be shepherds in his likeness and sentinels of his word. He calls us so that his integral relational purpose, process and outcome of just-nection unfolds to completion. As Simeon alerted us (Lk 2:34-35), the bad news is integral to Jesus’ gospel and is unavoidable for those who claim and proclaim the whole gospel. Moreover, the bad news should not be underestimated, and is consequential whenever it is. The fight against reductionism is at the core of Subject God’s relational response to the human condition, fighting against persons reduced and relationships fragmented from wholeness. This critical fight is the *right* basis for Jesus assertively cleaning out the gathering at God’s house and the just means of wielding his sword for uncommon peace (Mt 10:34-36). Those whose thinking, perception and action about sin are not centered on reductionism will fall into reduced ontology and function for their persons and thereby fall out of just-nection.

Jesus doesn’t recognize persons in reduced ontology and function as his true followers (Mt 7:21-23). Nor does he accept as his church a gathering (large or small) in reduced identity and function (as in Rev 2-3). These churches, persons and relationships comprise the relational orphans needing just-nection by *relationally* belonging in his church family. Therefore, to fulfill his relational purpose for justice and peace, Jesus vulnerably enacts the relational terms of God’s rule of law and its relational order by enforcing them on the variable Rules of Faith from tradition and on the adaptations having evolved from the status quo for their transformation (Mt 5:17-20).

Due to a weak view of sin and its adapted anthropology, the global church and its persons and relationships have not recognized adequately (or at all) this pervasive reality in our midst:

Reductionism has either *common-ized* our theology and practice by its simplification of how we think, see and act.
Or reductionism has simplified our theology and practice by its *common-ization* of how we think, see and act.

Without any tolerance for reductionism, Jesus (with the Spirit) challenges our theology and practice today, as he confronts who, what and how we are in everyday life (the righteousness in Mt 5:20)—always integrating the bad news and good news of his gospel. The correct theological doctrine is important but only in God’s relational language, which always gives priority to the primacy of relationship together in the Trinity’s likeness (just as Jesus prayed and critiqued the church in Ephesus). Ministry is necessary practice but must neither define the identity of who and what we are, nor determine the function of how we are (as Jesus critiqued the church in Sardis).

Jesus' shepherds of his flock cannot be satisfied with the church as a mere gathering; nor can they claim to be in his likeness without the depth of relational involvement with and ongoing response to relational orphans for their just-nection. Congruently, Jesus' sentinels of his word for all human life cannot settle for calling for justice without having just-nection, nor can they stop at working for peace without bringing wholeness. To be satisfied or to settle reflects the *common*'s influence shaping our persons and relationships. In his fight against this *common*-ization, Jesus pursued Peter and now pursues us:

“Do you love me *with your relational involvement* more than *your engagement of the secondary?*”

Then, let our relational response unfold by “follow me” and be distinguished by

- “Feed my flock *my word only in relational terms.*”
- “Shepherd my *church family* with justice for their just-nection.”
- “Grow their persons without distinctions in order for their vested and privileged rights to be enforced, so they will enact their rights to fulfill their inherent human need to be whole as family together.” (Jn 21:15-17).

He pursues us to be *right*, so that in our just-nection we will not be disablers of justice and enablers of injustice. Therefore, may the bad news of his gospel be whole-ly claimed and proclaimed by us in the primacy of relationship, with nothing less and no substitutes. Then, we will be relationally involved with him to “declare justice for all persons, peoples, tribes and nations without any distinctions...until he brings justice to victory.”

Chapter 5 The *Uncommon Good* of the Gospel

Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

John 1:46

The LORD make his face to shine upon you...and *bring the change* to give you peace.

Numbers 6:25-26

My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

John 14:27

As we transition in our discussion from the bad news of the gospel to the good news, we have to be aware that the bad news could also be reported with misinformed, distorted or even fake news. For the transition to justice to be complete, such reporting must be recognized or any good news will lack the significance distinguishing Jesus' gospel. The bad news exposes us to the fragmentary heart of the human condition in order to bring us the integral heart of human life. Anything less and any substitutes for how we think, see and act are unable to recognize the heart of the (our) human condition and thus are disabled to understand the integral gospel for all human life and its essential order.

It was common thinking for Nathaniel to be skeptical and ask, "can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (Jn 1:46). Nazareth was a small town with a common negative stereotype, which predisposed Nathaniel's thinking to be incredulous about the good news reported by Philip (Jn 1:43-45)—biasing his perception of Jesus. In common terms, what Nathaniel thought was "good" was measured by reduced outer-in distinctions of what persons did and had; and his measurement of Jesus in this comparative process couldn't indicate 'good' but implied he was 'less', perhaps even 'bad' on this comparative scale. Nathaniel's predisposed mindset and biased lens were not surprising because they demonstrate the common thinking and perception of "good." This thinking and perception emerged from the "good and evil" in the primordial garden and have evolved under the wrong assumption of "knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5). This faulty assumption has adapted into the prevailing thinking and pervasive perception of *the common good*.

Falling into the Common Good

What has adapted into the common good revolves on two basic issues critical to understanding the common good: (1) the state of what is called ‘common’, and (2) the composition of what is considered ‘good’. Any use of the term ‘the common good’ makes assumptions about these basic issues, and its application appears positive under the further assumption of having the appropriate outcome for all persons and peoples on the earth. These assumptions are rarely challenged, if at all,¹ but they are consequential for Christians in their claim to the good news of the gospel and in their related work for the common good.

The inaugural human persons were constituted in creation justice under the authority of God’s rule of law for its human order in wholeness. But, when they “saw that *the alternative* was good” to fulfill their common needs, desires and concerns, they chose the alternative (formed by a pseudo-dialectic, discussed in chap. 4) to creation justice in wholeness; they made this choice subtly under the assumption that they would also “know good and evil like God” and thereby have the wisdom to act for their common good (Gen 3:5-6). These consequences followed:

1. What emerged from this alternative constructed the prevailing human condition constituting the human context, known as *the common*. Most important, the state of this common exists in reductionism, that is, in a state of reduced ontology and function in all its diversity and variations at all levels of human life—a state in subtle contrast, variable contradiction or conflict with creation justice.
2. What evolved from this alternative also transposed the composition of *good* to be compatible with the common, thereby redefining ‘good’ to be inclusive of reduced ontology and function in their variations and diversity making up the human context. In much postmodern thinking, this “good” would be desirable because it is more inclusive of the human context to represent the common good. This redefining of good involved both the common-ization of “good” and the renegotiation of “evil” (making it variable and relative), which signified the misleading promise made in the primordial garden about “knowing good and evil like God.” Consequently, this composition of good encompassed the human condition and thus fell into ambiguous distinction with evil—the “good and evil” of the alternative to creation justice.

These consequences have evolved subtly into the prevailing notion of the common good; and when its assumptions are not challenged, the common good adapts even more subtly to pervade Christian theology and practice with its common-ized and relativized shaping. As an extension from the primordial garden, this existing condition among us has fallen into the virtual realm composing the common good, having only assumptions to cling to.

¹ Two examples by Christians, who center on the common good but don’t address assumptions about it, are: Jim Wallis, *The (Un)Common Good: How the Gospel Brings Hope to a World Divided* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014), and Miroslav Volf and Ryan McAnnally-Linz, *Public Faith in Action: How to Think Carefully, Engage Wisely, and Vote with Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016).

Therefore, the reality facing us in applying the common good to human life is unavoidable:

The common good is not always *good* according to God's eyes, whose lens distinguishes the reality of creation from the virtual and augmented realities of human shaping; nor does the common good routinely serve all human life in the inherent human need of all persons and peoples—at best serving only their permissible rights, which is insufficient to fulfill the inherent human need that requires vested and privileged rights.

This reality is the genius of reductionism, which generates illusions about “good and evil” and promotes misinformation, distorted facts and fake news about the utility of the common good. The purpose of reductionism is to counter wholeness—the wholeness of God and the wholeness of human persons created in likeness. The counter-workings of reductionism generate *ontological simulations* and *epistemological illusions* of human identity and function, which have become the default condition that subtly pervades our theology and practice. And reductionism's most ingenious counteraction is the alternative of the common good, and seducing us with its appealing results (or hope).

Accordingly, when Christians hear the human-life buzzword ‘the common good’—even if only in their own thoughts and words—they must neither automatically affirm that it's good, nor simply accept that it's beneficial for humanity or even benefits just the majority of the human population. One example of the subtle influence of reductionism in the common good involves benefitting the majority of the human population. Sounds good so it seems unreasonable to discount it. But, on what basis can we say that this is good without assuming that the majority isn't wrong, unjust or bad—which human history disproves? For the enforcement of God's rule of law, God clearly instructed a different perspective: “You shall not side with the majority so as to pervert justice” (Ex 23:2). Many who advocate for the common good also emphasize giving the poor special attention or treatment. Yet, for the whole justice of God's rule of law, “nor shall you be partial to the poor” (Ex 23:3, cf. Dt 1:17). With their apparent thinking about the common good, Jesus' first disciples had yet to learn in their advanced discipleship the priority to be given to the poor, in contrast to what Jesus makes primary for all persons and relationships in his gospel (Mt 26:6-13). These examples evidence the influence of reductionism by common-izing how we think, see and act.

Therefore, until the basic assumptions about the common good are clarified and corrected, we need to exercise the valid means of a ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’ on any reference to the common good. In other words, we need to be engaged ongoingly in the fight against reductionism or this critical battle will subject us to the common's influence composed by reductionism—notably shaping ontological simulations and epistemological illusions. Whether in a reduced theological anthropology or having a weak view of sin without encompassing reductionism, the shaping influence of reductionism will subtly pervade our theology and practice and prevent our whole transition to justice.

As a former reductionist with fragmented theology and practice, Paul knew how irreplaceable the fight against reductionism is for the integral fight for the *good* of the whole gospel. When he countered reductionism in the church and the fragmentary theology and practice preventing wholeness of persons and relationships in the church, Paul qualified Christian freedom: “All *good* things are *permissible rights*, but not all “*good*” things are beneficial...not all “*good*” things build up *the whole*. Do not seek your own *good* but *the good* of the other” (1 Cor 10:23-24). Paul, however, didn’t affirm the common good, instead he countered the assumption that it would build up the whole. By correcting the misguided assumptions extended from the primordial garden, Paul further clarified the issue for our theology in order for our practice to be *right*, or best and not simply common-ly good: “I want you to be wise in what is *truly* good and *clearly distinguished* from what is *unambiguously* evil. *In this fight* the God of peace will crush Satan, *the author of reductionism*, under your *whole-ly* feet” (Rom 16:19-20).

In his defining fight against reductionism, Jesus wielded the sword of uncommon peace to unmistakably distinguish that he did not “come to bring peace to the earth *for the common good*” (Mt 10:34-36). His purpose is to break apart the simulation in existing bonds in relationships, to cause conflict in the conventional unions of human life, and thereby to tear down common illusions to expose the underlying reality of reduced persons and relationships without just-nection in the fragmentary human relational condition (Lk 12:49-53). Without the common thinking of civility and a fashionable notion of being irenic for the sake of the common good, Jesus strongly declared the bad news of the gospel. This is the uncomfortable part of his gospel that commonly gets revised by misinformed, distorted or fake news in order to reflect, reinforce and sustain the virtual and augmented reality of common peace (as in Jn 14:27). Jesus’ intense fight against reductionism—for example, enacted intensely against the reduction of persons and relationships in God’s house (Mk 11:15-17; Jn 2:14-17)—expressed the depth of his whole person from inner out, and thus caused him to weep over what others assumed to be of the common good—weeping because their common peace lacked wholeness for all human life and its essential order of all persons and relationships (Lk 19:41-42). And as Jesus made unequivocal, his uncommon peace remains indistinguishable for them from common peace because it is “hidden from your *lens assumed under the common good*.”

By relentlessly declaring the bad news of the gospel in his fight against reductionism, Jesus exposed, clarified and corrected the assumptions of the common good. His declarations extended further and unfolded deeper integrally with the good news proclaiming **the uncommon good** distinguished by only Jesus’ gospel. Yet, the uncommon good will be hidden from our lens also as long as we lack clarity about the common good and its common peace. This clarity will elude how we think, see and act (1) if we dismiss the uncommon good as a mere ideal without real significance, or (2) if we simply ignore its reality because the uncommon good involves more vulnerable change than we are willing to undergo for the integral heart of human life and/or to undertake to make whole the fragmentary heart of the human condition (including our condition).

Conventional Change or Redemptive Change

Change is usually implied in any conversation for the common good; and change is always an explicit or implicit goal for those calling for justice and working for peace. Change, however, in the uncommon good of Jesus' gospel is neither optional or temporary for human life, nor merely remedial for everyday life. The significance of change cannot be just a moment in time or involve just a movement of action. In Jesus' gospel, significant change is the transformation of life (and lives), which is constituted by the redemptive change of both the *old* (i.e. the reduced, fragmented, bad, wrong, unfair, unjust) being terminated and the *new* (i.e. the whole, good, right, fair, just) raised up for the experiential truth and reality of the heart of human life and its essential order for all persons and relationships. Anything less and any substitutes for redemptive change reduce such change to conventional change. At best, the significance of conventional change is (1) temporary for the human condition because it doesn't get to its fragmentary heart, and (2) fleeting for everyday life because it doesn't involve the qualitative-relational heart of human life.

The uncommon good of Jesus' gospel offers, involves and requires redemptive change of reduced ontology and function in all its variations and forms in everyday life and at all levels of human life (including institutional, systemic and structural). This redemptive change encompasses the ontological simulations and epistemological illusions that compose our default mode. When his disciples' everyday practice made evident their reduced ontology and function centered on human distinctions from outer in ("the greatest," Lk 9:46; 22:24), he told them the whole truth: "Unless you change *from inner out* like *vulnerable* children, you will never *belong to my kingdom family*" (Mt 18:3). His truth, however, was not about **conventional change** merely from the outer in; outer-in change is the *metaschematizō* that even Satan promotes (2 Cor 11:14-15). The truth of his gospel is the "turn-around change" (*strepho*) signifying the **redemptive change** of transformation from inner out (*metamorphoo*). *Metamorphoo* is the relational outcome constituting the uncommon good of Jesus' gospel, which Paul, on the one hand, made conclusive (2 Cor 3:18; 5:17) and, on the other hand, made imperative as the ongoing change necessary in order to be distinguished from the common (Rom 12:2). And as Peter would testify about the good news, the uncommon good offers, involves and requires nothing less than redemptive change of reduced ontology and function, the condition he persisted in; and that no substitutes such as conventional change are sufficient or acceptable for redemptive change, such as Peter attempted until his transformation.

The need for change is basic to the human condition since the primordial garden. We all, then, need change, whether we seek, want or even recognize it; this need is innate to our human condition. More complex is the type of change required to meet this need. Since the beginning, however, the means for change utilized in the human context for changing the human condition have complicated both what is significant change and what brings significant change (e.g. the misguided tower of Babel, Gen 11:1-4). The gospel's uncommon good clarifies and corrects what is needed for the human condition.

First, the terms are clarified to avoid confusion or conflation of terms. Conventional change is common change, and redemptive change is uncommon change. That which is common is distinct to the human context, human life and its persons.

Uncommon (or holy) distinguishes God and God's relational context and process unique to God. The common and the uncommon are mutually exclusive and thus should not be confused with each other. Moreover, the common and the uncommon are incompatible and therefore must not be conflated. Since conventional change is common change, the extent of this change does not and cannot exceed the common. While our desire for or pursuit of change may not go beyond the extent of conventional change, our hopes for change often exceed common change. Likewise, those working for justice and peace tend to pursue the limits of conventional change, while their hopes and expectations usually exceed common change—notably true for Christians. It is problematic for those needing, wanting or working for change either to not understand or to ignore the extent of that change; and it is disappointing, frustrating, angering or depressing when their hopes and expectations for change are not fulfilled. But, this process reflects how conventional change gets confused with redemptive change, and, more importantly, how uncommon change is conflated with common change to mislead those needing and wanting change as well as to misguide those seeking and working for change.

Jesus clarifies for us: **The change we use will be the extent of change we get.** When his clarification is listened to, then his correction can be received.

Conventional change may serve and does indeed work for the common good. The common good, however, cannot be confused with the uncommon good and must not be conflated with what Jesus' gospel distinguishes only as the uncommon good. What he brings (as in Mt 10:34) and what he gives (as in Jn 14:27) are only uncommon and thus exclusive to the whole of God and God's relational context and process. The unique nature of what Jesus brings is irreducible in the human context and by human life and its persons; and the uniqueness of what he gives is nonnegotiable to all human terms. In other words, the uncommon good is unmistakably distinguished from the common good and must never be confused or conflated with it. This critical clarification and correction were initiated by God in Babylonia, where God deconstructed the tower of Babel for the corrective purpose to expose the false hope of a common good and to dispel the illusion of its expected outcome from common change (Gen 11:5-9). God's purpose wasn't only to clarify and correct but also to prepare the way for the uncommon good to be received; and further integrated in God's purpose, to enact the uncommon change necessary for this relational outcome to be whole and uncommon (whole-ly) as the experiential truth and reality in human life and its order for all persons and relationships.

The tower of Babel predates the hopeful change that has evolved in two prime examples of recent history. One example counters what Jesus brings and the other example contradicts what Jesus gives, both of which compete with uncommon change and its uncommon good. The first prime example has a conflict approach to change, which could be confused with the sword Jesus brought. This is the Marxist ideology and its dialectic (thesis-antithesis-synthesis), which communism has implemented under the assumption that it will result in the synthesis for the greater good of the people. On the one hand, a conflict approach to change is warranted because significant change requires the *old* to be terminated for the *new* to emerge—which is the unequivocal purpose of Jesus' sword. On the other hand, a Marxist-Hegelian dialectic does not merit affirmation of the means used for its end to bring about a synthesis. Its common thinking, explicitly or implicitly, is that the end justifies the use of its means, even if the means are wrong or unjust.

The systemic use of power relations to enforce change formally breaks justice and officially legitimizes its injustice. This common thinking about “good and evil” relativizes what is *right*, and thereby promotes, reinforces and/or sustains the disabling of justice while enabling injustice. Therefore, the conflict approach to change of Marxist ideology (and all its variations) cannot be confused with the sword of uncommon change that Jesus brings:

The common’s conflict approach to change works variably to disable justice and to enable injustice, while the uncommon’s redemptive change serves invariably for the just-nection of all persons and relationships in wholeness; the former works under the assumption of serving the common good, while the latter serves only the reality of the uncommon good and thus works for the only *good* that distinguishes justice by Jesus’ gospel.

The verdict on the Marxist-Hegelian dialectic (cf. pseudo-dialectic discussed previously) has not been concluded because the jury on communist history is still in session. But, the synthesis for a new human order has had no indications of being nothing more than a false hope—not only in falling short of utopian expectations but with its dystopian consequences (cf. pseudo-dialectic discussed previously). Nevertheless, the anticipated victory for this hoped-for result has not stopped many from continuing to pursue this common change, likely in the absence of real hope for significant change. Variations of a conflict approach have adapted into many forms of protest (political, social, economic, religious, and the like) that have been aggressive (in both macro- and micro-aggression) and thus violent (even implicitly as Jesus defined in God’s rule of law, Mt 5:21-22). Even knowingly in their common thinking, their approach to change has adopted the principle of the end justifies the use of its means. These varying conflict approaches to change—which includes the adaptation of the Marxist dialectic in liberation theology—are still simply common change that should not be confused with the uncommon change Jesus brings.

At the same time, this is not to say that the approach to change should be nonviolent. What does need to be said, however, is that when viewed through the lens of uncommon terms, the approach of nonviolence is an oversimplified notion of change, as difficult as this approach is to embrace and enact. Such change is unable to deal with the existing depth of the *old* even though it may address and confront the old, thus it merely acts as common change working for the common good. Consider this sensitive example, which various persons could have misgivings accepting. Though Martin Luther King’s nonviolent approach to change eventually included the global injustice of the Vietnam War, it never encompassed the sexism within the Civil Rights Movement to change the gender inequality existing among themselves—notably those proclaiming and working for the common good. In other words, change became selective and likely protective for those who didn’t want to be vulnerable from inner out.

This makes evident the fact that Christians who advocate for nonviolent change distort what Jesus brings with his sword, either by commonly idealizing it or by simply ignoring it. The consequence has been that the redemptive change needed, for example, to clean out God’s house has been absent, which has left the relational orphans populating churches without just-nection—leaving the church in the simulation of its

practice and the illusion of its relationships together. This relational condition is not the uncommon good that Jesus' gospel brings. The sword of Jesus signifies the intensity (not the violence) with which the battle against reductionism (the full scope of sin) must be fought. Thus, Jesus' sword is the relational extension of God's wrath in the OT. Contrary to common perception and thinking about God's wrath, this intensity expressed the heart of God's grief in relational response to the scope of sin as reductionism, which reduced persons and relationships from their wholeness created in the image and likeness of the Trinity. The heart of God's grief first responded intensely to this reductionism with the flood, and only because of Noah's wholeness (*tamiym*) was he saved from God's intense battle against reductionism (Gen 6:1-9).

God's wrath and Jesus' sword express the heart of the Trinity's grief (as in Lk 13:34; 19:41-42) in the relational response necessary to bring the uncommon change for transforming the human condition and its fragmentary relational order. Therefore, the unavoidable reality facing Christian leaders and activists is this: The *old* is not eliminated without conflict and this conflict does not terminate without Jesus' sword of uncommon change for only the uncommon good. Accordingly, even nonviolent approaches to change should not be confused with the uncommon change required for the uncommon good of Jesus' gospel (not our variations of the gospel).

All the above approaches signify common change, which in one conventional way or another disable justice and enable injustice by reinforcing and sustaining the reduced ontology and function of the human condition. Moreover, any form of power relations at any level becomes an enabler of injustice and a disabler of justice (cf. Lk 22:24-26). Whether intentionally or inadvertently, these approaches counter what Jesus brings. The redemptive change brought by Jesus is the only good news to have integrally the whole and uncommon relational outcome for human ontology and function, and this whole-ly relational outcome is the uncommon good that Jesus gives.

Next, contradicting the uncommon good that Jesus gives is the second prime example in recent history: globalization, as it has evolved from colonialism and been adapted from the Enlightenment. Countering the uncommon good brought by Jesus and contradicting this reality that he gave are not mutually exclusive but interrelated in critical ways. They are both problematic in their underlying reductionism that promotes and generates results different from Jesus' gospel. Yet, it is one issue for conflict approaches to counter what Jesus brings by using a misleading or misguided hope, and a deeper, more complicated issue to contradict the uncommon good he gives by using a false hope.

Analogous to the global effort by Babylonia to "build ourselves a *global community*" (Gen 11:4), political globalization evolved in human history to "make a name for ourselves." The construction of this "name for ourselves" required (1) competing with the kingdom of God to rule the world, and (2) imposing its rule over others under the dominance of its sovereignty. This global process formed the dynamic of colonialism (or imperialism), which has been the prime political example that has disabled justice and enabled injustice—a dynamic generated often by the myth of the common good. As a subtle extension of the Roman Empire, Constantine (in the 4th century) justified this dynamic with a false hope of building Christendom; and the U.S. has intensified the colonial dynamic by common thinking that amplifies the myth of Manifest Destiny and/or the false hope of democratic ideology—both illusions having

justified the enabling of injustice that contradicts the uncommon good given by Jesus. Many Christians in the U.S. would either disagree with this assessment or feel very uncomfortable accepting it. But, then, they have to answer to the type of change they advocate and be accountable for its effects on their own lives, the church, this nation and the world. And the change they use and get from it have to be measured by the uncommon change for the uncommon good of the gospel that Jesus brings and gives.

From political globalization has evolved economic globalization. The modern development of the economy distinctly adapted from the Enlightenment (around the 18th century), which promoted two movements for human progress:

1. The reliance on rationalized thinking to supposedly enlighten human perception and action, which, on the one hand, would challenge human development beyond tradition but, on the other hand, would compete with the uncommon change that Jesus brings by substituting a secular worldview (**secularism**) to contradict the uncommon good Jesus gives.
2. The emergence of modern science, which challenged traditional beliefs and the limits of their conclusions (e.g. the order of the universe) to both (a) justify secularism for human development and (b) prioritize the development of technology for human progress—the primacy of which has pervaded modern life and preoccupies (even dominates) persons over the primacy of relationships together.

By adapting in this evolutionary process, the economy underwent pivotal change with the Industrial Revolution (starting from the late 18th century) and has since progressed (i.e. evolved) as energized by the natural (common) selection of the economy's fittest components to survive. The economy's survival of the fittest generates the economic colonialism necessary to empower the progress of the global economy, even over the objections of tribes and nations. Like political globalization, of course, this defining dynamic of economic globalization also contradicts the uncommon good that Jesus gives.²

Economic globalization, however, doesn't survive by colonialism alone. The survival of its fittest has a much more subtle basis. Earlier, Jesus alerted his followers to what contradicts what he gives (the scope of Mt 6:19-32). What he defined is the mentality and lifestyle of **consumers**. *Consumerism* drives the common everyday life and practice that fuels economic growth; and the subtle the-more-the-better mentality and the explicit lifestyle of greed intensify consumer drive as mere objects manipulated and forged by economic promotion (as Paul alluded to, Eph 2:3). Economic globalization survives only by the consumption of its common goods, which it multiplies by creating the subtle need for **convenience** and **efficiency**. These human-shaped needs consume consumers—even at the expense of fulfilling their inherent human need basic to all persons—which economic globalization has now substituted as the prevailing source for

² Further discussion on globalization, aimed at the global church, is engaged openly by Vinoth Ramachandra, *Subverting Global Myths: Theology and the Public Issues Shaping Our World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008).

the good life. Moreover, discordant clouds are forming over the expanding scenario of the global economy, which darkens its optimistic basis (1) on the misguided assumption that the earth's natural resources can support unlimited economic growth, and (2) on the misleading assumption that all human labor benefits from capitalist development.

Therefore, Christians need to awaken to the consuming reality enveloping our everyday life. The priority given to consumption, plus the pursuit of convenience and the search for efficiency, all reinforce and sustain economic globalization, and thereby also enable the injustice of its colonial practices and disable the justice needed for the care of all creation. Since we are all consumers in one way or another, wanting convenience and desiring efficiency to some extent, the priority we give to these even if not excessive will determine whether or not we also contradict the uncommon good Jesus gives—as well as also counter the uncommon change he brings.

Given these two prime examples of hopeful change and related variations of them on the personal or collective level, we are always faced with the significance of the change we use. This change is especially important for the goal of those calling for justice and working for peace. Significant change, however, is neither just a moment in time nor involving just a movement of action. How we think, see and act regarding change have to be challenged ongoingly by the distinction between common-conventional change and uncommon-redemptive change. All the issues about change converge in the vital difference between *metaschematizō* (outer-in change) and *metamorphoo* (inner-out change, as distinguished by Paul); and this critical distinction between the outer in and inner out cannot be confused with each other or conflated together, because they signify the incompatibility of human identity and function in either reduced terms or whole terms. The former involves common change and nothing more, and the latter involves uncommon change and nothing less.

It should be evident in how we think, see and act that the type of change is crucial for the outcome desired, hoped for and expected. The self-evident reality is:

The change we use will be the extent of change and related outcome we get—which either at best serves only a common good variably defined, or at the least works for the uncommon good of all persons and relationships in wholeness.

Metamorphoo distinguishes the uncommon change necessary by its nature (not by duty or obligation) for the whole (not partial or fragmentary) relational outcome of the uncommon good that Jesus brings and gives (as in 2 Cor 3:18). Only inner-out change unequivocally distinguishes the uncommon from the common (as in Rom 12:2), and thereby constitutes the uncommon-redemptive change of the gospel (as in 2 Cor 5:16-17)—which common-conventional change is unable to bring and give, yet may try to simulate (as reductionism does, 2 Cor 11:13-15) or create illusions about (as Peter attempted, Gal 2:11-14).

The uncommon good of the gospel that Jesus brings and gives emerges by the redemptive change of the who, what and how persons are from inner out (their righteousness), and it unfolds with the wholeness of their righteousness in likeness of God's. This relational outcome of wholeness is the primacy defining the full identity of those in God's kingdom-family and that determines their primary relational involvement with the whole of who, what and how God is—as Jesus made conclusive in contrast and

conflict with the common (Mt 6:33). Anything less and any substitutes of who, what and how persons are reflect, reinforce and sustain the reduced ontology and function that both counters what Jesus brings and contradicts what he gives. Those reductionists are in need of redemptive change in order to be involved in and belong to relationally the uncommon good of his gospel of uncommon peace—as Jesus clearly distinguished for the who, what and how his true followers are in wholeness (Mt 5:6,9,20).

Premature Justice and Immature Peace

In Jesus' uncommon good, the significance of change is always relational, and redemptive change only transforms in the primacy of relationship. Thus, significant change always encompasses, involves and changes relationships, which unmistakably contrasts with common-conventional change. Any change that is not so engaged relationally falls short and, therefore, is insufficient to bring the significant change and give the significant outcome that transforms relationships in their primacy. Uncommon change is irreplaceable to bring the significant change necessary for justice and to give the significant outcome constituting peace. Anything less and any substitutes, even with good intentions, at best result in premature justice and immature peace.

Accordingly, and invariably, when we call for justice, we have to know what indeed brings justice; and when we work for peace, we have to understand what truly gives peace.

The uncommon change of the uncommon good emerged distinguished in relational terms when God responded face to face with his kingdom-family by the relational involvement of his definitive blessing (Num 6:22-27). “*Subject God* make his face to shine upon you...and give you peace” is the most common blessing in our tradition, whose use has lost its relational significance and has either ignored or not understood the essential significant change at the heart of Subject God's relational response. By “give you” (*siym*), God is not acting as a mere benefactor, nor is it merely highlighting God's good character to give. The deeper meaning of *siym* used in God's response centers on the heart of what Subject God brings and gives: (1) to bring about a change, and integral to this change (2) to establish a new relationship. Thus, the Subject's face-to-face response to subjects (not objects of his blessing) is to bring the significant change that establishes them in new relationships. The relational outcome is not a “new” normal but gives them the new order of relationships together in *shalom*—that is, their well-being in wholeness to constitute their just-nection as subjects in Subject God's family.

Sadly, those associated with God's kingdom-family turned God's definitive blessing into a “new” normal by first transposing the uncommon change God brings to common change, and then by common-izing the uncommon peace God gives (cf. Isa 29:13). The pervasive consequence was to convert God's uncommon good into a prevailing common good. This conversion continues today, subtly shaping how we see and think about the gospel to counter the uncommon change Jesus brings and to contradict the uncommon wholeness he gives. Jesus had to clarify and correct this conversion throughout his embodied presence in order to expose the common-ization of what he brings and gives (as discussed throughout this study).

Notably, of course, his main disciples were common-ized in their identity (seeking to be the greatest, Lk 22:24) and gave priority to serving the common good over the primacy of relationship together (Mt 26:8-11). Also, the majority associated with God's family functioned in common peace to counter the *siym* of Subject God's relational response, and thereby contradicted the *shalom* he gives (Lk 19:41-42). As evident in his post-ascension critique of churches (Rev 2-3), Jesus (together with the Spirit) continues to pursue us in any distorting conversion of the uncommon change he brings and the uncommon peace he gives. His relational purpose is always for the just-nection of all persons and relationships in the uncommon good. Furthermore, his ceaseless purpose in this vital process pursues us, so that any call for justice will not stop prematurely until just-nection is complete, and that all work for peace will not be engaged immaturely without wholeness and settle for common peace. Jesus knew all too well from his personal observations that common thinking, perception and action result in anything less than their maturity until they undergo uncommon change.

In the ordinary terms of the gospel, the sword of uncommon peace that Jesus brings and gives would seem to contradict peace and to function counter to it. That would only be true for our theology and valid in our practice when the focus is reduced to common peace. The truth of Jesus' gospel, however, that invalidates other gospels using his name is this: Whenever common peace is used in place of uncommon peace, there is a contradiction of what Jesus gives; and whenever our work revolves around common peace, it functions counter to the uncommon peace that Jesus' sword brings.

The uncommon good of Jesus' gospel unfolds in his discipleship manifesto for all his followers (the Sermon on the Mount, Mt 5-7), emerging with their definitive identity formation (the Beatitudes, 5:3-10). Their identity as "peacemakers" is not merely a partial identity but their whole identity as the "children of God" (5:9). Yet, only those who are relationally involved with God with their whole persons from inner out relationally belong in God's family (5:8), which emerges from only the uncommon-redemptive change of the who, what and how they are (5:3-6). Therefore, in Jesus' uncommon good, the uncommon change of peacemakers involves only whole persons who work just for uncommon peace. These daughters and sons in God's family know that anything less is an immature account of their whole identity, and that any substitutes are an immature peace of the whole who, what and how they are and function for. Immature peace and uncommon peace are at the critical disjuncture composed between "the wide gate and easy road" and "the narrow gate and difficult road" (7:13-14). This disjuncture continues to create both fog for his followers theology and ambiguity confounding their practice, such that they stop prematurely without just-nection in their call for justice and engage the work of peace immaturely without wholeness by settling for common peace. This describes the who, what and how of persons prevailing among those associated with God's kingdom, whose reduced identity and function composed the religious status quo that Jesus required his true followers to go further and be deeper than, without stopping short (5:20).

Reductionism is always imposing its "knowing good and evil" on those functioning as objects shaped by the human context in reduced ontology. These are the sentinels (Eze 33:7-9) who all-too-easily claim premature justice and who all-too-widely profess immature peace—taking a wider trajectory and easier path than Jesus (cf. Eze

34). Yet, this bad news is redeemed and transformed by the good news: the uncommon good that Jesus brings with uncommon change and gives with uncommon peace. If we are willing to turn around from the assumptions in our theology and change the bias in our practice, then our just-nection can be completed to counter premature justice rather than countering what Jesus brings; and then our persons and relationships can be made whole to contradict immature peace instead of contradicting what Jesus gives. The common-good workings of reductionism always seeks to convert the uncommon good, so that premature justice will subtly pervade everyday life to enable injustice, and that immature peace will prevail over human life to disable justice and prevent just-nection.

Once again, the uncommon good Jesus brings and gives faces us with this persistent reality:

How we see and think about change will be the change we use, which will be the change we get...which will be the justice and peace we use, which will be the justice and peace we get—all of which will compose either the common good or the uncommon good...that we get as objects or experience as subjects, who serve as mere servants or work for as whole persons in the Trinity's likeness.

The common good is composed by reduced ontology and function that lacks just-nection regardless of the amount of premature justice and immature peace generated. The uncommon good is constituted by whole ontology and function in the *right* relational order for the just-nection of all persons and peoples in whole justice and uncommon peace. Jesus' gospel brings and gives nothing less and no substitutes.

To know what indeed brings justice and to understand what truly gives peace converge in **the integrating dynamic of just-nection** (discussed in chap. 4) that Jesus brings and gives. As the conclusive extension of the definitive blessing of Subject God's face (2 Cor 4:6), Jesus' gospel embodies the primacy of God to enact the primacy of face-to-face relationship for the persons primary to God. The *right* order of relationship together, which was created by the Subject only for subjects in his likeness, is the whole-ly relational outcome of just-nection. God's justice is distinguished whole and God's peace is experienced uncommon by the integration just in *the relational dynamic of just-nection*. Jesus redeems, reconciles and transforms the relational connection required for justice of the human order in the integrally created and newly created whole-ly likeness of God (summarized by Paul in 2 Cor 3:18; 5:16-17; Col 3:10-11). Therefore, just-nection is the unequivocal and irreplaceable antithesis that distinguishes justice from **the common denominator of injustice** (expanding previous discussion):

That which encompasses the common's prevailing relational distance, separation or brokenness that fragment the human order and reduce persons to any and all relational disconnection contrary to their created likeness to God; this is consequential for relegating persons to relational orphans, the relational condition that disables them to function in their vested and privileged rights, and thereby prevents fulfillment of their inherent human need, whereby their everyday function subtly enables injustice—reinforcing and sustaining injustice even as they exercise their permissible rights.

The obscured reality, verified by existing facts, is this: Without just-nection persons fall into this *equation of injustice*. Contrary to any misinformed, distorted or fake news, this inescapable reality composes the human relational condition that pervades the existing human order with relational orphans—pervading even the church, countering and contradicting Jesus’ gospel (Jn 14:18). The disjunction between the common denominator of injustice and the integrating dynamic of just-nection raises questions about surrounding human conditions (past and present) for us to examine:

- Has just-nection unfolded from the Reformation?
- Has just-nection emerged from the Enlightenment?
- Has modern Israel increased its understanding of *shalom* in God’s relational terms—that is, increased from the level in ancient Israel?
- Have Mideast peace accords resulted in just-nection?
- Has democracy guided by Christian principles or values engendered just-nection and cultivated peace?
- Has the U.S. civil rights movement brought just-nection, including in gender relations within itself? And what kind of change does it focus on?
- Related, both in the U.S. and globally, have various efforts at integration brought just-nection, and has multiculturalism led to it?
- Have the historical movements for peace produced just-nection, even among its participants? And what kind of change do they seek, and what kind of peace does it offer?
- Has the women’s movement created just-nection or cultivated peace for themselves?
- Does just-nection exist in South Africa after apartheid?
- Does the peace between Protestants and Catholics in Ireland have just-nection? What kind of peace do they work for and give?
- Is there just-nection in the global church and can it be found in the local church, even experienced on the Sabbath?
- Is just-nection found on the internet and is it experienced in social media?
- Does just-nection exist in the priorities of our everyday life?
- Is our theological anthropology composed with peace and our view of sin directed to just-nection?
- Do Christian persons and their relationships distinguish just-nection and reflect the peace that are uncommon to their surrounding contexts?

Add your own questions to this partial list and examine them honestly.

When we fact-check these various conditions, situations and circumstances in human life, they verify the existing reality of their premature justice and immature peace. In one way or another, in whatever extent, they all fall short of what Jesus brings and gives. Premature justice does not bring just-nection and immature peace does not give wholeness; and their premature and immature fruits expose the roots of the tree they

come from. Moreover, while such prevailing premature justice and pervasive immature peace may serve the relative notion of the common good, they do not, will not and cannot *work* for the uncommon good of Jesus' gospel. What *works* in Jesus' gospel only brings justice by uncommon change and gives peace through uncommon peace. As a further qualifier, what Jesus brings and gives do not preclude the diversity exercised in efforts for justice and peace but rather are against the reductionism expressed in their lack of maturity. Thus, the uncommon good of Jesus' gospel should not be confused with a common metanarrative that postmodernism opposes; nor should Jesus' uncommon good be conflated with the grand narrative proposed by modernism, which has been adapted into traditional theology and the practice of the status quo.

The uncommon good Jesus brings and gives distinguishes only the uncommon, so that it is irreducibly incongruent with the common and, therefore, is nonnegotiable incompatible with anything common. Even a partial hybrid in theology or practice are indigestible for the uncommon's integrity—as the church in Thyatira was corrected by Jesus' critique (Rev 2:19-23). For the sentinels of human life to function in premature justice is to be misguided in their calling and to have misguided results. For the shepherds of God's family to function with immature peace is to be misled in their purpose and to mislead others for the outcome. This immaturity creates a crisis of credibility about what sentinels and shepherds do bring and give. In Jesus' perception and thinking, this existing condition is encompassed in the bad news of his gospel, which apparently has not been received to clearly distinguish *whole-ly* in much theology and practice today. But, not surprisingly, nothing more than the common (change, peace, good) can result and should be expected whenever what Jesus brings is countered and what he gives is contradicted.

The Justice of Love

In the uncommon good brought and given by Jesus, he constituted a new dimension for his rule of law, and this dimension is defining for his followers (notably his shepherds and sentinels) to distinguish them in the contexts of the common: **reciprocating love**—a new commandment of relational involvement with each other based just on the face-to-face experience of his intimate relational involvement with them (Jn 13:34-35). Jesus makes conclusive that reciprocating love is foremost what God desires from us in our relationship. That is, God doesn't desire what we have and do—which is the human identity of a reduced theological anthropology—but our whole person relationally involved with him (as in Ps 40:6-7; 147:10-11, cf. Jn 4:23-24). Reciprocating love illuminates the relational reality of just-ness and thereby qualifies the embodying, enacting and enforcing of God's rule of law condensed into love (Mt 22:34-40). This relational understanding composes *the justice of love*.

I have refrained from talking about God's love until we have a better understanding of what the whole-ly God brings and gives in relational response to the human condition. God's love has been highlighted too commonly apart from the whole relational context and process of the gospel, thereby rendering God's love without its full relational significance or its whole relational outcome. Now I want to engage God's love in the uncommon good of Jesus' gospel.

Contrary to common Christian thinking and perception, God's love has less to do with serving and even less to do with sacrifice. God's love (*agape* in the NT, *hesed* in the OT) certainly includes serving and sacrifice but it involves more depth. In God's relational terms, love enacts the presence and involvement of the whole of who, what and how God is. That is, God's righteousness and love are inseparable (Ps 85:10,13; 89:14), and without their dynamic integration God's presence and involvement are ambiguous, if not concealed. Deeper than serving and beyond sacrifice, love makes vulnerable the presence and involvement of the whole who, what and how God is, and anything less and any substitutes of God (even in sacrifice on the cross) no longer constitute the encompassing depth of God's love.

The pivotal enactment of God's love, which expressed the justice of God's love, emerged in the strategic shift of God's presence and involvement that clarified any ambiguity and corrected any distortion of God's relational response in the human context. When Jesus engaged face to face the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (Jn 4:4-26, noted previously), he extended God's whole presence and involvement to her (as in 4:10,14,23-26). His vulnerable relational response enacted the justice of God's love that openly countered the gender, racial-ethnic and socio-religious injustice this woman experienced from the pervasive discrimination of others. In this strategic moment of God's whole presence and involvement made vulnerable face to face, Jesus embodied, enacted and demonstrated for us the depth of relational involvement that constitutes the love he gives and the justice of love he brings. It is only on the relational basis of his relational involvement that his followers can understand his commandment to them, and thus also embody and enact reciprocating love from the vulnerable experience of his love face to face. This relational involvement is commonly confused with serving or sacrifice, but such actions neither require this involvement nor have its embracing depth.

Just as the Samaritan woman experienced face to face with Jesus (in her vulnerability also, Jn 4:15-20), the justice of God's love brings just-nection, in which she enacted her vested and privileged rights to fulfill her inherent human need (Jn 4:28-30,39-42). Her just-nection emerged from the relational outcome of Jesus' whole person making relational connection with her by his vulnerable relational involvement. In other words, Jesus loved her—not by serving her or sacrificing for her—and the depth of his relational involvement brought the uncommon change necessary to redeem her from injustice and to transform her condition to just-nection in order to give her wholeness. Thus, by his vulnerable relational involvement she experienced the relational reality of the whole who, what and how Subject God is—the strategic shift of the face of God whose presence and involvement shined on her and brought the uncommon change for new relationship together in wholeness. This is the integration of *siym* and *shalom* (Num 6:26) unfolding in the integrating dynamic of just-nection. Without the embracing depth of Jesus' relational involvement, the justice intrinsic to God's love does not unfold and thus its whole relational outcome of just-nection does not emerge. At best, what unfolds is premature justice that counters what Jesus brings, and what emerges is immature peace that contradicts what he gives.

This key interaction modelled Jesus' ongoing vulnerable relational involvement that engaged his whole person with all persons, which he expressed also while on the

cross (evident by his face-to-face involvement with diverse persons). The depth of his relational response and involvement face to face distinguishes (1) clearly how he loves us to constitute our involvement in reciprocating love, and (2) the whole relational outcome of just-nection that by necessity involves the justice of his love, which must be engaged for the *right* involvement in reciprocating love. Stopping short of Jesus' relational involvement relegates our love to a default condition that can only bring the premature justice and give the immature peace of the common good; and such love would have had no relational significance to the Samaritan woman for significant change in her life filled with discrimination and injustice. Without the significant change of what filled up her life, how could she or anyone have their inherent human need filled to wholeness?

In his gospel, Jesus didn't proclaim the concept of justice (as Mt 12:18 is commonly misconstrued). He vulnerably lived and enacted the relational terms of whole justice in its embracing depth of relational involvement—the integration of love and righteousness with faithfulness (as discussed previously in Ps 85:10,13; 89:14). Without the experiential reality of this integration, the relational process essential for justice is reduced to the concept of justice, which has no relational significance in spite of its claim for the common good. Jesus makes integral to justice the relational involvement of love, and this is primary over any other enforcement of the rule of law (as in Lk 11:42). For justice to have significance and to encompass the significant change needed for just-nection, it must be constituted by the justice of God's love.

Jesus demanded that the righteousness of his followers go beyond and deeper than who, what and how the majority associated with the kingdom of God were (Mt 5:20). To function in God's kingdom involves living daily in the realm of the uncommon while in the surrounding context of the common (as Jesus prayed, Jn 17:13-19). This relational process requires the *right* order of persons as inner-out subjects, who are governed by Subject God not to merely conform to the rule of law but to be relationally involved according to God's integral 'rule of justice', as defined only by God's relational terms (laws) for relationship together. Therefore, contrary to common practice, to love our neighbor involves going beyond and deeper than doing something positive for them, even if that's what we would like ourselves (enacting the Golden Rule). The underlying thinking in just a positive response is that any such action is "good" and thus would also be *right* for the common good.

Jesus clarified and corrected such thinking and action with his ongoing vulnerable presence and relational involvement. The new dimension of reciprocating love that Jesus constituted for his rule of law *and* of justice encompassed the depth of God's relational terms for the *right* order of relationship together—the only human order for just-nection in wholeness. As Jesus prayed, however, God's relational terms are holy, distinguished uncommon from the common, and therefore cannot be confused or conflated with our human terms shaped by or enveloped in common terms. Yet, the line of distinction between the uncommon and common has blurred, become obscure or simply assumed to be insignificant or of little consequence.

When Jesus' disciples returned to find him interacting with the Samaritan woman, "they were astonished" (surprised, amazed, *thaumazo*, Jn 4:27). Given the discrimination prevailing that constructed the existing human order in their context, they assumed that Jesus would conduct himself according to such normative relations. They understood

neither the embracing depth of his relational involvement with her that distinguished how he also loved them, nor the relational purpose of his involvement to bring just-nection that distinguishes the *right* involvement for their reciprocating love. Jesus challenged them to enact this embracing depth of relational involvement in order to extend the justice of God's love for the just-nection of all persons without making distinctions, and to build on its relational outcome of wholeness for all persons and relationships (4:34-38). If they (we) do not make their whole person vulnerable for this depth of relational involvement with all persons without using distinctions—"just as I have loved you"—there will not be justice in their love. Rather their actions will be rendered to **default love**, whose reduced function even enables injustice and disables justice to prevent just-nection. This would have happened to the Samaritan woman if Jesus had not relationally involved his whole person vulnerably face to face with her person without distinctions.

Default Love

Even though it is common Christian thinking, it is puzzling to say or hear that the God of love calls the people of God to love. This statement amounts to an oxymoron that assumes persons can experience God's love in relationship without the reciprocal involvement of love. After all, as the thinking goes, "God is love" and those associated with God experience that love—contrary to "those who *are relationally involved* [*meno*] in love *are relationally involved with God*" (1 Jn 4:16, extending Jn 15:9-12).

What is expressed in this statement is a default mode of love composed by persons of reduced human ontology and function, which then shapes God's ontology and function in our likeness and the common way of human relationships. To receive love, however uncommon, persons have to open their hearts to be vulnerably involved as subjects (not mere objects) to receive God (not just the action of God's love); and this intimate involvement is the very nature of love defined by God only in the primacy of relationship together—the primacy of how God engages relationships and not how humans do them. Thus, to experience love in God's relational terms is to reciprocate with the relational involvement necessary to consummate the love connection—as Peter had to learn with much difficulty (Jn 13:8).

In other words—which may also have difficulty for us—those who truly experience God's love are those in relational involvement who love back and who extend their love to others in ongoing relational involvement. The uncommon relational outcome of this reciprocal relational process also involves continuing to experience God's love further and deeper. So, God doesn't extend to us a special calling to love but rather counts on the further extension of our love from the irreducible relational process of experiencing "just as I love you." And this relational outcome deepens for our persons as subjects only when human distinctions no longer define our persons and determine our relationships together. Otherwise, what emerges is the default mode of love expressed by persons reduced in their ontology and function. Default love reconstructs God's love without his righteousness and justice (without the integration of Ps 89:14); and without this integration persons don't know and cannot understand God but can only boast about their distinctions (Jer 9:23-24).

The justice of God's love is distinctly more difficult than default love, though the latter has its issues. The just order of relationships for God's people as *subjects* is not defined and determined foremost by love but by *holy*—that is, the uncommon God whose love for us is just uncommon to our human experience of love. Based solely on experiencing God's uncommon love, we are to love in reciprocal likeness, and with nothing less and no substitutes from common love. To confuse uncommon love with common love (including the common notion of “unconditional love”) or to conflate them relegates that love to default love lacking just-nection. God's people, Jesus' followers, are distinguished only by the uncommon, as persons who function clearly distinguished in the uncommon love of God's righteousness and justice—the *right* relationship order of the whole of who, what and how the Trinity is. The experience of God's uncommon love is the only way that default love can be changed to uncommon love. Yet, this experience only happens through the uncommon relational connection of vulnerable relational involvement; and until this relational involvement is ongoingly engaged (not a singular moment at conversion), we cannot reciprocate in the justice of God's love “just as I have loved you.” Thus, we also cannot simulate this relational involvement without our experience of God's love being nothing more than an illusion.

Peter had difficulty engaging vulnerable relational involvement, which prevented the uncommon relational connection with Jesus to experience his love (notably at his footwashing). That relegated Peter to function merely in default love, even in all his bold claims and good intentions to be with Jesus (e.g. Jn 13:37; Lk 22:33). When Jesus asked Peter those pivotal questions (Jn 21:15-18), he wasn't asking whether Peter merely loved him in his default mode. He wanted Peter's relational involvement in uncommon love “just as I loved you.” What relegates our function to default love is to live in the default condition of reduced ontology and function; and the reality is that we simply fall into a default condition in everyday life whenever we don't live daily in whole ontology and function.

When we integrate the depth of what Jesus enacted irreducibly and said nonnegotiablely regarding love—fully embracing *who* was present and *what* was involved in everyday life—this is *how* uncommon love is distinguished from default love:

1. The significance of love is having relational connection.
2. The significance of relational connection is having relational involvement.
3. The significance of relational involvement is being vulnerable.
4. The significance of being vulnerable involves my whole person from inner out.
 - Therefore, uncommon love distinguishes the relational connection of whole persons who are relationally involved vulnerably from inner out.

When uncommon love is distinguished, the justice of love emerges to define persons and determine relationships as follows:

1. The justice of love involves whole persons from inner out without any distinctions from outer in.
2. Whole persons functioning without outer-in distinctions are vulnerable in order to be relationally involved with other persons without reducing them to outer-in distinctions.

3. Persons without outer-in distinctions make the depth of relational connection that unfolds in the *right* order of relationships for the just-nection of all persons.
 - Therefore, the justice of love is the vulnerable relational involvement of whole persons without outer-in distinctions, who make the embracing depth of relational connection with others as persons without their distinctions, with the relational outcome of just-nection that uncommonly changes relationships to the *right* order in uncommon peace—just as the face of Subject God embodied in Jesus loves us.

Accordingly, the justice of love defining persons as whole and determining relationships as *right* does not, will not and cannot emerge without the vulnerable relational involvement of uncommon love. Unless persons are engaged in this uncommon relational involvement—irreducible to the common and nonnegotiable to human terms—their actions fall into default love that can only bring the change for common peace to serve the common good.

Christians fall into default love by the choice (intentionally or inadvertently by default) to not assert who, what and how they are as *subjects* in everyday life. Subjects make the conscious choice not to reduce their person in contrast to Christians who defer. Thus, they become like objects shaped by their surrounding contexts and fall into a default condition of reduced ontology and function. When our identity and function are influenced or shaped by reductionism, we are defined by the extent of what we do and have. ‘What we do’ ranges from our achievements and successes to our failures, and ‘what we have’ encompasses our abilities, resources, physical attributes or lack thereof. Consider how our persons are assessed and categorized in everyday life by our resumes, and why these resumes are critical for determining our life. What we do and have compose distinctions that define our identity and determine our function; and values are attached to these distinctions by the inevitable comparative process that structures persons and relationships in a stratified order. Whenever such distinctions are made and wherever they exist, there is a value attached to each of them that determines the comparative position of persons in that stratified order. This categorizing of persons is a fact of life that pervades the church and its order; and this reality needs to be addressed by an uncommon choice in order to bring uncommon change.

The disciples used the gender, ethnic, social and religious distinctions of the Samaritan woman to not be involved with her. Peter used the distinctions of Jesus as Teacher and Lord to avoid being vulnerably involved with Jesus; and he used the Gentile distinction to discriminate against them, even after learning that “God made no distinctions” (Acts 15:9). Their default love reflected their choice as objects to live by reduced ontology and function, whereby they defined their own persons by the valued distinction of “the greatest.” Based solely on the primacy of persons from inner out involved in relationship together, Subject God corrected the value placed on such distinctions (Jer 9:23-24), and also clarified that God’s people are not responded to by Subject God because of any valued distinction they had (Dt 7:7-9). Moreover, he exposed the common influence of distinctions and how this creates bias that disables justice and enables injustice (Ex 23:2-3; Lev 19:15), and thereby contradicts the ontology and function of the whole-ly God (Dt 10:17; 2 Chr 19:7).

Counter to default love, God's uncommon love is enacted so that the justice of love will unfold the whole relational outcome for persons and the *right* relational process, involvement, connection and order for their relationships. Since human distinctions are a prevailing reality for everyday life, the issue of this simple fact is "what do Christians choose to do about it?" Do we choose to allow it to define our persons or other persons? Do we choose to allow it to determine how we are involved in relationships? Or do we choose to assert our person as subjects and exercise who, what and how we are from inner out, and thus not allow human distinctions to influence or shape us in reduced ontology and function for our response of love?

When our relational involvement of love goes deeper than human distinctions, our relational response is freed from any bias that limits, constrains or even prevents relational involvement with persons we dislike and with our enemies. Default love could be nice, irenic or positive with those persons, but distinctions have already precluded the depth of vulnerable relational involvement. The justice of love is not about merely being *nice* and involves not just making friends and influencing enemies; and this love is not about being different but involves being uncommon. On the other hand, uncommon love shouldn't be confused with 'tough love'. Default love can act firmly and sternly but the level of relational involvement is not vulnerable to be hurt, to suffer or be anguished... "just as I love you."

There are no shortcuts in the justice of love. Its difficulty is in the relational terms constituted by God, which are irreducible to the common and nonnegotiable to human terms. "Do you love me?" is not answered by common love. Love each other, your neighbor and your enemies are not responded to by default love. Just-nection for persons and relationships does not emerge from premature justice, nor does their wholeness unfold with immature peace. Until the uncommon good of Jesus' gospel prevails in our theology and practice, pervading the biases of our Christian traditions, church systems and ministry operations, we cannot and should not expect anything more. Anything less and any substitutes are rooted in reductionism, which operates subtly by the (over)simplification of human issues and then the common-izing of human responses to the human condition—all reinforced and sustained by Christians in default function.

Until we make the conscious choice as subjects to ongoingly engage the critical battle against reductionism as all sin, the shame of our status quo will continue. Without the uncommon relational involvement distinguished by Jesus' gospel, only common change can occur at the most, with common peace the most optimistic result possible. And unless we expect from each other the embracing depth of relational involvement as Jesus loves us, our default love signifies a crisis in urgent need of the transformation emerging only from uncommon change.

Benign Injustice Common-izing Peace

We have to understand the uncommon good that Jesus brings and gives to know what justice is. We have to know what justice is from inner out to understand injustice; and we have to be aware of injustice to live daily in justice from inner out. Being aware of injustice, however, is an entangled problem when our understanding of injustice is biased. This has been an ongoing problem ever since "good" was common-ized and

“evil” was renegotiated, making it variable and relative. Therefore, we need to face these related questions: “Where are you—in your person from inner out?” and How has reductionism shifted your person to outer in and defined your identity by such distinctions?

The reality also facing us is the fact that how injustice is seen and thought of have varying understanding and relative ascription. This reality produces **benign injustice**, which promotes illusions of justice by dulling or obscuring awareness of existing injustice. And the distinctions used for persons and relationships are at the core of this reductionist process. When his disciples were entrenched in such distinctions and preoccupied with having the privilege of “the greatest,” Jesus corrected their thinking and lens by changing that so-called privilege into the *right* human order. Persons of privilege live in unequal relationships that are stratified by power relations or by those “called benefactors” (Lk 22:24-25). Jesus alerted them to the gray areas of the human order that make up benign injustice.

Benefactors are identified with distinctions of privilege, prestige and power, and how they have functioned in their distinction has varied—with mixed results and reviews. Consider how the default love of benefactors is composed by paternalism. Many recipients also consider God’s love as paternalistic and render God the ultimate Benefactor. This confuses common love for uncommon love, and many benefactors conflate their actions with God’s love. Paternalism, however, functions contrary to uncommon love and thus in contradiction to the uncommon good that Jesus brings and gives.

Any paternalistic action directed to others always emerges from an upper position in the relational order, whether that order is recognized as stratified or not. It is from this position of privilege, prestige and power that recipients receive, and thus by implication are relegated to a lower position—whether explicit or implicit in the so-called positive action. Intrinsic in this comparative process is the formulation of a **deficit model** to measure the recipients, which both measures all recipient persons as *less* than benefactors and also tells those less what they need to measure up to in order to rise higher in this human order. The deficit model has been imposed by those *more* to subtly subordinate those less and to maintain the inequality between them. Those less only reinforce and sustain such inequality when they accept the deficit model for their self-assessment.

This is the unavoidable result: the ongoing engagement in relationships and treatment of persons composed by personal, institutional, systemic and structural inequality; and this inequity is consequential for both preventing justice and enabling injustice however benign paternalism may seem.

Consider further. The paternalistic efforts of liberal ideology have promoted a deficit model in U.S. race relations, which has only maintained the reduced identity and function of minorities in the fragmentary human condition. Many would consider this progress from past use of a deficit model that categorized minorities as sub-human, less human, inferior humans, or simply unworthy persons. Yet, the label of second-class persists for any use of a deficit model for persons. Thus, in existing race relations,

whether politically, economically, educationally or just socially, the *right* human order has not emerged to stop enabling injustice, much less bring change to stop disabling justice and turn to just-nection. This state of paternalism has been exacerbated by the existing reality of *benevolent sexism*.³ While benevolent sexism is certainly more benign than sexual abuse, all such paternalistic actions have relegated females to a deficit condition and related position on the comparative scale—which then must also be construed as sexual misconduct. This deficit has had exponential consequences for all persons of both genders and their relationships together and separate (e.g. comparative masculinity among males).

Christians have not been on the sidelines of paternalism or removed from its consequences. On the contrary, Christians have directly engaged in paternalistic efforts, strongly supported paternalism if not led it, and widely been complicit with its consequences. Christian missions from the West, of course, led the way with its paternalism (with colonialist variations) imposed on others with a deficit model. Western theology has been paternalistic with its views, insisting on (imposing) its so-called correct doctrine so that the rest of the world will be “correct” in its theology and practice. Even Christian justice and peace ministries have engaged in paternalistic efforts that by default reinforce a deficit model without bringing the uncommon-redemptive change that gives uncommon peace.

The bad news of Jesus’ gospel counters any good news used that contradicts the uncommon good brought and given by Jesus. Such misinformed, misrepresenting or fact-less news have been a critical issue for the prophets of God’s words, the shepherds of God’s family, and the sentinels of human life. For example, there were false prophets who said “the Lord declares...” when the Lord had not spoken, and who proclaimed “Peace when there is no peace” (Eze 13:1-10, cf. Jer 8:11)—all acting with a benign sense of injustice that common-ized the peace the face of God gives.

These signify the false hopes today that must be unmistakably contrasted from the distinguished relational hope placed in Subject God’s relational response of love to bring just-nection and give uncommon peace. In ancient history, Israel erred in confusing the kingdom of God with nationalism, and they mistook their uncommon identity with the common distinction of exceptionalism—all conflated under the assumption of having God’s favor (counter to Dt 7:7-9). In modern history, the U.S. also makes similar confusing and conflating assessments of itself, along with the false assumption of “one nation under God” as “God’s chosen nation.” Many evangelicals in the U.S. proclaim this news as the gospel. The bad news of Jesus’ gospel, however, exposes this so-called good news as misinformed, fact-less or fake news, which misleadingly promotes illusions of justice by a lens of benign injustice that common-izes peace.

Unless we remain steadfast in proclaiming the gospel by *paltering* (selectively stating only part of the gospel) and persist in avoiding Jesus’ bad news by *confirmation bias* (selectively using only that which supports our beliefs), then we are faced with the reality of his bad news:

³ The sexist dynamics engaged in benevolent sexism (formerly known as ambiguous sexism) is noted by Peter Glick and Susan T. Fiske, “Hostile and Benevolent Sexism: Measuring Ambivalent Sexist Attitudes toward Women,” in *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, March 1, 1997. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/aba/10-1111/j.1471-6402.1977.tb00104.x>.

If how we see and think of injustice excludes benign injustice, then our understanding of injustice is deficient because we lack knowing justice from inner out. The consequence is having a bias in how we act in everyday life, which makes us inconsistent in our daily actions because justice has become relative for us—with permissible rights variably composed, enacted and enforced. Since this reflects not understanding the uncommon good of Jesus’ gospel to know what justice truly is, how we act is limited to default love and is constrained to the common good. Under this limit and constraint, our actions then in reality subtly enable injustice and disable justice, and thus which reinforces and sustains the (our) human condition. Without uncommon change, therefore, this condition prevents just-nection and the enforcement of vested rights and privileged rights to fulfill the inherent human need of all persons. The reality of all this evidences both the influence of reductionism exerted on how we think, see and act, and the extent of common-ization in our theology and practice.

Jesus shared unequivocally, “my *uncommon* peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives...*as Israel gave...as the U.S. gives.*” Based on the fact-checked integrated bad and good news of what Jesus brings and gives, here we are at this critical juncture—which we need to resolve unmistakably or be relegated by default to the common alternative:

- We cannot claim the good news of Jesus’ gospel without receiving his bad news.
- We cannot have his uncommon peace until we turn around from common peace.
- We cannot experience uncommon-redemptive change unless we go beyond common change.
- We cannot embrace the uncommon good brought and given by Jesus if we have fallen into the common good.
- We cannot be relationally involved in the justice of love as long as we function in default love.
- We cannot mature just-nection and wholeness while we counter what Jesus brings and contradict what he gives.

The uncommon good of Jesus’ gospel brings just uncommon change and gives just uncommon peace. Anything less and any substitutes in our gospel are on a wider theological trajectory and an easier relational path than Jesus. This wide trajectory and easy path need to be turned around and transformed down to their common roots, so that uncommon good fruit will grow and mature to fulfill the inherent human need of all persons—persons distinguished from inner out, without distinctions, for their wholeness in equalized relationships together.

“Can any other *good* come out of Jesus of Nazareth?”

Chapter 6 Proclaiming Jesus' Gospel

For a *person* has been given to *be vulnerably present and relationally involved with us* ...there shall be endless peace for...his kingdom *family*. He will establish and uphold it with justice and righteousness from *the present through the future*.

Isaiah 9:6-7

Make disciples of *my gospel* for all nations, *peoples and persons*, *growing* them in the *image & likeness* of the Trinity...*maturing* them to *relationally respond* to everything that I have *shared in relational terms* with you.

Matthew 28:19-20

I am astonished that you are so quickly...turning to a different gospel.

Galatians 1:6

Given the pervasive problem of distinguishing the uncommon from the common in our everyday life, it is critical that the tension and conflict between them be an open, ongoing and discomforting issue that confronts us for resolve. Hopefully, our further discussion will magnify this issue in our theology and amplify it in our practice.

Jesus' post-ascension critique of churches (Rev 2-3) made apparent this defining reality:

Churches and ministries have their own agendas that are prioritized in their theology and practice, the existence of which composes the diversity of the global church.

However important those agendas might be, when Christians pursue their agendas at the expense (minor or major) of the whole picture (not just the big picture), they fall into giving their agenda priority over the primary constituted by God's whole picture. Christian agendas are a disguised problem of immeasurable consequences, because they (even inadvertently) fragment (subtly by compartmentalizing) God's whole by their human shaping. This all reflects, reinforces or sustains common thinking, perception and action. As Jesus exposed in the churches, our agendas identify the gospel we use and further indicate our underlying theological anthropology and view of sin.

Therefore, at this stage in our study we are acutely faced with basic matters since recurring issues require us to assess ongoingly how we think, perceive and act. This ongoing process needs to be engaged with the relational involvement in *triangulation* with the Trinity and others in everyday life, while in *reciprocating contextualization* between God's relational context and our surrounding human contexts. In this relational process, we need to keenly assess basic matters with Jesus' paradigm:

- The gospel we use or emphasize will be the agendas we get.
- Yet, our agendas unfold from our gospel that emerges from the measure of our theological anthropology, which is composed from our view of sin.
- Thus, the measure of sin we use is the theological anthropology we get.
- The theological anthropology we use will determine the measure of the gospel we get.
- The gospel we use will determine the agendas we get, live by and serve.

The *right* (as in *best*) conclusions for these basic matters are indispensable for the call to justice and are irreplaceable for the work of peace. And these conclusions, therefore, are nonnegotiable to the premature justice and immature peace existing among Christian diversity.

The Truth of His Gospel versus Our Gospel

With the evolving development of modern technology, the line between reality and augmented or virtual reality (e.g. human generated images) has become so blurred that it is often difficult to discern the truth from misinformation or fake representation of the truth. The latter represents an acceptable norm in postmodernist thinking, while the former represents the bad assumption in modernist thinking that has not recognized (or acknowledged) its own bias in shaping the truth. This distinct line is also concurrently blurred in relation to the gospel.

Our view (picture or even video) of the gospel can be either partial or complete, either distorted or lucid, either virtual or real. Portions of that picture could be either-or, but to have the whole picture we cannot include any elements of both-and. That makes God's whole picture distinguished from any of our portrayals, and the tension and conflict between them needs to be magnified in our theology and amplified in our practice.

There are three pivotal issues that bring out the main composition of any picture of the gospel:

1. Who and what is the person created by God, and how are persons to function in their created human order, which constitutes their likeness to God? This issue is essential to understand the persons with whom God was involved in the beginning, and is vital for composing the theological anthropology at the heart of human life—the lack of which alters the picture of the gospel accordingly.
2. What changed who, what and how that person was, and thereby fragmented the human order between persons and reduced their likeness to God? This issue is pivotal to understand the sin that encompasses the breadth and depth of the human condition, and is critical for having the view of sin that gets to the fragmentary heart of the human condition—the shallow view of which composes theological anthropology accordingly.

3. How did the whole-ly God respond to this human condition and what is the nature of God's response? This issue is fundamental to understand who, what and how God is, and is definitive for embracing this whole-ly God's gospel from the beginning—the reduction of which opens the gate wide, accordingly, to a diversity of agendas.

God's whole picture is never complete until these interrelated issues are fully understood. And the key to this full understanding is the 2nd issue and our working view of sin in everyday life.

As composed by reductionism from the beginning, the human condition is in ongoing tension and conflict with God the creator and ruler of all life. In this overt and covert battle, God is routinely rendered (a) nonexistent in ontology/being (as in atheism), or (b) irrelevant in ontology and function (as in scientism), or (c) detached or removed in function (as in deism). With the reduction of God, the human order and its essential justice from creation are reconstructed, revised or simply ignored. Certainly, Christians don't define their theology by (a) or (b), though in their practice they may live daily as if (b) were true. Less obvious, however, most Christians do practice (c) in one way or another, as if to live in a virtual reality. The subtle function of (c) is a functional substitute for God's likeness and thus displaces the function of God's creation justice with the human shaping of "good and evil"; and it is this view that has evolved from the primordial garden to entrench human life in this human condition. Without understanding reductionism, a shallow and weak view of sin has pervaded our theology and practice, and relegated the gospel to diverse portrayals, with a lack of redemptive significance for the breadth and depth of the human condition and no transforming significance for the wholeness of persons and relationships.

The truth composing Jesus' gospel of essential justice integrates these three dimensions: (1) fully encompasses the past, (2) whole-ly embraces the present, and (3) completely encircles the future. The 1st dimension of his gospel encompasses both creation and the fall into reductionism. The 2nd dimension embraces both human life in the qualitative image and relational likeness of the Trinity, and how the human condition has evolved from the beginning; and the 3rd dimension encircles the whole relational outcome of his gospel in completion. All three dimensions are integrated for the whole 3-D picture of his gospel. Therefore, omitting any dimension or reducing any of them no longer distinguishes Jesus' whole gospel but determines a partial (flat or distorted) or virtual (realistic but not real) portrayal of a gospel shaped by human terms and bias—the tension and conflict between his gospel and our gospel.

His 3-D gospel is necessary to identify, respond to and embrace the whole person created also in 3-D based on the image and likeness of the Trinity: (1) the person as an individual subject (not individualism), (2) the person in collective/corporate union with other persons, and (3) the life-order of these persons in relationship together. Jesus embodies and enacts the relational response to the 3-D person of human life with his 3-D gospel in order to transform persons and relationships for the whole relational outcome of the new creation of persons and relationships in God's kingdom-family. Anything less and any substitutes do not, will not and cannot portray the whole 3-D picture of his gospel; and the outcome from any such gospel will be measured accordingly—nothing more.

Part of that outcome directly includes the gospel we claim for our person and relationships.

- Therefore, the gospel we claim is the disciple we become in everyday life.

Another part of that outcome also includes the gospel we proclaim. Yet, proclaiming the gospel is less about articulating a narrative and more involved in sharing a relational experience; the former makes aspects of doctrine primary without the whole picture, while the latter makes primary the relationship composing the whole 3-D picture.

- Therefore, the disciples we are is the gospel we proclaim.

And based on the agenda of our gospel over his gospel, a further part of that outcome is unavoidable with inevitable consequences.

- The gospel we proclaim will be the disciples we make in the Great Commission.

No matter how realistic our picture of the gospel is, his shepherds and sentinels can only fulfill their purpose by the integral relational reality and experiential truth of his gospel. That purpose is fulfilled only by whole persons as subjects transformed from inner out, who function vulnerably involved in reciprocal relationship with the Trinity in the integral fight against the reductionism composing the breadth and depth of the human condition, and fight for Jesus' gospel of wholeness for all persons and relationships in human life. This integral fight *against* and *for* converges in what should be the practice of evangelism, and it emerges just in the evangelism of justice.

The Evangelism of Justice

The traditional proclamation of the gospel (*euangelion*) has revolved around the conventional practice of evangelism (*euangelizo*). The evangelism practiced, however, depended on the gospel used, which tradition has limited to a truncated soteriology of mainly being saved from sin—a shallow or weak view of sin lacking reductionism. This tradition of evangelism has been challenged not so much in its theological limits but to supplement its practice with social action. That is, many have called for a response to the various needs in the human context in addition to proclaiming salvation, with varying priorities given to each practice. A major consequence from this challenge has been the emergence of a false dichotomy in our theology and practice between evangelism and social action. Supporters of both sides have engaged in “holy debate,” and any conclusions that have evolved have only compounded the underlying problem and deepened the consequence.

It is critical for us to move beyond the misleading and misguided dichotomy between evangelism and social action. For the most part, both sides in this “holy debate” presume to speak for God—as in the “holy debate” about theories of human order (discussed in chap. 1)—and thus push their agenda. Their biased agenda, however, fails to get to the heart of Jesus’ gospel and, consequently, to the heart of human life and the human condition. Therefore, the hard reality is that both sides don’t fully claim and proclaim Jesus’ gospel of just-nection essential for our creation and salvation. With this underlying problem, any attempt in this “holy debate” to reconcile reduced sides or to synthesize fragmented positions neither resolves the problem nor composes the whole picture of Jesus’ 3-D gospel. Rather this well-intentioned effort only constructs a hybrid of fragmentary parts that do not add up to the *whole*. This whole outcome requires that how we think, see and act go beyond these limits and constraints, and get to the depth of his gospel and thereby down to the heart of whole-ly God.

In the 3-D gospel integrally embodied and enacted by Jesus, “he will proclaim justice...until he brings justice to victory” (Mt 12:18,20); “there shall be endless peace for...*his kingdom-family*. He will establish and uphold it with justice and righteousness from *the present through the future*” (Isa 9:6-7). How does this unfold for our theology to be congruent with his gospel and for our practice to be compatible with who and what he embodied and how he enacted the 3-D gospel?

The whole gospel emerged in the beginning with the Word and unfolded from the beginning in God’s whole response to what evolved from the primordial garden. The gospel centers on salvation (including redemption and deliverance), but unlike other portrayals of the gospel this salvation is constituted only in relational terms and defined as follows:

Salvation is the shorthand relational term that integrates the whole relational response of uncommon grace from the Trinity to the inescapable human condition, in order to fulfill this relational purpose and outcome:

1. To redeem persons and relationships from the reductionism prevailing over them that has violated the created justice of human ontology and function and broken their just-nection.
2. To bring the uncommon redemptive change necessary to transform this human condition to restore persons and relationships to their whole ontology and function created in the qualitative image and relational likeness of the whole-ly Trinity.
3. To restore persons and reconcile relationships to the created wholeness of life and its essential order, the relational process of which must by its constituting nature involve the justice composed by God for human life to be whole.
4. To raise up the new creation of the whole-ly Trinity’s family for all persons, peoples, tribes and nations to relationally belong both equalized without distinctions and intimately in uncommon peace.

Salvation, then, in Jesus’ 3-D gospel is the distinguished relational dynamic that encompasses the whole theological anthropology from creation and its reduction as the depth of sin. The relational dynamic of salvation also embraces the existing human condition that disables justice and enables injustice at all levels of human life. Since

Salvation, then, in Jesus' 3-D gospel is the distinguished relational dynamic that encompasses the whole theological anthropology from creation and its reduction as the depth of sin. The relational dynamic of salvation also embraces the existing human condition that disables justice and enables injustice at all levels of human life. Since salvation brings uncommon redemptive change to the human condition of reductionism, salvation is not, will not and cannot be claimed if justice is not the new relational order and if persons are not distinguished in everyday life by the image and likeness of God's ontology and function. That is, with the 3-D view of sin as reductionism, no one is saved *from* sin as long as reductionism shapes persons and relationships together. Therefore, in Jesus' 3-D gospel, by the necessity of sin as reductionism salvation both saves *from* reductionism and saves *to* wholeness; no one is saved *from* reductionism alone because only wholeness emerges when reductionism is removed. If wholeness doesn't emerge, reductionism still remains and any saving from so-called sin doesn't encompass reductionism.

Salvation *from* and *to* are inseparable and integrate the relational response, purpose and outcome that Jesus fulfilled in proclaiming his gospel. Anything less and any substitutes neither claim nor proclaim this 3-D gospel, but rather fall into a default mode with a gospel on a different theological trajectory and an agenda on a different relational path than who, what and how Jesus enacted.

Default salvation is a *justice-less salvation* that centers on saving from sin that either doesn't include sin as reductionism or doesn't include saving to wholeness. In Jesus' 3-D gospel, justice is not merely the fruit of salvation but it *is* salvation. Those pursuing the social action agenda over evangelism engage in *whole-less justice* and thus fall into **default social action**, likely motivated by default love. In his gospel, this default mode does not "bring justice to victory" as Jesus proclaimed (Mt 12:20). Accordingly, evangelism revolving around justice-less salvation falls into **default evangelism**. Like default social action and love, this default mode neither encompasses the good news of what Jesus brings nor embraces what he gives, and thus neither claims the depth underlying his Great Commission nor proclaims the extent of it. Therefore, in their default modes of justice-less salvation and whole-less justice, both sides fail to restore the vested and privileged rights from creation justice that all persons require to fulfill their inherent human need for their everyday well-being. In so doing by not doing, both sides counter what Jesus brings and contradict what he gives.

Since salvation is justice in Jesus' gospel, Christians cannot be satisfied with the lack of justice or settle for any type of justice. For example, merely working within permissible rights, around them, or for changing them is inadequate, and it distorts the whole 3-D picture of his gospel. We are accountable for the justice by which God created all life and saved it with the wholeness of the new creation. Anything less and any substitutes of God's justice are not what we are saved to *be* and called to share with others.

This brings us to another disjunction facing us in our theology and practice between Jesus' Great Commission and our view of it:

- The gospel we claim is the measure of the disciples we become in our discipleship.

- This measure of discipleship we use is the gospel we proclaim to make disciples in the Great Commission.

The Being-Making Disciples Equation

Proclaiming the gospel assumes that the gospel has been claimed first. Yet, what has been claimed cannot be assumed in the proclaiming of Jesus' gospel. Proclaiming his 3-D gospel is based on claiming what Jesus brings and gives. What Jesus brings and gives, however, also cannot be assumed in the claiming. Jesus' definitive paradigm (Mk 4:24) outlines this irrevocable equation for us:

- The measure used for what Jesus brings and gives is the measure of what we can claim.
- The measure of what we then have claimed is the measure of what we can, will and do proclaim.

This determinative equation unfolds in our practice from what emerges in our theology.

This fact of life leads us into *the discipleship paradigm* that Jesus made conclusive for all his followers. If the gospel we claim and proclaim makes primary the doctrine of Jesus (Christology) or his teachings, we have displaced his whole person embodied and enacted in the primacy of relationship. Displacing his person, even with correct doctrine and teachings, has major consequences for *the discipleship imperative* that Jesus made definitive for all his followers: "Follow me—*my whole person in the primacy of reciprocal relationship together*" (Jn 12:26). In particular, those serving him must be relationally involved in the primacy of "where *my person is*," not where his location is. The depth of this relational involvement is not common—as Peter demonstrated noticeably in his discipleship—and thus requires uncommon change for persons to be vulnerable from inner out, that is, without their identity and function constructed from outer-in distinctions as the early disciples struggled with. The transition in this relational process is only possible by the transformation (*metamorphoo*, not *metaschematizo*) composed in his salvation (never default salvation). Jesus' salvation brings just-nection and gives the uncommon peace of wholeness for persons and relationships. When these are claimed in relational terms from Jesus' person, the relational outcome is disciples who "follow me in relational involvement where my person is." Since the depth of this relational involvement is uncommon, how and what distinguish it from what's common?

What's common is composed by the human relational condition of relational distance, separation and brokenness with creator God. This relational condition is signified in the earthly dwelling of whole-ly God, in which the temple was constructed with an irreplaceable curtain that prevented direct relational connection between the Uncommon and the common. This relational structure became the norm for the relational practice of God's people, evolving into their tradition and the shame of the status quo that reinforced the human relational condition and sustained its human order. Nevertheless, in God's relational response of grace Jesus brought the uncommon change that tore down

the curtain to reconstruct the dwelling of whole-ly God's presence, in order to have direct relational connection in the primacy of face-to-face relationship without the veil (Mt 27:50-51; Heb 10:19-20). The reality of what Jesus brings is how the depth of this relational involvement was opened to us for this relational purpose distinguished from the common.

Paul made conclusive this relational reality and how this relational purpose is fulfilled (2 Cor 3:12-18). In contrast to those living in the norm of the old, Paul distinguishes the new that Jesus brings: "the veil is removed...there is *relational* freedom...all of us with unveiled faces *have relational involvement with the Trinity*"—how?—by "being transformed [*metamorphoo*] *in our persons from inner out* into the same *qualitative image and relational likeness of the Trinity*." This is the uncommon change that Jesus brings to transform our persons and relationships for what he gives, which further distinguishes the uncommon from the common (2 Cor 4:4,6; 5:16-18).

Removing the veil is pivotal in the relational process, because it makes our person vulnerable from inner out to have the depth of relational involvement necessary for face-to-face relational connection with God as if behind the curtain. Without this inner-out vulnerability, we remain as if in front of the curtain without this face-to-face relational connection. The relational connection face to face with the whole-ly Trinity reconciles the relational distance, separation and brokenness existing in the veiled relational condition—the prevailing condition formed in the primordial garden, "both covered their nakedness" (Gen 3:7). In face-to-face reconciliation, persons are then restored to the just-nection of their relational order in likeness of the Trinity. When the relational distance, separation and brokenness are removed, persons come together face to face in the depth of relational involvement heart to heart, which is definitive of intimate relationship. Anything less than face to face does not have intimate relational connection.

For this intimacy to have this depth of relational involvement, however, requires whole persons—that is, persons who have been *equalized* from inner out and thus who are involved without outer-in distinctions defining their identity and determining their function. The presence of any veil evidences persons still using outer-in distinctions, which prevents their equalization. When persons come together in the depth of relational involvement of both intimate and equalized relationships, they function just like the trinitarian persons (as in Jn 15:9 and 13:34).

Just-nection is only possible for persons involved in intimate and equalized relationships together. These are the whole persons whose outer-in distinctions have been removed to free their persons to be vulnerable together; this is the just-nection first witnessed in the primordial garden, "both naked and were not ashamed" (Gen 2:25). When the veil of outer-in distinctions is not removed or has resurfaced, persons are relegated to the unavoidable comparative system intrinsic to distinction-making that fragments their relational order accordingly. That loss of just-nection in the human order sustains the human relational condition. The presence of the veil in our persons and relationships prevents our involvement in intimate and equalized relationships, which is the relational condition that pervades Christian fellowship. Our relational condition with the veil quantifies the measure of the gospel we have claimed and qualifies the measure of the disciples we are. Moreover, what are quantified and qualified both counter what Jesus brings and contradicts what he gives in his 3-D gospel.

Jesus' salvation removes the veil unequivocally, thereby redeeming human persons from the injustice of the existing human order and constitutes the just-nection of the new relational order in the primacy of face-to-face intimate and equalized relationships together (cf. Isa 25:6-8). This new creation order of human life in likeness of the whole-ly Trinity is the wholeness first promised in God's definitive blessing (Num 6:26), and that Jesus' relational response of salvation saves us *to* in the Trinity's family to be whole together "as we are one" (Jn 17:22). These are the unmistakable disciples who "follow me" in reciprocal relationship together, "just as I have been relationally involved vulnerably with you."

His disciples emerge only when their veil is removed and their whole person is transformed from inner out, in order to free them for the depth of face-to-face relational involvement in intimate and equalized relationships together in likeness of the Trinity. The face-to-face, heart-to-heart involvement in both intimate and equalized relationships together is what distinguishes the uncommon from the common that Jesus' 3-D gospel brings and gives. When the measure of disciples is distinguished by claiming his whole-ly gospel, they are the only disciples who can proclaim his gospel by making other disciples distinguished in likeness. Only to those disciples distinguishing the uncommon does Jesus give his Great Commission to complete **the being-making disciples equation**:

"As you go through everyday life in reciprocal relationship just as I am relationally involved with you to the end of time, be the whole persons from inner out I saved and thereby whole-ly distinguish your just-nection in the contexts of the world, in order for you to make disciples who also follow me with their whole person in the primacy of relationship together according to my relational terms, so that they likewise will relationally belong in the Trinity's family" (his 3-D view of Mt 28:18-20).

Therefore, the fact of our life as disciples unfolds in this equation and determines the disciples we can, will and do make in proclaiming the gospel:

- The measure of the disciples we are from our theology and in our practice is the measure of the gospel we proclaim and thus the measure of the disciples we make.

This determinative equation still operates even when we aren't explicitly proclaiming the gospel. The reality for all followers of Jesus is that how we live everyday also in itself proclaims the gospel we have claimed (as in Jn 13:34-35). This reality challenges what we proclaim and confronts what we claim.

The Nature and Culture of Gospel Faith

Currently in the U.S., faith has become less and less associated with organized religion. This trend is evident notably among younger generations who have reacted to the lack of significance witnessed in the practice of Christian faith. Many of them appear

to think, see and act in ways that suggest a belief that they can experience the common good and even serve it better than what is demonstrated by the organized practice of Christian faith. Realities like this, and many exist globally, challenge what we've been proclaiming and confront the reality of what we have claimed by our faith.

The nature of the gospel's theological trajectory embodied by Jesus is foremost *uncommon* (as experienced by the Samaritan woman at the well and by Nathaniel), plus being whole (as constituted by the Trinity). The nature of the gospel's intrusive relational path enacted by Jesus is distinguished whole (as Levi and Zacchaeus, among others, experienced) and uncommon (as Peter struggled with). The nature of faith goes beyond merely believing what Jesus embodied and enacted but it embraces the direct relational response to Jesus and vulnerably trusting him in his whole-ly gospel. Accordingly, the nature of *gospel faith* by necessity (not out of duty or obligation) is the integrated relational response both whole and uncommon—**whole-ly faith**.

By its nature, gospel faith is uncommon, and this faith has been faced with the ongoing problem of being distinguished from the common thinking, perception and act of faith prevailing in our theology and practice. Underlying this problem are the pervasive issues of a reduced theological anthropology that emerges from a shallow-weak view of sin not encompassing reductionism. How we live daily reflects who and what we are, not to mention reflecting the gospel we've claimed. In gospel faith, who, what and how we are reflects the ontology and function of the person created, saved and newly created by the whole-ly Trinity in likeness. Therefore, when our faith is whole-ly, how we live reflects that whole-ly likeness; but when our faith is not whole-ly, whatever likeness we do reflect then also reflects on who, what and how our God is. This reality informs us that the witness of our faith speaks volumes about the God we claim and proclaim. Thus, not any variation of faith can reflect the whole-ly nature of gospel faith, and our faith never does when what we practice is *common-ized*. In other words, when the response of our faith to Jesus is reduced to the common way that relationship is engaged, the uncommon nature of gospel faith is no longer distinguished from the common. The relational consequence of such common-ized faith (even by church leaders and activists) is the hard-to digest reality that "I never knew your *whole person from inner out*" (Mt 7:22-23, cf. Lk 13:26-27).

There is no way for Christians to avoid the witness that the nature of their faith creates. Nor can they discount the implications that the practice of their faith defines the God they claim and determines the gospel they proclaim. Given the nature of faith, its practice also includes the formation of a culture of that faith, whether intentional or not, formalized or not. We can understand this culture of faith as follows:

A culture of faith is the life and practice unique to a collective group of Christian persons that relatively both defines who and what they are and determines how they function, thereby being a primary source of their identity. As such, culture is not about an individual person but a corporate dynamic of persons who belong and/or identify in this context together.

Perhaps most Christians would align the culture of faith with a particular or local church, whose practice may or may not be significant depending on their faith. Churches

certainly generate a culture in their faith practice, but how significant that culture is depends solely on the nature of their faith.

How relative a Christian culture defines and determines those persons evolves also from the nature of their faith. When their response to the gospel is not whole-ly, the relative defining and determining extent of a culture ranges on a spectrum from near total (as in a cult) to negligible. The culture of gospel faith is not a cult because it is whole and not fragmented by reductionism as found in a cult. Nor is gospel-faith culture relative in defining and determining the wholeness of its persons because it is uncommon. The culture of whole-ly faith goes beyond this spectrum, and when it is qualified along some point on the spectrum it falls out of Jesus' gospel culture and its whole-ly faith. The key in this faith-culture process once again is the underlying measure of theological anthropology and sin used, which bias how the gospel of what Jesus brings and gives are thought of in theology and seen in practice.

For example, a cult reduces persons by *object*-ifying them to strictly conform to its culture, under the false assumption that its gospel is superior. Consider also how other Christian cultures fragment persons by compromising the integrity of their identity and function by not clearly being distinguished from the common surrounding context, or by compartmentalizing their identity and function into some hybrid with the common—perhaps influenced by the desire that their gospel be inclusive or not exclusive. Any routine reducing of persons or conventional fragmenting of them is engaged when a culture's view of sin does not encompass reductionism—the prevailing sin that composes the breadth and depth of the human condition in general and their human relational condition in particular. Thus, any Christian culture defining the identity of persons and determining their function by a reduced theological anthropology subtly both reflects the sin of reductionism and reinforces or sustains the human condition. Such Christian cultures—which pervade Christianity and dominate the global church—counter the uncommon that Jesus brings and contradicts the whole that he gives for the uncommon good of all persons and relationships in wholeness. The immeasurable consequence increasingly evident today is that these cultures exist in ongoing tension and persist in varying conflict with Jesus' gospel culture and its whole-ly faith, even as they may serve the common good.

When Jesus cleaned out the traditional temple and reconstructed God's dwelling without the curtain for the intimate and equalized involvement of all persons, he brought the uncommon change necessary to distinguish God's family from the common. When Jesus constituted the new wine fellowship, it consisted of persons defined from inner out, who were involved in the primacy of relationship together over any other secondary practice (Lk 5:33-39)—the uncommon nature of which defines and determines those persons in wholeness. The uncommon that Jesus brings and the wholeness he gives can only be claimed by whole-ly faith; this was the surprising lesson learned by Nicodemus about his conventional faith. When so claimed, by its nature the gospel's whole-ly faith also unfolds distinguished uncommon and whole, and it cannot unfold distinguished by the practice of anything less and any substitutes.

The unfolding of whole-ly faith formulates **the gospel's culture**, which can only be composed uncommon and whole. What constitutes the culture of the gospel's faith as whole-ly is the distinguished image and likeness of the Trinity that Jesus embodied and enacted to reveal the heart of the Trinity's ontology and the depth of the Trinity's

function (2 Cor 4:4,6; Col 1:15,19). Jesus embodied the qualitative image of the trinitarian persons' uncommon ontology with his whole person from inner out (Jn 10:38; 14:9), and he enacted the relational likeness of the Trinity' whole function as One in relationship together (Jn 10:30; 15:9; 17:21). When we claim Jesus' gospel by whole-ly faith, we are transformed into the whole-ly image and likeness of the Trinity (2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10). Living this gospel faith together in everyday life composes **the whole-ly culture** of what Jesus brings and gives, which converges, emerges and unfolds on the basis of his relational process distinguishing the uncommon identity and whole function of his true followers:

“Following me...where I am,” and being who, what and how they are from inner out together without the veil of distinctions “so that they may be one *whole* as we, *the Trinity*, are One,” distinguished by their vulnerable depth of relational involvement in the primacy of intimate and equalized reciprocal relationship together “just as I have been *relationally involved with you*,” whereby “the world may know *the gospel I bring and give and may believe with whole-ly faith*”—just as Jesus prayed (Jn 17:21-23).

Just having the image and likeness of the Trinity in our theology is insufficient. Bearing the Trinity's qualitative image and relational likeness in practice requires that our theological anthropology not reduce our persons and relationships to the limits and constraints of a quantitative identity and function composed primarily by outer-in distinctions. And growing in the **qualitative sensitivity** and **relational awareness** of the Trinity's qualitative image and relational likeness necessitates that our view of sin both understand sin's reductionism and ongoingly fights against all expressions and levels of it in human life—first and foremost in our own lives as persons, and our life of relationships together. Bearing the Trinity's qualitative image and relational likeness and growing in this qualitative sensitivity and relational awareness are the key to distinguish the whole-ly culture of persons who claim Jesus' gospel by their relational response of whole-ly faith.

The qualitative image of the Trinity—signifying the very heart of the Trinity—emerges only in whole persons from inner out, whose veil of outer-in distinctions has been removed to reveal the very heart of those persons. In this qualitative image, persons are free to function vulnerably in the relational likeness of the Trinity. This relational involvement is determined by the primacy given to relationship over any other activity, and it involves foremost the primacy of relationships together in wholeness that are integrally intimate and equalized from any distinctions fragmenting relationships in a comparative process. This uncommon relational context and process that compose the whole-ly culture integrally come together with the most significance on the Sabbath, which integrates all persons vulnerably in the primacy of our relational response of worship. Yet, this relational response is not centered on the activity of worship but involves the relational response of subject-persons (not as mere objects conforming) in reciprocal relationship embracing the Trinity. This relational quality further unfolds as our primacy in relationship embraces other persons by our vulnerable relational response and involvement.

Jesus highlighted the culture of what he brings and gives in the primacy of relationship together, with two defining interactions that make clear the composition of this vulnerable relational response and involvement. The first interaction centered on Mary's (Martha's sister) vulnerable relational response and involvement with Jesus. Perhaps surprising to many Christians, Jesus proclaimed that her primary action (relational work) distinguishes his gospel and its whole-ly faith and culture (Jn 12:1-8; Mt 26:8-13, discussed previously). Without any distinctions defining her, Mary's whole person acted with the qualitative sensitivity and relational awareness of Jesus' person that are necessary to be involved in the primacy of reciprocal relationship together. As preparation for the burial of his person, by implication Mary's relational response celebrated both the removal of her veil through his death and also his resurrection of the new creation of persons and relationships in wholeness. Her relational response would not have proclaimed his gospel and could not distinguish its whole-ly faith and culture, unless her response involved her whole person from inner out with the veil of distinctions (notably her gender, role and resources) removed. Such distinctions didn't define her identity and determine her function, whereas the other disciples present reacted to her on the basis of their role as servants and their primary function to serve the poor—at the expense of the primacy of relational work distinguishing Jesus' gospel. Does this relational dynamic seem familiar in Christian interactions today, especially for many church leaders and activists who depend on their role and resources? Given this defining interaction, which identity and function sole-ly distinguishes the culture of Jesus' gospel, and which identity and function prevail today in Christian culture, in spite of even celebrating Jesus' death and resurrection?

The second defining interaction unfolded on the cross when Jesus made special relational connection with his mother Mary and his closest disciple John (Jn 19:25-27, noted earlier). Jesus brought uncommon change to their identity and function by having each embrace the other as “your son” and “your mother” respectively. This was a transformation from the common to his new creation family that he gave them for the wholeness of their persons and relationships together. The relational outcome of what Jesus brought and gave unfolds in his gospel's culture as they grow deeper in their new identity and function. By embracing each other in their new identity and function, his gospel's culture unfolds in two essential ways that are nonnegotiable for distinguishing this culture as inseparably whole and uncommon. Based only on the gospel of what Jesus brings and gives, the two ways emerge:

1. Their new identity is not defined by the reduction of their person to merely an individual, but rather their persons are whole just in the primacy of relationships together as his family in likeness of the Trinity. Any individualism counters what he brings and contradicts what he gives.
2. Therefore, their new function is determined neither by individualism nor by their biological family, which is an uncommon change from existing function but indispensable to be distinguished from the common. In his gospel's culture, the biological family is always secondary (not unimportant) to the primacy of his family—persons together as one in likeness of the Trinity, who relationally belong by their ongoing relational response and involvement of whole-ly faith.

These two ways are indispensable to define the identity and determine the function of persons growing in what Jesus brings and gives, and thereby irreplaceable for unfolding his gospel's culture. Anything less and any substitutes—which are typical in Christian cultures—no longer distinguish such a culture as whole and uncommon. The resulting ambiguity, conflict or contradiction in our theology and practice must be resolved, in order to be compatible with the theological trajectory of what Jesus alone brings and congruent with the relational path of what he gives without less or substitutes.

The whole-ly culture of Jesus' gospel unfolds in our midst when (1) it integrates persons and relationships in the wholeness of his new creation family (not our versions of church), (2) it encompasses the breadth and depth of the human condition in all its reductionism, and (3) it embraces all of human life and its diverse human order at all existing levels of the human context and its surrounding creation. The whole person from inner out functioning in the primacy of relationship together is at the heart of whole-ly culture—persons reflecting the heart of the Trinity—whereby this distinguished culture unfolds with those persons relationally involved to bring uncommon change in order to give uncommon peace. This vulnerable function goes beyond merely engaging in Christian ethics conforming to a moral code of justice,¹ and it goes deeper than default love such as peacemaking with common peace for the common good (e.g. as in being irenic). How so? Because this distinguished function exercises Jesus' sword of uncommon change for the sake of creation justice to be enforced for the vested and privileged rights of all persons, in order to have their inherent human need fulfilled in the just-nection of uncommon peace. Christian culture becomes ambiguous, if not a contradiction, with anything less and any substitutes.

By encompassing the human condition and embracing all of human life, no area or level of the human context is ignored or left unaddressed by his gospel's culture. This includes the political realm of life, which is certainly a major operation in everyday life. To be nonpolitical, as many Christians advocate and promote for Christian culture, is to counter what Jesus brings by compartmentalizing life by subtly separating the so-called uncommon (sacred) from the common, rather than distinguishing the uncommon from the common as Jesus did (notably with his sword). Moreover, to avoid politics in the exercise of Christian faith contradicts what Jesus gives by fragmenting the wholeness persons and relationships could have in everyday life (not as an ideal or in theory) if the existing human order were changed by the uncommon Jesus brings—an existing order that inevitably shapes Christian culture. Jesus' gospel culture is nonpartisan politically, but there is no way to get around engaging politics and not fall into countering what Jesus brings and contradicting what he gives.

From the political in everyday life to the surrounding creation, the whole-ly culture unfolds in our midst to embrace the life God created and to encompass its existing reduced and fragmented condition. Yet, this only unfolds among persons made whole in relationships together as the Trinity's family. Paul made conclusive the Spirit's relational work to constitute persons in their inner-out transformation into the qualitative life (*zoe*, not *bios*) of wholeness (the only peace the Spirit gives) in the Trinity's new creation family (Rom 8:5-16). Then he revealed the amazing reality that all of "creation waits

¹ Claire Disbrey advocates for the Christian practice of "virtue ethics"—going beyond merely conforming to an ethical-moral code out of obligation and focusing on the virtues of being a good person—in *Wrestling with Life's Tough Issues: what should a Christian do?* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007).

with eager longing for the *distinguished function* of the family of God.” Why? In its existing condition of “bondage to decay,” the hope of creation is to be redeemed from its reduced and fragmented condition and restored to the wholeness constituting the Trinity’s new creation family (Rom 8:19-22). In anticipation of creation’s decay in modern life, the hope of creation includes caring for existing creation—from personal lifestyles to the ozone layer and outer space. But creation’s hope goes beyond creation care to the integration of creation into the whole of God’s new creation as distinguished by the persons of whole-ly faith belonging to the whole-ly Trinity’s family. This hope of creation is realized as the Trinity’s new creation family embraces all of God’s creation and encompasses its existing condition of decay, in order to integrate creation not merely into Christian stewardship and the church’s mission. More so, by integrating creation deeply into the wholeness of the new creation family’s identity and function, the relational reality of which integrates all of life at all its levels without making distinctions and being selective about this family’s uncommon relational response and whole relational involvement.²

More than a counter-culture, the whole-ly culture of Jesus’ gospel is always unequivocally *anti-reductionism* for this ongoing purpose: to *bring* uncommon change to human life and to redeem, heal, reconcile and transform the human relational condition in order to *give* it the uncommon wholeness that distinguishes the collective identity and function of persons belonging to Jesus’ culture. If the Christian culture in our midst operates with anything less and any substitutes, it does not operate with whole-ly faith but some reduction or fragmentation of it. Furthermore, such Christian culture does not unfold the whole-ly culture from Jesus’ gospel, but in the reality of its theology (not its theory) and its practice (not its ideal), this culture has been influenced by reductionism and common-ized accordingly, such that it counters the uncommon Jesus brings and contradicts the whole he gives. Sadly, these cultures proclaim a different gospel because they have claimed a different gospel from Jesus’. As Paul experienced with churches in his day, he would continue to express about our pervasive conditions today: “I am astonished that you are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another gospel” (Gal 1:6-7).

Face to Face Justice

When the gospel we claim and proclaim is not the whole-ly gospel embodied and enacted by Jesus, we fall into the default modes of discipleship that practice justice-less salvation and whole-less justice. This disjunction pervades Christian culture and the global church’s mission to render our identity and function to an ambiguous condition challenging our faith (as Jesus does, Mt 5:13-16).

The creation justice Jesus proclaims to “bring justice to victory *in the new creation*” (Mt 12:18-21) can only be claimed by persons without the veil, in order to make face-to-face relational connection with the intimate presence of the Trinity. The

² A Global Consultation on Creation Care emerging from the Lausanne Movement perhaps points to but definitely stops short of this whole integration of creation care with the gospel for the theology and practice of the church, which is discussed in Colin Bell and Robert S. White, eds., *Creation Care and the Gospel: Reconsidering the Mission of the Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2016).

integral theological truth and thus relational reality are that the Trinity's presence and involvement were made vulnerable to us for this face-to-face relational connection when Jesus tore down the curtain—the truth for our theology and the reality for our practice needing to distinguish what we claim and proclaim. This face-to-face relational connection without the veil of human distinctions gives hope to all persons, peoples, tribes and nations to claim the uncommon Jesus brings and the wholeness he gives. Their hope fades when those who proclaim the gospel do not engage the face-to-face relational dynamic of Jesus' gospel necessary to have the relational involvement to make relational connection with them. In any such proclamation, the face-to-face relational connection is not distinguished for them to claim the just-nection Jesus brings and gives, and whatever they may claim would only be a different gospel.

The reality keeps surfacing that how we live (individually and collectively) proclaims the gospel we have claimed; and this reality reflects both the image of God we bear and the God of our image. What Jesus proclaims is **face-to-face justice**, and he brings justice to victory only in the primacy of face-to-face relationship together to constitute persons and relationships in wholeness—the uncommon wholeness in likeness of the Trinity. The face-to-face likeness of the Trinity, therefore, is essential for defining our identity and determining our function. We reflect this likeness of the Trinity by our ongoing vulnerable relational involvement (also known as love) in the primacy of face-to-face relationship. Consider then that any call to justice without face to face could only be incomplete and not bring the change for the just-nection of others. Consider further that any work for peace without face to face could only be fragmentary and not give the relational response and involvement for the relational connection that others need for their wholeness. Such a call is made on behalf of premature justice, and such a work is made for the sake of immature peace.

With creation justice, God didn't merely create life in what is right, as if to be lived within the limits and constraints of a mere moral-ethical code of justice. God created life in what is *best*, to which a mere moral-ethical code of justice is in contrast, and often since in conflict with. **God's justice is the superlative**, and anything less and any substitutes compose simply **comparative injustice**. The spectrum of injustice, which includes benign injustice, encompasses every consequence resulting from any lack of God's justice (consider Lev 19:15; Jam 2:1-10). The human struggle for justice centers on improving its comparative state of injustice, and benign injustice is often not part of that struggle. Christian practice that is focused on what is right over what is *best*, also converges with the human struggle to conflate the superlative of God's justice with the comparative of injustice. This conflation of the superlative with the comparative is evident notably when Christians ignore or don't address benign injustice. In creation justice, the Trinity created human life with the superlative of just-nection for persons to be whole from inner out (without outer-in distinctions) in the primacy of face-to-face relationship together in the Trinity's likeness—that is, only in what is *best*.

In their human relational condition, the psalmist cried out to his God for justice; that God would respond and “decree justice” by “*your* rule over them” (Ps 7:6-7, NIV). To rule (*yashab*) means to sit, dwell in their midst, not merely as a judge (cf. NRSV) but for the relational purpose and outcome of covenant relationship together distinguished in wholeness (the *tamiym* of Gen 17:1). In other words, this is the primacy of intimate involvement (as in Dt 7:7-9) in the relational response by God to bring peace to his

people face to face (fulfilling God's definitive blessing, Num 6:24-26). This face-to-face justice is the sole gospel that Jesus embodied and enacted whole-ly. Therefore, the uncommon change he brings, even with his sword, and the uncommon peace he gives both emerge, unfold, grow and mature exclusively face to face. This primacy is irreducible from what is *best* and is nonnegotiable by merely what is right, even if it serves the common good.

The primacy of face to face is how the justice of Jesus' gospel is proclaimed, and this primacy leads justice to victory face to face in the relational response and involvement of the Trinity's new creation family. Just as "*decaying* creation waits with eager longing for the *relational response and involvement* of the Trinity's family," all human life and its human relational condition long for the redemptive change that the face-to-face relational response and involvement this new creation family brings and gives whole-ly. When our persons come together face to face without the veil, we make the relational connection necessary for our just-nection in the Trinity's new creation family. As the uncommon Jesus brings and gives is claimed face to face, we are distinguished whole-ly to proclaim his gospel face to face just as Jesus did—to call for superlative justice face to face and to work for the peace of new relationship together in wholeness face to face.

This primacy of face-to-face relationship together is how God created all life in what is *best*, and how the Trinity constituted the new creation in likeness with nothing less and no substitutes. Anything less and any substitutes in our thinking and perception of the gospel are challenged by Jesus' gospel face to face. Anything less and any substitutes in our actions are confronted by his face-to-face justice, which exposes a different gospel we have claimed behind the gospel we proclaim.

Anything less and any substitutes for face-to-face relationship together have become more complex in the modern context of technology. What is virtual has evolved into such realistic representation that it blurs the line with reality. What has simulated face-to-face connection or substituted for face-to-face involvement have become so pervasive on the internet and social media that they prevail for defining human identity and determining human function in everyday life. In this modern life lacking face to face, persons are experiencing the greatest lack of qualitative sensitivity and relational awareness witnessed in human history. The accelerating consequence is reconstructing persons and relationships in a default mode that includes benign injustice, such that their practices in real reality further enable comparative injustice while they disable superlative justice.

The only hope to redeem anything less and any substitutes is the face-to-face justice of Jesus' gospel, which remains in disjunction with the prevalence of our gospel. Since that hope will not be realized until it is claimed face to face, those persons indeed proclaiming his whole-ly gospel will need to intensify their face-to-face relational response and involvement in order to deconstruct anything less and any substitutes—first in Christian culture and the church. This deconstruction includes exercising Jesus' sword of uncommon change that will expose the virtual reality of relationships (as in Mk 7:6-8), break apart the simulation of relationships, for example, in biological families (as in Mt 10:34-36), and will unavoidably involve the relational depth to clean out God's house in order to restore the primacy of face-to-face relationships for all persons without any and

all distinctions. Wherever anything less and any substitutes exist, at whatever level of human life, Jesus' gospel of face-to-face justice urgently needs to be proclaimed by persons in the primacy of face-to-face relationship together for the sole relational purpose to bring superlative justice to victory—nothing less and no substitutes.

Proclaiming Jesus' gospel, therefore, is in ongoing integral tension with his bad news, the reality of which is unavoidably facing us in our theology and practice:

Wherever Christians are complicit with anything less and any substitutes, and whenever we (individually and collectively) compose our theology and practice with anything less and any substitutes, we common-ize what Jesus brings and gives. Such proclamation claims that who, what and how we are in our theological anthropology is common-ized, which brings out the everyday reality that how we think, see and act with our view of sin are common-ized.

“...Where are you?” “What are you doing here?”

Chapter 7 The Consecrated for Whole-ly Justice and Peace

**Consecrate yourselves and be holy; for I am the LORD your God.
Follow my terms for covenant relationship and enforce them for the human order.**
Leviticus 20:7-8

**Father, I have given them your word, and the common has hated them
because they do not belong to the common, just as I do not belong to the world....
As you have sent me into the common, so I have sent them into the common.**
John 17:14,18

**I have made you a sentinel for my family and human life;
whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning for me.
If...you do not speak out to them to change, I will hold you accountable
for your complicity in their injustice.**
Ezekiel 33:7-8

In the most globally visible period of human history, we live in divisive, fragmented and broken contexts of everyday life. The challenge for all Christians is not how “good” we adapt to this human condition, but how well we change it. When we have the knowledge of what Jesus brings and the understanding of what he gives in his gospel, this urgent challenge shifts to accountability. The accountability for us is inescapable if we have claimed his gospel. At that point, our accountability focuses less on *how* do we change the human condition and more immediately on *when* do we change the existing human (our) condition evident at all levels of everyday life. That is, when do we (both individually and collectively) bring to everyday life the uncommon change Jesus brings, so that we can grow and mature the whole-ly justice and peace of his gospel?

Christians in the U.S., as Christians, should be the most marginalized segment of the population. Yet, in reality, we collectively are the most assimilated into the American way of life. Christians in other countries could be marginalized just for their religious difference from the dominant sector, but not necessarily for their identity (being) and function distinguished as Christians. What distinguishes Christians in any country is *being* in likeness to the whole-ly Trinity—that is, being whole and uncommon in their identity and function in the common contexts of everyday life.

Whenever and wherever we claim Jesus’ gospel, we are faced with the reality that his manifesto for discipleship (Sermon on the Mount, Mt 5-7) automatically becomes definitive for us; and his relational terms are irreducible and nonnegotiable. The pivotal verse in his manifesto was declared for his followers to distinguish the real from the virtual, which I paraphrase as follows:

“Unless the whole-integrity of who, what and how you are in your persons and relationships is not distinguished from the reductionists commonly associated with God—who define themselves by their outer-in distinctions—you do not represent my family and have not claimed my whole-ly gospel, thus you are unable to proclaim whole justice and bring justice to victory in uncommon peace as I do” (Mt 5:20).

From the beginning, the Word had always clarified and corrected *Who* is present and *What* is involved, whereby he ongoingly clarifies and corrects what and who are essential from creation through complete salvation. The sentinels of his family are responsible to declare the relational words (not mere teachings) from his mouth to all human life, in order to bring the turn-around change to the fragmentary heart of the human condition and its human order (Eze 33:7-8).

Jesus made conclusive for his followers that we are to fulfill our responsibility only on this basis: “As you *Father* sent me into the *common*’s world, so I have sent them into the *common*’s condition” (Jn 17:18). Therefore, we can only fulfill the responsibility of our reciprocating relational purpose by (1) being “not of the *common* just as I do not belong to the world” (Jn 17:14,16), and (2) “all being one...as we are one *in the Trinity*...that they may become *whole-ly* one” (*teleioo*, 17:21-23). No matter how seriously we take our responsibility of his calling and commission as his sentinels, we cannot fulfill this responsibility unless *who* is present in the world and *what* is involved in everyday life are integrally uncommon and whole—nothing less and no substitutes for whole-ly in the image and likeness of the Trinity.

Reflect on your God, and *Who* is present and *What* is involved in this song:

The Face of God¹

Dt 5:4; Num 6:25-26; Ps 80:3; 2 Cor 4:6

1. The face of God has opened
the holy God be praised
the face of God is present
O whole of God be thanked
2. the face of God is involved
the grace of God be praised
the face of God interacts
O whole of God be thanked
3. The face of God still remains
the faithful God be praised
the face of God stays focused
O whole of God be thanked

¹ By T. Dave Matsuo and Kary A. Kambara, © 2014. Sheet music available at www.4X12.org.

4. The face of God gets affected
the love of God be praised
the face of God so forgives us
O whole of God be thanked

5. The face of God not common
the holy God be praised
the face of God not two-faced
O whole of God be thanked

6. The face of God, face of God
the whole and holy God *is*
the face of God, face of God
is the whole and holy God.

Amen, amen, amen!

Consecrated in the Trinity's Image and Likeness

From creation through salvation, what is essential for human persons is to be created in, saved and transformed to the qualitative image and relational likeness of the Trinity (Gen 1:26-27; Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10). Since the beginning, human persons have had tension and conflict about God's image and living in God's likeness. Christians have had difficulty reconciling this truth in their theology with its reality for their practice. Yet, Jesus embodied *Who* was present and *What* was involved in the Trinity, and he enacted this good news in everyday life in order for the Trinity's image and likeness to be the experiential reality distinguishing our ontology and function (Col 1:15; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 4:24). This relational outcome emerges from our reciprocal relational involvement in "follow me" for the primacy of relationship together "where I am" (Jn 12:26). Anything less and any substitutes for this primacy render our practice to counter what Jesus brings, and contradict what he gives. For us, therefore, *who* is present and *what* is involved only have significance in everyday life when they are distinguished in the whole-ly Trinity's image and likeness. Distinguished, however, not by an ideal or concept but whole-ly by the experiential reality of the qualitative image and relational likeness enacted by Jesus' whole person in the Trinity, which vulnerably disclosed who, what and how he counts on all of us to be in his likeness (his "just as I" declarations).

How we live daily unavoidably reflects *who* is present and *what* is involved, and *how* real or virtual that is. Paying close attention to Jesus' person and his face-to-face communication (not detached teachings) provides us with the clarification and correction needed for our persons and relationships to grow uncommon and mature whole, so that we will be consecrated just like Jesus and the Trinity. When we don't listen vulnerably to the Word in relationship, we fall into a default mode that is subtly influenced by the common and reduced from the primary. One of the major consequences making evident falling into a default mode is burnout among church leaders and activists. This prominent

condition (and variations related to it) pervading Christian contexts evidence how persons become preoccupied with the secondary at the expense of the primary—namely, immersed in an identity and function defined primarily by the work they do. In this common occupational hazard, both their persons and relationships suffer (notably as relational orphans) from the lack of fulfillment in their inherent human need, whereby their vested and privileged rights have been neglected since their image and likeness of the Trinity has not been embraced whole-ly in its primacy. This is the consequence whenever our theological anthropology is reduced and our view of sin doesn't encompass reductionism.

When the LORD corrected his people, the consecrated were to “be holy” according to the relational terms by which “I sanctify you” (*qadash*, Lev 20:7-8). *Qadash* means to be set apart, to be holy or made holy in who, what and how they are, thus to be distinguished in their identity and function from the common and ordinary of human life. In other words, the consecrated were made uncommon by their uncommon God. Jesus extended this **uncommon-izing relational process** for his consecrated followers: “Father, sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (Jn 17:17). The traditional doctrine of sanctification has narrowed down the uncommon-izing relational process to becoming more perfect like Jesus, which has constrained persons from being whole. Yet, Jesus clarified this uncommon-izing process with the interrelationship between “the truth” and “your word.” Even more so, he corrected the limits of conventional sanctification by embodying the integral reality of God's Word as the Truth. As the whole-ly Truth for the uncommon Way to the whole Life, “I sanctify myself so that they too may be truly sanctified” (17:19, NIV). That is to say, Jesus enacted the qualitative image and relational likeness of the whole-ly Trinity, so that our persons will be consecrated in his whole-ly image and likeness whereby we will be distinguished uncommon and whole “into the common contexts of the world, as the Father sent me into the world.”

If we follow Jesus' person “where I am,” we engage the uncommon-izing relational process of our identity and function being transformed to and consecrated in the qualitative image and relational likeness that Jesus enacted embodying the Trinity in his whole-ly person. The relational outcome is for our person to be defined by the primary of the qualitative from inner out integrating the secondary quantitative outer aspects for constituting our whole person in the image of the trinitarian persons. Plus, and integrally, our whole persons function in the primacy of face-to-face relationship together, both equalized and intimate in the likeness of the whole-ly Trinity, whose ontology and function are irreducibly One and nonnegotiablely uncommon.

The ontology of the Trinity embodied by Jesus, and the image of the Trinity's ontology enacted by him, never emerge from Jesus' person as an individual. His ontology was always constituted together with the Spirit (Lk 4:1,14,18) and the Father (Jn 10:30; 12:45; 14:10-11), so that the individual has no significance to the trinitarian persons. They are each whole persons integrated together as One, in the integral dynamic of whole relationship. The function of the Trinity embodied by Jesus, along with the Trinity's ontology, and the likeness of the Trinity's function enacted by him, also never emerge from Jesus' person apart from his vulnerable involvement in the primacy of face-to-face relationship together. This ontology and function of the Trinity make the whole of who, what and how the Trinity is by nature uncommon and beyond the understanding of the common (e.g. Jn 10:30-39; 14:9-10). Perhaps this common thinking and perception

underlie why the image of God is relegated to our theology without having much if any significance in our practice. Yet, “just as I” always declares a key matter for which we are responsible and thus accountable. Always likewise, Jesus’ consecrated followers are whole persons, whose primary identity is the qualitative image of the Trinity that is defined neither as an individual nor by any outer-in distinctions. The qualitative image of these whole persons are integrated together in the primacy of integral relationships both equalized and intimate, which constitutes their function in the relational likeness of the whole-ly Trinity.

Therefore, Jesus followers are distinguished whole-ly only with the following:

When they are sanctified by the qualitative image and relational likeness enacted by Jesus, which consecrates their person whole from the inner out to be their primary identity over any other secondary identity from outer in, and which integrates them as these whole persons vulnerably involved face to face in the primacy of reciprocal relationship together in wholeness over any other secondary matters in everyday life.

When the Trinity’s qualitative image and relational likeness are the experiential Truth and relational reality in our persons and our relationships, we (as persons together as one) will be distinguished whole-ly in the context of the common “so that the world may believe...may know *the uncommon change I bring and the uncommon whole peace I give*” (Jn 17:21-23).

So, what defines you in everyday life, and how does that determine how you function and how your relationships are?²

When Jesus declared to Peter at his footwashing “unless I wash you, you have no share with me,” Peter perceived Jesus’ action only in quantitative terms from outer in (Jn 13:8-9). This is a key interaction for Jesus’ consecrated followers, yet not to be set apart for serving but to be distinguished in the image and likeness enacted by Jesus. What Jesus enacted in this interaction was difficult for Peter to embrace because of its nature, which was clearly confronting for this magisterial shepherd of Jesus’ family. What was difficult for Peter to embrace that confronted him at his core?

First, by enacting the qualitative image of God, Jesus unmistakably distinguished that his person was defined from inner out by the primary terms of the qualitative, not from outer in by the secondary quantitative terms of his role as “Teacher and Lord” (v.13). Without his outer-in distinctions—and who among us can claim such superior distinctions?—Jesus vulnerably disclosed his whole person, the integrity of who, what and how he was functioning (his righteousness) with nothing less and no substitutes. Secondly, his whole person functioned without the veil of distinctions in order to be relationally involved in relationships face to face for the relational connection necessary to distinguish the relational likeness of the Trinity. Jesus enacted this primacy of face-to-face relationship together with the depth of his relational involvement from inner out, such that Peter was unable to embrace Jesus’ person since his own person functioned from outer in to make quantitative distinctions primary over the qualitative—implied in “you, *my Teacher and Lord*, shall never wash my feet.” The common function of Peter’s

² Also, consider how many worship songs refer to God in the third person rather than the second person. What is the level of face-to-face involvement when we address God using the third person, or address any other person by being indirect?

person exposed his shallow engagement of relationships with his veil, and thus Jesus confronted him with the reality “you have no *depth of involvement to have relational connection* with me.” This relational reality exists for all of us: when we keep our veil on, what we see are human distinctions rather than the whole person (both ours and others) in face-to-face relationship.

Peter essentially needed to change his theological anthropology and view of sin in order to see that who, what and how he was lacked the qualitative image and relational likeness enacted by Jesus, as vulnerably disclosed in this key interaction. Peter needed to be whole-ly consecrated (not simply “sanctified”) by embracing the uncommon change Jesus brings and the uncommon wholeness only Jesus gives, so that Peter would no longer counter and contradict Jesus.

When his whole-ly gospel is claimed instead of our gospel, Jesus’ shepherds and sentinels are consecrated in the qualitative image and relational likeness of the Trinity that Jesus’ person enacted for our transformation to nothing less and no substitutes—the uncommon-izing relational process which can never be overemphasized nor overestimated. If, however, we are not distinguished in everyday life by the Trinity’s image and likeness—namely, transposing the qualitative with the quantitative, and renegotiating the primacy of face-to-face relationships—we can only reflect a default mode, which reinforces and sustains anything less and any substitutes. Jesus allows for no latitude of variation (as in human diversity) in the identity and function of his shepherd and sentinels—as Peter discovered and had to confront in his own life. Paul distinguishes this transformation definitively only in persons “with unveiled faces” who reflect the Trinity’s image and likeness in their everyday life (2 Cor 3:18). The veil commonly reflects and shrouds our default mode; and Paul would not allow his own outer-in distinctions to define his person and determine his function (see 1 Cor 2:3-4; 2 Cor 10:10; 11:6; 12:7-10; Gal 4:13-14, cf. Phil 3:4-7). Like the unveiled face of Paul, in our unveiled face the whole-ly relational outcome is our reciprocal relational involvement face to face with the Trinity to proclaim his gospel of justice (not whole-less justice), in order to save all persons (not justice-less salvation) to bring their just-nection to victory in the uncommon wholeness (not common peace) of the Trinity’s new creation family.

Reflect on your practice of Communion and share in this song:

Whole-ly Communion³

Mt 9:10-13; Heb 10:19-22; 2 Cor 4:6

This song is composed to be sung during Communion.

Heartfelt and heart-filled

1. Here at your table
you call us from afar
You, O Jesus, to you

³ By Kary A. Kambara and T. Dave Matsuo, ©2014. Sheet music available at www.4X12.org.

2. Here behind the curtain
we join you, old to new
You, O Jesus, in you
3. Now without the veil
we see God, Face to face
You, O Jesus, with you
4. In your very presence
whole of God, O, whole of God
Father, Son and Spirit

Bridge:

Here at your table—
Here behind the curtain—
Now without the veil—

Final verse:

In your very presence
whole of God, O—whole of God
Father, Son and Spirit!

The Simplification of Uncompromising Change

Persons sanctified by the Trinity are consecrated in the Trinity's qualitative image and relational likeness. This change unfolds with a growing depth of qualitative sensitivity and relational awareness accordingly. A lack or loss of qualitative sensitivity and relational awareness evidence when our everyday life is not set apart to reflect the Trinity. Without being set apart in these terms, then *who* is present and *what* is involved reflect merely a reduced salvation from a revised gospel. A truncated soteriology reflects two limits defining our theology, which create constraints for our practice:

1. Reduced salvation is limited only to being saved *from* sin that doesn't encompass reductionism, thus limits our salvation to a change (wrongly assumed to be transformation) without being saved *to* the change Jesus brings for the wholeness he gives. If we were saved to this wholeness, then we would have to be saved from reductionism. The two cannot coexist in our theology and practice.
2. The first limit evolves into a second limit, which composes a justice-less salvation that limits what we claim and proclaim, whereby we are constrained to the limits of a whole-less peace.

When who, what and how we are reflect the limits of justice-less salvation and the constraints of whole-less peace, our persons and relationships counter the uncommon change Jesus brings, and contradicts the uncommon peace he gives.

Transformation is a misleading assumption that Christians frequently make about salvation. Related, many Christians calling for justice and working for peace are misguided to assume that their theology and practice are not composed by whole-less justice and peace. *Change* is the common issue here that calls into question what is the underlying change claimed and proclaimed.

The issue of change emerges distinctly from the gospel. If that change doesn't encompass the human condition and get to the heart of human life, what significance does that gospel have? If that gospel encompasses this change but is not reflected in those who claim or proclaim it, what significance does that change have? Certainly, then, this significance revolves around the disjuncture between *our* gospel and *his* gospel, and the change that emerges from it. This disjuncture in our theology underlies the disjuncture in our practice between the wide gate-road and the narrow gate-road, which Jesus clarified to distinguish his difficult relational path from other easier ways (Mt 7:13-14). Following his person is more complex, involving complex subjects, while easier ways are simplified to render persons to simple objects—whom Jesus corrected as those he doesn't know (7:21-23).

The change Jesus brings is difficult and never easy. Yet, when our view of sin doesn't encompass reductionism or ongoingly fight against it, the counter-workings of reductionism exerts its subtle *process of simplification* on our identity and function, on the gospel and its outcome. Hence, the simplification of change in our persons, churches, and other persons and contexts of human life neither gets to the depth of their heart nor down to the fragmentary heart of their human condition. This faces us with an unavoidable reality of his gospel: If we do not speak out for the uncommon turn-around change Jesus brings, we are accountable for our complicity in their injustice (as in Eze 33:7-8).

The subtle simplifying of change becomes more evident when we examine the function of our theological anthropology. Consider this:

When our identity is measured by what we do and have, there is unspoken pressure to produce, progress, have achievements, and succeed in the work we do. The subtle influence of such pressure can cause strain and stress when we don't demonstrate progress, achievement or success—intensified in its persistent comparative process of measurement. Under such conditions, in situations or circumstances where change is difficult to accomplish and its prospect may not be on the horizon, we become susceptible to simplifying change for easier or quicker results—results critical also to our identity.⁴

⁴ Like social change, the way many persons tend to deal with climate change is typically based on how human brains are wired. That is, the brain has difficulty with complex issues that are more future and thus puts more emphasis on the tangible present; this reflects how the majority address climate change with easier alternatives. See David G. Victor, Nick Obradovich and Dillon Amaya, "Why our brains make it hard to grapple with global warming," OP-ED, *Los Angeles Times*, 9/17/2017.

Our rationale for simplifying change may be that ‘any change is better than no change’, and understandably so given the difficulty. But, our underlying motivation for easier and quicker results often involves having something to show for our efforts that would affirm our identity and not be rendered *less* in the comparative process—perhaps be considered “the greatest” as Jesus’ early disciples pursued.

Apply the simplification of change to the areas of your work. Certainly bringing change for justice and peace is not easy. Of greater priority, bringing change to our persons and churches is also difficult, to say the least. With the level of complexity involved for significant change, on what basis could you declare that you would not choose an easier alternative to change? Moreover, what would be the cost for you to make that choice, or what do you think making your decision would be at the expense of?

This pivotal issue intensifies the disjuncture between the theological anthropology composing our gospel and his gospel. Either our persons and relationships undergo simpler change or they turn around on the basis of difficult change, but the latter can neither be mistaken for nor conflated with the former. The difficult change Jesus brings is only redemptive change, the transformation of the *old* to the *new*. Therefore, his change for transformation is uncompromising, and thus by its nature is uncommon.

No matter who the persons and what the relationships are, or what area and level of everyday life, nothing less and no substitutes for his uncommon change impacts the heart of human life and turns around its fragmentary human condition and order. Any compromise of this uncommon change exchanges it with common change, which evolves from the simplifying influence of reductionism. This includes the change associated with the common good, which compromises the uncommon change Jesus brings for only the uncommon good. Paul exposed the subtle workings of common change (*metaschematizo*, 2 Cor 11:13-15) and made it imperative not to resort to it (*syschematizo*) in place of the uncompromising uncommon change (*metamorphoo*, Rom 12:1-2). As difficult as this change could be to experience in everyday life, this is the only change that Jesus brings to declare justice, and the only relational outcome that he gives to bring just-nection to victory (Eph 2:14-22; 4:14-24).

The whole-ly new (contrary to a “new” normal) rises with the Trinity, and this consecration always counters any common change and contradicts anything less and any substitutes in our theology and practice.

Reflect on your person and join in this song:

‘Singing’ the New Song⁵

Sing the new song to the Lord
Sing the new song to *our* Lord
(*Joyfully*) —the veil is gone
the veil is gone
[embrace the whole of God]

Note: []s hummed (or the like); no words aloud,
no instruments played

⁵ Composed in the key of Jesus with the Spirit and sung with Paul (2 Cor 3:16-18), Kary A. Kambara and T. Dave Matsuo, ©2011. Sheet music available at www.4X12.org.

Sing the new song to the Lord
Sing the new song to *our* Lord
—you are holy
 you are whole
—we're uncommon
 we are whole
[embrace the whole of God]

Sing the new song to the Lord
Sing the new song to *our* Lord
(*Passionately*) —you compose life
 in your key
—life together
 intimately
—no veil present
 distance gone
[embrace the whole of God]

Sing the new life with the Lord
Sing the new life with *our* Lord
—you are present
 and involved
—we *be* present
 now involved
[embrace the whole of God]

Sing this new song to *you* Lord
Sing this new life with *you* Lord
(*Joyfully*) —the veil is gone
 the veil is gone
[embrace the whole of God]

[embrace the whole of God]

[embrace the whole of God]

Progressive, Non-progressive, or Radical

Many may perceive the consecrated followers of Jesus as non-progressive, embodying tradition and following that agenda. Others may see those proclaiming justice as progressive, enacting an agenda that may or may not be contrary to the gospel. In a postmodern and post-Christian climate, a growing number may think of both groupings as without significance, perhaps even as prolonging the status quo with no significant change. Christian non-progressives and progressives have warranted the ‘insignificant’

label in how they are seen and thought of, because their witness has not been substantive sufficiently to embrace all of human life and encompass the human condition. In other words, there isn't anything notably different about them that distinguishes their practice from others having the same concerns, and thus for others to take an interest in their practice.

At his ascension, Jesus communicated to his shepherds and sentinels that “you will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth”—that is, “when the Holy Spirit’s *person is relationally involved with you*” (Acts 1:8). His witness (*martyrs*) is more than a common witness who has information or knowledge to confirm something. His witnesses possess the experiential Truth and relational reality of his face-to-face relational involvement with them in the primacy of relationship together that constitutes their just-nection. If this witness is limited to knowledge and constrained to referential information, such a witness has lost its substantive relational significance. To prevent that relational loss, the Spirit’s person is present and involved in reciprocal relationship, in order to maintain, deepen and consummate the relational connection of Jesus’ witnesses to have the substantive significance to be distinguished in all parts of the world, at all levels of human life.

Essentially, non-progressives proclaiming a justice-less salvation become shepherds of inequality and enablers of injustice. Progressives proclaiming a premature justice and immature peace (whole-less justice and peace) as sentinels have fallen into default love, which may address permissible rights but not the vested and privileged rights necessary for just-nection and the fulfillment of inherent human needs. The being-making disciples equation limits the results of both groupings to nothing more. That brings us back to who, what and how Jesus’ consecrated are.

Creation, the human condition, his gospel and salvation converge for just one and only one outcome. When they are fully understood, they integrate into the *whole* constituted by the Trinity. This integral picture of God’s whole is unmistakably distinguished from the common, in order to compose unequivocally without comparison the uncommon wholeness of all human life and its human order in the whole-ly Trinity’s image and likeness. This radical relational dynamic gets to the roots of life to embrace the heart of human life and encompass the fragmentary heart of the human condition. Only that which is radical gets to these vital roots. Yet, because of its nature, those who are radical can only be uncommon, and this is problematic for most Christians who follow an easier path than Jesus’ intrusive relational path. Since nothing less and no substitutes compose the Word proclaiming the good news for human life and its order, the identity and function of his shepherds and sentinels can only be distinguished by nothing less and no substitutes. The relational terms of his gospel are irreducible and nonnegotiable.

Therefore, the essential integrity of this transforming new life and order is neither progressive nor non-progressive; rather it emerges only and unfolds just as uniquely radical. And it grows and matures distinguished by the everyday life and practice of his consecrated in the Trinity’s image and likeness—the consecrated for whole-ly justice and peace.

Claim the experiential Truth and relational reality in the following song:

The Whole-ly Trinity⁶

Note: underlined words to be chanted, rapped, shouted, or any other style, in this rhythm but not sung; tempo increases after Bridge 1, then slows down after verse 6 to the end.

1.

Praise God whole and uncommon
Father, Son and Spirit,
Praise God whole and uncommon
Father, Son and Spirit,
together as One
You are, are, are
the whole-ly Trinity.

2.

Praise You Father, Son, Spirit,
Your persons together
Praise You Father, Son, Spirit,
Your persons together
whole and uncommon
You are, are, are
the whole-ly Trinity.

Bridge 1:

O, O, O, O praise! O, O, O, O praise!

3.

Glory be Father, Son, Spirit,
all present together,
yes, present together
yes, present together,
whole persons as One
You are, are, are
the whole-ly Trinity.

4.

Thank You Father, Son, Spirit,
all involved together,
yes, involved together,
yes, involved together,
in relationships
with us, You are
the whole-ly Trinity.

Bridge 2:

O, O, O, O praise! O, O, O, O thank!
O yes, O yes, O yes, O yes!

5.

Praise You whole-ly Trinity,
all present and involved, O
Praise You whole-y Trinity,
all present and involved,
Your persons together
whole relationship,
You're whole and uncommon.

6.

Thank You whole-ly Trinity,
distinguished above all, O
Thank You whole-ly Trinity,
distinguished above all,
yet here for us all
to make us whole
and uncommon like You.

Bridge 3:

So, yes, now yes, O yes!

7.

Praise O thank the Trinity
with our whole and uncommon, Yes,
Praise O thank the Trinity
with our whole and uncommon:
Father, Son, Spirit
You are, are, are
the whole-ly Trinity,
You are, are, are
the whole-ly Trinity,
the whole-ly Trinity.

⁶ By T. Dave Matsuo, ©2017. Sheet music available at www.4X12.org.

The Spirit of New Life Together

Non-progressive churches in the West have fallen on hard times, though white evangelicals in the U.S. have become more tenacious in their identity. Progressive churches and ministries also struggle both to stay relevant in the West and to have an identity considered to be significant for the common good. And with a growing postcolonial climate, both variations appear to have little if any impact in the global South. Leading the way to changing the make-up of the Christian population, the Spirit-focused charismatics and Pentecostals in the global South have renewed church growth to claim the majority of Christians in the world. How significant this growth is beyond a quantitative measure remains to be seen. But, like Christians everywhere, the significance of their witness will be a measure of how the Spirit is distinguished in both their theology and practice.⁷

As the distinguishing measure for his followers, Jesus declared to them face to face that “I will not *let you live as relational orphans*” (Jn 14:18). The experiential truth and relational reality of his declaration emerge with the presence of the Spirit’s person, who is relationally involved in reciprocal relationship together as Jesus’ relational replacement (Jn 14:16-17; 15:26-27; 16:7-15). The Spirit *as* person has been the neglected or forgotten person in the Trinity, even by charismatics and Pentecostals who reduce his person to merely his power, and limit his presence and involvement to this related activity. Some may consider the latter practice better than neglecting or forgetting the Spirit, but we have to ask if this is sufficient to distinguish *Who* is present and *What* is involved. As his relational replacement, Jesus would declare a resounding “No! That’s not who and what replaces my embodied person.” Paul would echo Jesus and declare that the Spirit’s person would be grieved by the loss of primacy in reciprocal relationship together (Eph 4:30; Rom 8:15-16).

Embrace the Word and Paul’s words in their relational language (not referential) expressed in this song:

The Spirit of the Word⁸

Taken from Jn 14:15-27; 16:13-15; 17:20-23; Gal 4:6; Eph 2:22; Nu 6:24-26

1. ‘I will not leave you as orphans’
‘I do not leave you apart’
‘The Father gives you the Spirit
the Father gives you the Spirit
in my name, in my name.’

⁷ Esther E. Acolatse works to integrate the theological task of the global South and North for their church practice to better distinguish the Spirit according to Scripture. See her discussion relevant for the global church in today’s world, *Powers, Principalities, and the Spirit: Biblical Realism in Africa and the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

⁸ By T. Dave Matsuo and Kary A. Kambara, ©2011. Sheet music available at www.4X12.org.

Chorus:

‘The Spirit lives with you’
‘We make our home with you’
dwelling whole as family
“Abba Father, Abba Father”

2. ‘I’ve sent you the Spirit of truth’
‘I’ve left you the Spirit of Truth’
‘You know him within you’
‘He guides you and tells you
what is mine, what is mine.’
3. ‘My peace I leave you, my family
My peace I give you, be whole!’
‘The Lord shines his face on you,
the Lord turns his face to you
and makes you whole, makes you whole.’
4. The whole of God with us has shared
the whole of God with us is present
‘that they may be one as we,
that they may be one as we’
‘I in them, you in me.’

End: O my Father, O my Father!

The Spirit must not be reduced in his person and, equally important, must not be fragmented from his oneness with the other trinitarian persons as the Trinity. By extending what Jesus brought and gave, the Spirit is the ongoing *functional key* for the irreplaceable relational connection required for the relational reality of our just-nection *with* the Trinity and *in* the Trinity’s image and likeness. Through the presence and involvement of the Spirit’s person, we are consecrated (2 Thes 2:13) to be the intimate dwelling of the Trinity as family together (Eph 2:22; Jn 14:23, cf. 1 Cor 3:16). This new life together, however, does not emerge, grow and mature without the relational work (not limited or constrained to power) of the Spirit. Yet, in contrast to how the Spirit’s power is often misperceived, the Spirit (along with the other trinitarian persons) doesn’t function in unilateral relationship but only in reciprocal relationship according to the Trinity’s relational terms (just as Jesus declared, Jn 14:15-21). Therefore, when we are not ongoingly relationally involved with the Spirit in this primacy of face-to-face relationship without the veil, we lack the relational connection with the Trinity for the relational reality of our just-nection in the Trinity’s family. The relational consequence is

to render us to relational orphans, who are disabled in justice-less salvation and unable to experience the uncommon peace Jesus gives (14:26-27)—leaving them only able to compose their witness in a default mode. In this relational condition, the most that churches can claim, expect, proclaim and hope for is whole-less justice and peace—notably functioning in complicity with benign injustice while common-izing peace.

The prevailing witness today of the church and its persons and relationships evidences this relational condition lacking the Spirit's person. With the human condition pervading our midst (both within and surrounding the church), this has left many in varying degrees of “troubled hearts and inwardly afraid”—as Jesus anticipated from common peace (Jn 14:27). For those advocating for justice and peace, it is stressful, frustrating, angering, disheartening and even despairing to work for change while in this condition—leaving such well-intentioned workers constrained to their default mode and thus laboring as relational orphans without relationally belonging to and having the essential support of family together as in the Trinity. Nevertheless, Jesus' shepherds and sentinels have the clear alternative to be consecrated by the Spirit in new life together as the Trinity's family, the relational involvement of which will get to the heart of their everyday life for the just-nection they can now claim as their relational reality no matter what is happening around them. In this growing and maturing relational outcome, they will be distinguished unmistakably to proclaim the good news for the fragmentary heart of the human condition and its broken order; and in the significance of their new life together with the Spirit, they will unequivocally counter those who enable injustice and contradict those who disable justice—including those serving the common good by working merely for conventional change with premature justice and immature peace.

For this relational outcome to grow and mature, however, the diversity of the global church (i.e. its fragmentation) will have to be made whole and thus consecrated uncommon by the Spirit. That is to say, the fragmentary global church needs to be consecrated whole-ly by the Spirit beyond charismaticism and Pentecostalism, in order for the heart of its identity to be in the qualitative image and the depth of its function to be in the relational likeness of the Trinity. Paul made the uncommon peace Jesus gives through the Spirit imperative as the church's sole determinant for its wholeness as one family, by which this whole-ly family will nurture and support all its members as persons without distinctions in the primacy of relationship together (Col 3:10-11,15-16).

We must not underestimate the inherent human need for the support system of the Trinity's family, nor can we overestimate this whole-ly family's support for the fulfillment of each of our inherent need.⁹ In reciprocal relationship with the Spirit, our vested and privileged rights are secured to be able to fight together against reductionism at all levels of the human condition and bring justice to victory (as in Eph 6:10-18). And Paul was neither hesitant nor apologetic to include his person in ongoing need of the church family's support, in order for him to vulnerably (*parresia*) proclaim the uncommon turn-around change Jesus brings and the uncommon peace Jesus gives (6:19-20).

⁹ James Davison Hunter discusses the Christian community's need for what Peter Berger calls “plausibility structures,” the stable support base provided by the church for its members during times of instability. See *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 200ff.

When the global church distinguishes the Spirit's person in inseparable oneness as the Trinity, it then can be consecrated whole-ly to distinguish its identity in the qualitative image and its function in the relational likeness of the whole-ly Trinity. As the global church is distinguished whole-ly, it can propagate the whole-ly culture of Jesus' gospel (not our variations) for all its churches (1) to grow their persons as subjects in the turn-around change Jesus brings, and (2) to mature their relationships as equalized and intimate in the uncommon wholeness he gives. This irreducible and nonnegotiable gospel culture centers on the qualitative as being primary over the quantitative and on the primacy of face-to-face relationship together, whereby it cultivates the depth of qualitative sensitivity and relational awareness that reflect the Trinity's qualitative image and relational likeness—all in support of persons in their vested and privileged rights to have their inherent needs fulfilled. With the outworking of this whole-ly culture, the consecrated together as one are distinguished whole-ly in the world with the significance to declare whole-ly justice and peace. Accordingly, the relational outcome from the consecrated's declaration will emerge (both in the present already and the future not yet) with the reciprocal relational work of the Spirit, in oneness together as the Trinity.

In this relational purpose and for that relational outcome, Paul implores us: "Pray in *relationship with* the Spirit at all times in every *expression of* prayer and *heartfelt* supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the *consecrated*" (Eph 6:18).

Pursue, anticipate, and celebrate this relational reality summarized in this song:

The Global Church Celebrating¹⁰

1. You God are whole and uncommon,
Distinguished beyond all the common,
None to compare, none to compare
You God are whole and uncommon.
2. Your Word is whole and uncommon,
Distinguished from all in the world,
Here to transform, here to make whole
Your peace is whole and uncommon.

Chorus 1:

Praise— the whole and uncommon (*"Praise" is shouted*)
God beyond all that is common,
You have transformed, you make us whole (*shout freely with beat*)
Your family whole and uncommon.

3. We are not parts of the common
Fragmented apart from God's whole,
We are transformed, we are made whole
Peace together whole and uncommon.

¹⁰ By T. Dave Matsuo and Kary A. Kambara, ©2016. Sheet music available at www.4X12.org.

4. We are God's whole and uncommon
Distinguished family from the common,
No longer old, raised in the new
Now together like the Trinity.

Chorus 2:

Praise— Father, Son and Spirit, (*"Praise" is shouted*)
Thank you for family together,
You equalized, you reconciled (*shout freely with beat*)
All persons, peoples and nations.

5. We shout with joy in our hearts,
Clapping, dancing inside to out,
No longer apart, no more orphans
God's family whole and equal.
6. We sing the new song from within,
Proclaiming joy to all the world,
Here is your hope, here is your peace
Wholeness together beyond common

Chorus 2:

Praise— Father, Son and Spirit, (*"Praise" is shouted*)
Thank you for family together,
You equalized, you reconciled (*shout freely with beat*)
All persons, peoples and nations.

[*everyone shouting, clapping, dancing to the Trinity*]

Yes! Yes!! Yes!!! (*shouted, and repeat as desired*)
All persons, peoples and nations.

Glossary of Key Terms

the being-making disciples equation: the measure of the disciples we are in everyday life determines the measure of the disciples we will make in response to Jesus' Great Commission, nothing more (chap. 6:107ff).

benign injustice: the fact that how injustice is seen and thought of have varying understanding and relative ascription is the reality that produces benign injustice, which promotes illusions of justice by dulling or obscuring awareness of existing injustice—the practice of which involves complicity with that injustice (chap. 5:97).

the common denominator of injustice: as the antithesis of just-nection, this composes the relational distance, separation, or brokenness that fragment the human order and reduce persons to any and all relational disconnection contrary to their created likeness to God, which is consequential for preventing fulfillment of the inherent human need (chap. 4:60; 5:89).

comparative injustice: with creation justice, God didn't merely create life in what is right but what is *best*; God's justice is the superlative, and anything less and any substitutes compose simply comparative injustice—the spectrum of which encompasses every consequence resulting from any lack of God's justice, including benign injustice (chap. 6:116).

a complex subject (as a person): in contrast to a simple object, this person is neither complicated from the inner out nor fragmented by the outer in, but is distinguished as the complex subject created in the qualitative image and relational likeness of the Trinity (chap. 2:33).

conventional (common) change: change merely from the outer in (*metaschematizo*), which is the change that even Satan promotes (chap. 5:81).

the critical distinction for human persons: as evolved from the primordial garden, the pivotal shift of persons from inner out to outer in that constructed human identity and function; from this defining distinction evolved related formative human distinctions (chap. 4:67).

culturalism, nationalism/tribalism: on the social, political or economic levels, singling out, elevating, prioritizing, aggrandizing, and/or glorifying one group at the cost or exclusion of others (chap. 2:31).

default evangelism: evangelism revolving around justice-less salvation, the mode of which neither encompasses the good news of what Jesus brings nor embraces what he gives, and thus neither claims the depth underlying his Great Commission nor proclaims the extent of it (chap. 6:106).

default love: the default action of those who do not make their whole person vulnerable for the depth of relational involvement with all persons without using distinctions, thus there is no justice in their love; rather their actions are rendered to default love, whose reduced function even enables injustice and disables justice to prevent just-nection (chap. 5:94).

default salvation: this is a justice-less salvation the centers on saving from sin that either doesn't include sin as reductionism or doesn't include saving to wholeness; in Jesus' 3-D gospel, justice is not merely the fruit of salvation but it *is* salvation (chap. 6:106).

default social action: those pursuing the social action agenda over evangelism engage in whole-less justice and thus fall into this default action; in Jesus' gospel, this default mode does not "bring justice to victory" as Jesus proclaimed (chap. 6:106).

deficit model: the model used in the comparative process to measure where persons fall in the stratified human order, and what those *less* need to measure up to in order to rise higher in this human order; used to subordinate others as less and to maintain the inequality between them and those *more* (chap. 5:98).

disablers of justice: persons under the shaping influence exerted by the prevailing norms of the surrounding status quo, whose practice then unintentionally disables their just-nection and/or the just-nection of others by rendering them as *objects* under the influence of their surrounding context; including those whose function serves to disable justice merely by their lack of justice or complicity with injustice (chap. 4:65).

enablers of injustice: as counterparts to disablers of justice, these are persons who also counter the bad news and contradict the good news of Jesus' gospel by not embracing the change Jesus brings and thereby allowing benign injustice to continue, or by simply not enforcing God's rule of law in whole-life justice (chap. 4:65).

exceptionalism: the ultimate outcome that evolves from the illusion of culturalism, nationalism or tribalism to construct this delusion about the group, which others must defer to or be controlled by (chap. 2:31).

face-to-face justice: what Jesus embodied and enacted were only distinguished in the primacy of face-to-face relationship as constituted in the Trinity; accordingly, what Jesus proclaims is face-to-face justice, and he brings justice to victory only in the primacy of face-to-face relationship together to constitute persons and relationships in wholeness—the uncommon wholeness in likeness of the Trinity (chap. 6:116).

holy debate: the human voices about the perception of God and the theories of the human order, which speak for God rather than carefully listening to God speak (chap. 1:8).

human need-rights: the integral human need composes these rights for all persons to have their inherent need—invariably designed by God and created in God’s image—respected, honored, and allowed to be fulfilled; this inherent human need antecedes what is considered ‘human rights’ and forms the irreducible and nonnegotiable basis for human need-rights (chap. 3:51).

immature peace: the peace without wholeness that results from conventional common change without the significance of transforming persons together in the primacy of relationship (chap. 5:87).

individualism: giving primacy to the individual person over persons together in whatever formation—starting with the family, and including the church (chap. 2:31).

integral human need: basic to all persons and underlying all rights in human life is the inherent need to fulfill and to be fulfilled in the created make-up of the human person, functioning in the primacy of relationship together in likeness of the Creator (chap. 3:51).

just-nection: the *right* order of relationship together created by Subject God for subject persons having the *right* relational connection in his likeness—the relational connection required for justice of the human order; therefore, God’s justice is distinguished and God’s peace is experienced just in this relational dynamic of just-nection (chap. 4:59; 5:89).

life lies: the lies, alternative facts and illusions of truth that we hear about ourselves and/or related others, which we then believe as the truth shaping us when in reality it was only a lie or illusion (chap. 2:30).

the “new” normal: the relational distance, disconnect or separation composing the relational condition of injustice in general and righteousness in particular (chap. 3:45,47).

permissible rights: rights available to all persons to the extent that their enactment either doesn’t disrespect, abuse and prevent the fulfillment of their and others’ human need, or that isn’t allowed access to that fulfillment by the normative enforcement of others (chap. 3:52).

premature justice: the result from efforts lacking the significant change that transforms relationships in their primacy, which is necessary for justice to be whole (chap. 5:87).

privileged rights: rights unique to all persons created in God’s image, who can claim these nonnegotiable rights just in their created uniqueness, unless the rights are withdrawn or denied only by God (chap. 3:52).

process of integrating priorities (PIP): the crucial process of integrating the secondary matters of life into the primary, in order to maintain the integrity of the subject-person's identity and function from inner out to serve the *right* purpose and outcome for all persons and relationships to be whole (chap. 2:32).

protective illusion of tolerance: the presumption by persons thinking that they accept others different from themselves, which in reality could become an obstruction to justice in human life and its essential order (chap. 3:39).

pseudo-dialectic: the normative process of human persons and their relationships extending from the primordial garden in three steps: (1) when persons in just-nection become disconnected from their primacy in *right* relationship together, (2) the disjunction when persons take an opposite recourse in simulating relationship, whereby they substitute virtual connections to blunt the shame of relational disconnection, and (3) this pseudo-dialectic doesn't reconcile the first two steps in a new synthesis but results in a different human order from creation—a variable difference in which persons are reduced and relationships are fragmented, all of which converge to form the normative values and practices framing the status quo (chap. 4:62).

reciprocating love: a new dimension that Jesus constituted for his rule of law to distinguish his followers in the contexts of the common—a new commandment of relational involvement with each other based just on the face-to-face experience of his intimate relational involvement with them (chap. 5:91).

redemptive (uncommon) change: the turn-around change of transformation from inner out (*metamorphoo*) of the *old* dying and the *new* rising, which is the relational outcome constituting the uncommon good of Jesus' gospel (chap. 5:81).

relational orphans: the prevailing condition of persons who are *alone* in the company of others because of relational distance, separation or disconnection in contradiction to their created likeness of God, thus who live in a state lacking just-nection; this is the relational condition that Jesus promised his followers would not experience because of the relational work of the Spirit, yet which also pervades the church (chap. 4:69).

a simple object (as a person): reduced persons defined and determined by simply being broken down into various parts (i.e. fragments) from outer in as if to be nothing more than a object shaped accordingly (chap. 2:33).

sin of reductionism: the sin that emerged from the primordial garden, which composes the human condition with persons in reduced ontology and function, and which composes the sin that Jesus saves us *from* in order to save us *to* wholeness (chap. 2:27).

social justice: a generic term for the most common way of how to see and think about rights and justice, which uses a fragmented lens and mindset that is neither whole nor unifies all aspects of justice and thus subject to relativism of authority and its rule of law (chap. 3:41; 4:64).

the uncommon good: distinguished from the common good, the only good news emerging from Jesus' gospel involves the uncommon good that is the relational outcome of the uncommon change Jesus brings; the uncommon good is not a mere ideal and it cannot be conflated with the common good, but embraces the heart of human life and encompasses the fragmentary heart of the human condition for uncommon change to uncommon peace (chap. 5:80).

uncommon-izing relational process: the process of sanctification in which the consecrated are set apart, made holy in who, what and how they are, thus to be distinguished in their identity and function from the common and ordinary of human life; in other words, the consecrated are made uncommon by their uncommon God (chap. 7:122).

vested rights: the rights from God that are inherent to all persons created in God's image, irreducible rights which cannot be revoked to prevent fulfillment of the human need (chap. 3:52).

whole-life justice: the inherent justice created by God that is irreducible and its human-need rights are nonnegotiable, which centers on the vested and privileged rights of all persons; this justice is not merely social but comprises the whole of life from inner out—involving the whole person and the breadth and depth of all their relationships—for which social justice is the pervasive substitute that variably shapes human thinking, perception and action about justice (chap. 4:64).

the whole-ly culture: the unfolding of whole-ly faith formulates the gospel's culture of what Jesus brings and gives, living this uncommon and whole life together in everyday life, which converges, emerges and unfolds on the basis of his relational process distinguishing the uncommon identity and whole function of his true followers (chap. 6:112).

whole-ly faith: the nature of faith goes beyond merely believing the gospel but it embraces the direct relational response to Jesus and vulnerably trusting him in his whole-ly gospel, thus the nature of gospel faith by necessity is the integrated relational response both whole and uncommon (chap. 6:110).

Scripture Index (Primary Source)

Page numbers in **bold** indicate where the primary discussions can be found.

Old Testament

Genesis

1:2 *19*
1:26-27 *15,19,63,121*
1:31 *20*
2:1-3 **58**
2:7 *21*
2:15-17 *23,25-26,53*
2:18,25 *20,24,49,58-59,61,67,108*
3:1-5 *6,15,25,26,46,77*
3:6-10 *25-27,37,58,60-61,67,78*
3:16-21 *63*
4:1-9 *37*
6:1-9 *36,84*
11:1-9 *6,82,84*
15:6 *47*
17:1-4 *23,47,55,116*

Exodus

23:2-3 *79,96*
33:18 *9*

Leviticus

19:15 *96,116*
20:7-8 *119,122*

Numbers

6:22-27 *56,59,77,87,92,108,116*
12:6-8 *9,23*

Deuteronomy

4:7-8 *57*
6:4-6 *57*
6:12-15 *59*
7:7-9 *96,99,116*
10:17 *96*

Nehemiah

9:13-14 *57*

Job

23:1-9 *8,11*
38:1ff *8*
42:1-6 *8,11*

Psalms

7:6-7 *116*
19:1-4 *17,23*
33:5 *68*
40:6-7 *37,91*
46:10 *59*
85:10-13 *45,47,68,92*
89:14 *45,47,68,92*
119:73 *57*
147:4 *53*

Isaiah

9:6-7 *101,105*
11:3-5 *47*
28:16 *61*
29:13 *56*
42:1-4 *55*
56:1-2 *59*
58:13-14 *59*

Jeremiah

9:23-24 *11,18,94,96*
23:3-4 *66*
23:16-17 *46*

Ezekiel

3:17 *66*
13:1-10 *46,99*
33:7-9 *1,119-20,126*
34:1-6 *67*

Malachi

2:5-9 *47*

New Testament

Matthew

5-7 *42,44,56*
5:3-10 **49,87-88**
5:6 *48*
5:9 *37*
5:13-16 *115*
5:17-20 *60,74,88,93,120*
5:21-48 **42,64,83**
6:19-32 *48,85*
6:33 *44,48,87*
7:1-4 *56*
7:13-14 *44-45,56,88,126*
7:15-20 *46*
7:21-23 *44,56,74,110,126*
7:24-27 *66*
9:1-13 *67*
9:35-36 *67,69-70*
10:34-36 *57,73,80,82,117*
12:9-25 *55,67,73,93,105,106,115*
16:21-23 *68*
18:1-4 *65,80*
22:34-40 *91*
26:6-13 *79,88,112*
27:50-51 *107*
28:18-20 **101,109**

Mark

4:24 *10,30*
7:6-9 *57,117*
9:33-35 *65*
11:12-18 *68,70,80*

Luke

2:25-35 *56,73*
4:1,14,18 *122*
5:33-39 *66,70,111*
9:46 *65,80*
11:42 *93*
12:49-53 *80*
13:26-27 *44*
13:34 *69-70,84*
15:1-7 *70*
19:41-42 *36,46,69-70,80,88*
22:14-27 *65,71,88,98*

John

1:1-5 *15,19,62*
1:10-14 *57,62*
1:43-46 *77*
2:12-22 *68*
3:1-15 *61*
4:4-26 **92**
4:27 *93*
4:34-38 *94*
5:39-40 *10,50*
8:19 *46*
10:14-16 *67*
10:30-39 *111,122*
12:1-8 **112**
12:26 *107,121*
13:8-15 *8,94,123*
13:34-35 *91*
13:37 *95*
14:6-7 *11,66*
14:9-11 *46,111,122*
14:16-18 *90,131*
14:19-21 *132*
14:23 *132*
14:26-27 *56,77,82,133*
15:9-12 *94,96,108,111*
15:26-27 *131*
16:7-15 *131*
16:33 *56*
17:13-19 *93,119,120,122*
17:20-26 *57,71,109,112,120,123*
19:25-27 **113**
21:15-22 *55,68,74,95*

Acts

1:8 **129**
6:1 *71*
9:4-5 *23*
10:13-16 *67*
15:8-9 *55,67*
20:27-28 *67*
22:3 *67*

Romans

1:20 *17*
4:1-3 *47*
8:5-16 *114,131*
8:19-22 *59,114*
8:29 *121*

9:33 *61*
12:1-2 **81,86,127**
16:19-20 *80*

1 Corinthians

1:10-13 *67,71*
2:3-4 *124*
2:9-13 *8*
10:23-24 *80*
12:12-13 *72*
12:21-22 *71*

2 Corinthians

3:12-18 *9,81,89,108,111,121,124*
4:4-6 *9,22,89,108,111,121*
5:16-18 *9,66,86*
10:10-12 *67,124*
11:13-15 **81,86,127**
12:7-10 *124*

Galatians

1:6-7 *101,115*
2:11-14 *67,86*
3:26-29 *67,72*
4:13-14 *124*

Ephesians

1:22-23 *66*
2:3 *85*
2:8-10 *59*
2:14-22 *16,67,69,72-73,127,132*
4:14-24 *66,121,124*
4:24,30 *36,131*
6:10-20 *45,56,133-34*

Philippians

3:5-6 *67*

Colossians

1:15-21 *22,66,111,121*
2:2-4 *11*
2:16-19 *71*
3:10-11 *10,112,121*
3:15-16 *16,45,69,133*

2 Thessalonians

2:13 *132*

Hebrews

6:19-20 *47*
10:19-20 *107*

James

2:1-10 *116*

1 Peter

2:5,9 *48*

1 John

4:16 *94*

Revelation

2-3 *71,74,88,91,101*

BIBLIOGRAPHY (Secondary Source)

- Acolatse, Esther E., *Powers, Principalities, and the Spirit: Biblical Realism in Africa and the West* (Grand Rapids: 2018).
- Anatolios, Khaled, *Retrieving Nicea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).
- Balz, Horst, and Gerhard Schreider, eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).
- Barbeau, Jeffrey W., and Beth Falker Jones, eds., *Spirit of God: Christian Renewal in the Community of Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).
- Barna Group, *The State of Discipleship* (The Navigators, 2015).
- Bartholomew, Craig, Colin Greene, and Karl Moller, eds., *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).
- Bartholomew, Craig G., and Heath A. Thomas, eds., *A Manifesto for Theological Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).
- Beck, Richard, *Reviving Old Scratch: Demons and the Devil for Doubters and the Disenchanted* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016).
- Bielfeldt, Dennis, "The Peril and Promise of Supervenience for Scientific-Theological Discussion," in Niels Hendrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees and Ulf Gorman, eds., *The Human Person in Science and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).
- Bockmuehl, Markus, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).
- Bockmuehl, Markus and Alan J. Torrance, eds., *Scripture's Doctrine and Theology's Bible: How the New Testament Shapes Christian Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).
- Boff, Leonardo, *Trinity and Society* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005).
- Brauch, Manfred T., *Abusing Scripture: The Consequences of Misreading the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009).
- Brown, Colin, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975).
- Brubaker, Pamela K., *Globalization at What Price? Economic Change and Daily Life* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2001).
- Brueggemann, Walter, *Mandate to Difference: An Invitation to the Contemporary Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007).

- Brueggemann, Walter and John Brueggemann, *Rebuilding the Foundations: Social Relationships in Ancient Scripture and Contemporary Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017).
- Buckley, James J., and David S. Yeago, eds., *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).
- Cacioppo, John T. and William Patrick, *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008).
- Chan, Simon, *Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2014).
- Chilton, Bruce D., “Judaism and the New Testament” in Daniel G. Reid, ed., *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004).
- Chung, Sung Wook, ed., *Christ the One and Only: A Global Affirmation of the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).
- Crisp, Oliver D., and Fred Sanders, eds., *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).
- Cunningham, David S., “The Trinity” in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- Damasio, Antonio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010).
- Darko, Daniel K. and Beth Snodderly, eds., *First the Kingdom of God: Global Voices on Global Mission* (Pasadena: Wm. Carey International University Press, 2014).
- Davies, Brian, “Simplicity” in Charles Taliaferro and Chad Meister, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- Dawkins, Richard, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).
- De La Torre, Miguel A. and Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, eds., *Beyond the Pale: Reading Theology from the Margins* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011).
- Dunn, James D.G., “Criteria for a Wise Reading of a Biblical Text” in David F. Ford and Graham Stanton, eds., *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom* (London: SCM Press, 2003).
- Edgar, William, *Created & Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017).
- Ellis, Bruce and Peter Goodwin Heltzel, eds., *Evangelicals and Empire: Christian Alternatives to the Political Status Quo* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008).
- Escobar, Samuel, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

- Evans, Craig A. and Stanley E. Porter, eds., *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000).
- Fiske, Susan T., “Hostile and Benevolent Sexism: Measuring Ambivalent Sexist Attitudes toward Women,” in *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, March 1, 1997.
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/aba/10.1177/0147-6402-1977.tb00104.X>.
- Fee, Gordon D., *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994).
- Giddens, Anthony, *The Consequence of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).
- Gladd, Benjamin L. and Matthew S. Harmon, *Making All Things New: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).
- Gleiser, Marcelo, *The Island of Knowledge: The Limits of Science and the Search for Meaning* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).
- Goldingay, John, *Biblical Theology: The God of Christian Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).
- _____, *Old Testament Theology: Vol. Two: Israel’s Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).
- Green, Gene L., Stephen T. Pardue and K. K. Yeo, eds., *Jesus without Borders: Christology in the Majority World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).
- _____, *The Trinity among the Nations: The Doctrine of God in the Majority World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).
- Greenman, Jeffrey P. and Gene L. Green, eds., *Global Theology in Evangelical Perspective: Exploring the Contextual Nature of Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012).
- Gregersen, Niels Henrik, “Varieties of Personhood: Mapping the Issues” in Niels Gregersen, William B. Drees and Ulf Gorman, eds., *The Human Person in Science and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).
- Grenz, Stanley J., *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).
- _____, *Rediscovering the Triune God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).
- _____, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).
- Groody, Daniel G. *Globalization, Spirituality and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015).
- Grudem, Wayne, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sister, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004).

- Hardy, Daniel W., "Reason, Wisdom and the Interpretation of Scripture" in David F. Ford and Graham Stanton, eds., *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom* (London: SCM Press, 2003).
- Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce Waitke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).
- Hauerwas, Stanley, "On doctrine and ethics," in Colin E. Gunton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- Held, David, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton, eds., *Global Transitions: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).
- Hellerman, Joseph H., *The Ancient Church as Family* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).
- Heslam, Peter, ed., *Globalization and the Good* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).
- Hiebert, Paul G., *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).
- Hoang, Bethany Hanke and Kristen Deede Johnson, *The Justice Calling* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016).
- Hooker, Morna D., *Endings: Invitations to Discipleship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003).
- Hunter, James Davison, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- Jenkins, Philip, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- _____, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- Johnson, Todd M. and Cindy M. Wu, *Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015).
- Kaiser, Walter C., Peter H. Davids, F.F. Bruce and Manfred T. Brauch, eds., *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996).
- Kalantzis, George and Gregory W. Lee, *Christian Political Witness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014).
- Kambara, Kary A., *A Theology of Worship: 'Singing' a New Song to the Lord* (2011). Online at <http://4X12.org>.
- _____, *Hermeneutic of Worship Language: Understanding Communion with the Whole of God* (Worship Language Study, 2013). Online at <http://4X12.org>.

- _____, *Worshipping God in Likeness of the Trinity: Not Determined 'in Their Way'* (Uncommon Worship Study, 2016). Online at <http://4X12.org>.
- Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007).
- _____, *Christ and Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).
- Keener, Craig S., *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).
- _____, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary, New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993).
- Keener, Craig and M. Daniel Carroll R., eds., *Global Voices: Reading the Bible in the Majority World* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2013).
- Keith, Chris and Larry W. Hurtado, eds., *Jesus among Friends and Enemies: A Historical and Literary Introduction to Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).
- Kittel, Gerhard, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).
- Kuhn, Thomas S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).
- Küng, Hans, *The Beginning of All Things: Science and Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).
- LaCugna, Catherine Mowry, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991).
- Ladd, George Eldon, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).
- Lane, Tony, *A Concise History of Christian Thought*, completely revised and expanded edition (London: T&T Clark, 2006).
- Lanier, Jaren, *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).
- Lynch, Gordon, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, (Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).
- Mahbubani, Kishore, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008).
- Malina, Bruce J., *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).
- Malina, Bruce J. and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000).

- Malina, Bruce J. and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).
- Matsuo, T. Dave, “*Did God Really Say That?*” *Theology in the Age of Reductionism* (Theology Study, 2013). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.
- _____, *The Disciples of Whole Theology and Practice: Following the Diversity of Reformation or the Wholeness of Transformation* (Discipleship Study: 2017). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>
- _____, *Following Jesus, Knowing Christ: Engaging the Intimate Relational Process* (Spirituality Study, 2003). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.
- _____, *The Face of the Trinity: The Trinitarian Essential for the Whole of God & Life* (Trinity Study, 2016). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.
- _____, *The Global Church Engaging the Nature of Sin & the Human Condition: Reflecting, Reinforcing, Sustaining or Transforming* (Global Church Study, 2016). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.
- _____, *The Gospel of Transformation: Distinguishing the Discipleship and Ecclesiology Integral to Salvation* (Transformation Study, 2015). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.
- _____, *Jesus into Paul: Embodying the Theology and Hermeneutic of the Whole Gospel* (Integration Study, 2012). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.
- _____, *The Person in Complete Context: The Whole of Theological Anthropology Distinguished* (Theological Anthropology Study, 2014). Online: <http://www.4X12.org>.
- _____, *The Person, the Trinity, the Church: The Call to Be Whole and the Lure of Reductionism* (Wholeness Study, 2006). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.
- _____, *The Relational Progression: A Relational Theology of Discipleship* (Discipleship Study, 2004). Online: <http://www.4X12.org>.
- _____, *Sanctified Christology: A Theological & Functional Study of the Whole of Jesus* (Christology Study, 2008). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.
- _____, *The Whole of Paul and the Whole in His Theology: Theological Interpretation in Relational Epistemic Process* (Paul Study, 2010). Online at <http://www.4X12.org>.
- McCall, Thomas H., *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).
- McDonough, Sean M., *Creation and New Creation: Understanding God’s Creation Project* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2016).
- McGilchrist, Iain, *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

- McKnight, Scot, *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014).
- McKnight, Scot, Peter Rollins, Kevin Corcoran and Jason Clark, eds., *Church in the Present Tense: A Candid Look at What's Emerging* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011).
- Middleton, J. Richard, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005).
- Moulton, Harold K., ed., *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).
- Naugle, David K., *Worldview: the History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).
- Niebuhr, H. Richard, *Christ and Culture* 50th-anniversary ed. (N.Y.: Harper San Francisco, 2001).
- Nisbet, Richard E., *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently . . . and Why* (New York: Free Press, 2003).
- Nyquist, J. Paul, *Is Justice Possible? The Elusive Pursuit of What Is Right* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2017).
- Olson, Roger E., *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity*, 2nd edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).
- Ott, Craig and Harold A. Netland, eds., *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).
- Pearse, Meic, *Why the Rest Hates the West: Understanding the Roots of Global Rage* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).
- Phan, Peter C., ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- Pilch, John J. and Bruce J. Malina, eds., *Biblical Social Values and Their Meaning: A Handbook* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993).
- Polythress, Vern Sheridan, *Redeeming Sociology: A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).
- Ramachandra, Vinoth, *Subverting Global Myths: Theology and the Public Issues Shaping Our World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008).
- Rogers Jr., Eugene F., *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology from Resources Outside the Modern West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).
- Sapolsky, Robert M., "How humans are formed," OP-ED, *Los Angeles Times*, August 3, 2014.
- Schultze, Quentin J., *Habits of the High-Tech Heart: Living Virtuously in the Information Age* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002).

- Shults, F. LeRon, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).
- Smith, James K. A., and James H. Olthuis, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant and Participation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).
- Smith, Kay Higuera, Jayachitra Lalitha and L. Daniel Hawk, eds., *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations: Global Awakenings in Theology and Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014).
- Stassen, Glen H. and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003).
- Stassen, Glen H., D.M. Yeager, John Howard Yoder, *Authentic Transformation: A New Vision of Christ and Culture*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).
- Steiner, George, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
- Stegemann, Wolfgang, Bruce J. Malina and Gerd Theissen, eds., *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002).
- Tabbernee, William, ed., *Early Christianity in Contexts: An Exploration across Cultures and Continents* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014).
- Taleb, Nassim Nicholas, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (New York: Random House, 2007).
- Thiselton, Anthony C., “Biblical studies and theoretical hermeneutics” in John Barton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1998).
- _____, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992).
- _____, *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).
- _____, *The Holy Spirit—in Biblical Teaching, through the Centuries, and Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).
- Turkle, Sherry, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J., *Biblical Authority After Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016).
- _____, ed. *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).
- _____, *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

- Vanhoozer, Kevin J. and Daniel J. Treier, *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture: A Mere Evangelical Account* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).
- Vickers, Jason E., *Invocation and Assent: The Making and Remaking of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).
- Vine, W.E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1981).
- Volf, Miroslav, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).
- _____, "Community Formation as an Image of the Triune God: A Congregation Model of Church Order and Life," in Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002).
- Volf, Miroslav and Ryan McAnnally-Linz, *Public Faith in Action: How to Think Carefully, Engage Wisely and Vote with Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016).
- Wallis, Jim, *The (Un)Common Good: How the Gospel Brings Hope to a World Divided* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014).
- Watzlawick, Paul, Janet Helmick Beavin, and Don D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1967).
- Wenham, David, *Did St. Paul Get Jesus Right? The Gospel According to Paul* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2010).
- West, Cornel and Eddie S. Glaude Jr., eds., *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).
- Westermann, Claus, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997).
- Wilkins, Michael J., *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995).
- Wilson, Jonathan R., *God's Good World: Reclaiming the Doctrine of Creation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas, *Journey toward Justice: Personal Encounters in the Global South* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas, "The Promise of Speech-act Theory for Biblical Interpretation" in Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, Karl Moller, eds., *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).
- Worthen, Molly, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

- Wright, N.T., *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).
- _____, “Whence and Whither Historical Jesus Studies in the Life of the Church?” in Nicholas Perrin and Richard B. Hays, eds., *Jesus, Paul and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N.T. Wright* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011).
- Yeh, Allen, *Polycentric Missiology: Twenty-First Century Mission from Everyone to Everywhere* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).
- Yong, Amos, *Who Is the Holy Spirit? A Walk with the Apostles* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2011).
- Zimmermann, Jens, *Recovering Theological Hermeneutics: An Incarnational-Trinitarian Theory of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).
- Zizioulas, John D., *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985).
- Zodhiates, Spiros, ed., *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1996).