

DENNIS PEACOCKE

ON THE
DESTINY
OF
NATIONS

RESOLVING OUR ECONOMIC CRISIS

AN INFORMED CHRISTIAN CHALLENGE
TO ABSURD ECONOMIC POLICIES,
LEFT-RIGHT POLITICAL GAMES, AND
TO A FREQUENTLY IRRELEVANT CHURCH

ALSO BY DENNIS PEACOCKE

Winning the Battle for the Minds of Men, 1987

Doing Business God's Way, 1995

The Emperor Has No Clothes, 2003

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First Edition

DEDICATION



"All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord And all the families of the nations will worship before You. For the kingdom is the Lord's and He rules over the nations."

Psalm 22:27-29

To the emerging leaders and thinkers of the nations and the lovers of God's earth and its people who, like myself, see the continuing slide downward into cultural madness; and to large segments of the church, either oblivious to this reality or trapped in a paralysis as to what to do about it. This is a defining moment for you, and as the following quote tells us, a defining moment for our modern "experiment" in the West of societies governed without an agreed upon set of common values and agreed upon spiritual assumptions..... and to the Lord for faithfully guiding Jan and I together in one heart through this process.

"We begin by noting that this is a unique cultural moment. Beneath all of the other major cultures were religious assumptions, whether these came from Hinduism, Islam, or Christianity itself. There are no such religious assumptions beneath our culture, however, and this is the first time any major civilization has attempted to build itself in this way."

David Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 1994, p. 80

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INTRODUCTION



"...He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;"

Matthew 25:31-32

Nations, like people, have destinies. Today, the nations of the world are confronted with a global crisis, some more than others. Yet, technology and global markets have tied us all together. This economic crisis is, at its heart, a values crisis. It is sustainable values that emanate from love that will elevate one person, one community, or one nation above the others as the emerging leaders of the new order guide us forward. Make no mistake: this economic crisis signals a pivotal moment of change for the people and nations of the earth. For the nations, it is a learning opportunity and a spiritual portal:

"For when the earth experiences Your judgments
The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness."

Isaiah 26:9

Economics, because it is the organizing system of man's labor, time, material possessions, and lifestyle, is about far more than just money, things, or power. It is about our hopes for ourselves and our posterity and how we can find fulfillment in the release of our labor. It is also the financial platform from which we build the other things in life, which transcend the material world. Therefore, when there is a major economic crisis, stability, provision, and hope are at risk for people and nations. This is a book about the challenging necessity of building a values-based economy that offers the possibility of sustained prosperity for the greatest number of people as a result of love-driven values.

The ideas and systems that brought us to this moment are tottering and increasingly insecure. They need careful scrutiny and attention.

Who is going to help us sort them out and help clarify their usefulness? The leaders of the next phase of human history and man's institutions have inherited that responsibility. They will have to sort out the ideas, values, and solutions that will lead the nations out of this crisis. Whole nations will surge forward or slump backward based on the wisdom of these leaders. Is it possible that "the first shall be last and the last shall be first"¹ in this process? Indeed.

This book is written by a Christian to both Christians and everyone else who cares about people, the earth, and the ultimate values that define and create the majesty and limitations of mankind. It is a hard read because the issues we must plow through and sort out require our fullest attention and the courage to define and deploy unpopular stands in the midst of self-interest and confusion. This is a book about defining moments and severe challenges that demand pain and reveal character. Ultimately, it is about partnering with God to bring redemption to people and the social systems of their nations.

Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of England and major historic figure of World War II, in England's darkest moment of the war, offered to his nation a policy of "blood, sweat, and tears." I have a similar challenge to those who choose to plow through the tough issues of this book: What will you do in your spheres of influence and leadership to help guide others across these sharp-edged times to a safer place? I am also inviting the readers of this book, Christian or not, to a kind of global "family meeting," wherein I am directly addressing the more than one billion believers in the world to more clearly see and take a far greater responsibility for the political-economic structures of their nations. May it be leadership that offers us all the chance to attain sustainable prosperity and the ability to please and glorify our Creator.

1. See Matthew 20:16.

CHAPTER 1



THE CURRENT CRISIS AND THE SEARCH FOR A VALUES-BASED ECONOMIC ORDER

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’
And He said to them, “You Shall Love The Lord Your God With
All Your Heart, And With All Your Soul, And With All Your Mind.”
This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is
like it, “You Shall Love Your Neighbor As Yourself.” On these two
commandments depend the whole law and the Prophets.”

Matthew 22:36-40

The core premise of this book is simple. In Christ’s defining and summing up into a single concept the meaning and demands of the entire Scriptures, He offers to mankind the most superior value-base for all of man’s conduct and social constructs ever given. To attempt to build our political or economic order on any other supreme guideline is an exercise in futility at best and cruelty at worst. This quest to honor God’s values, which are rooted in love, and to honor our neighbor with the highest good we could conceive for ourselves stands as the foundation of what I choose to call “Kingdom Economics.” It is the economic construct of what the King Himself says is the foundation stone of His emerging eternal Kingdom—honor God and honor one another. Ultimately, to profoundly honor someone places us squarely on the pathway to *agape* love.

Mankind should measure his political-economic order by this standard, be it capitalism, socialism, or any other economic system

set forth for our allegiance. Systems are built upon values, defined or undefined, and my intention is to argue for the constructing of an economic system offering the greatest possibility for aligning itself with Christ's standard of love. To call it by the name of any of the current systems is to miss the point. It must transcend them all, while recognizing the best within them, because God's Kingdom and His economic values transcend them all.

My second major premise is that secular society is committing suicide in its attempt to keep spiritual values out of the public square in terms of affecting its culture and social systems. As secularism gains momentum the cultures of the Western world are manifesting the results: economic crisis due to the corruption of the financial sector's values and the civil government's seemingly unending need for increased control over the lives of their citizens; seriously declining birth rates while at the same time the tidal wave of retirements from the baby boomers is about to place huge demands on entitlement programs and defunded retirement programs; massive disintegration of the traditional family units with half the marriages ending in divorce, increasing numbers of children being born out of wedlock, and a third of the adult population living together out of wedlock for sheer fear of making long-term commitments.

Where does secularism expect the stabilizing values of society to come from? Surely not the political parties, whose primary value is the pragmatism of winning elections. Perhaps they are looking for them to come from their "sanitized" public school systems where spiritual values are illegal to discuss, and their supreme moral value is the toleration of all people's values as long as they are held with "conviction and sincerity". Maybe it is from the universities who view religion and its values as superstitions of weak people incapable of living in the reality of reason and logic. Maybe it's from the media, or the youth culture, which has virtually no experience of what values cause a full life to be lived with enduring dignity.

Secularism's demand that all spiritual values from their Judeo-Christian heritage are to be kept outside of the major influence of their cultures

and the management of their social systems is guaranteeing their own demise. However, beyond all these criticisms, much of the church has tacitly permitted this to happen as they quietly agreed that religion was a “private” issue and one to be only carefully injected into public discussions outside of their own church or religious circles. This then takes us to our third major premise.

In my opinion, our attempts to “disciple the nations” according to Christ’s Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, has left much to be desired. While gratefully conceding the heroic efforts of multitudes of saints, God has seemingly had to frequently go around what we have done in the nations in order to more fully reveal Himself to the people of the earth. So I am saying to those of you who may stand outside, for now, of our faith to listen patiently as I sometimes encourage, sometimes scold, and sometimes plead with others of our faith to think through the tenets of our faith more deeply. I am calling all of us to engage where possible what Christ has given to us as citizens of His Kingdom and citizens of our nations as we attempt to contribute to the betterment of both.

My fourth major premise, which we will come back to shortly, is that this economic crisis is not a mere “recession”. It is the beginning of a global economic reset which God will powerfully use to reorder systems, reinsert within the Christian community a love for people and the desire to serve and influence them with the values and principles of God’s Kingdom, and reveal a whole new set of global leaders who respond to a more fully integrated social order.

If we Christians respond redemptively it will change us, our churches, and our nations. If we do not respond, or respond foolishly, it will hinder and further isolate our witness to the world. Our challenge is to help reveal Christ’s relevance to the whole of the human condition as a King who inaugurated a Kingdom with comprehensive answers to the sins and infrastructures of the world. Nevertheless, we will not respond in sufficient numbers or with sufficient answers if we avoid asking ourselves the kind of questions which “trap” us. Indeed, we must be committed enough and imbued with a sufficient sense of

personal obligation to do the hard work of study, personal sacrifice, and common unity with others required to honor God in this battle for the minds of men and the quest for sustainable prosperity. So let us begin our journey by asking the questions that have the power to trap us in the yoke of Christ's burden for the nations for which He died.

The ultimate question for Bible-believing Christians, then, is not when God is going to establish His Kingdom on earth; Christ already has.¹ Neither is it the question of when He will return. Alive or dead we will all be caught up in that event. Our most daunting question is: What does He expect of each of us in the various seasons and changing circumstances of our lives, in terms of personal growth, constructive social interaction, and in our roles as citizens of our communities and our nations? Indeed, what must we do before we die to fulfill our destinies assigned by God? Life often seems hard enough without dealing with questions of this magnitude! Yet, the questions remain and the accountability faces us all squarely.

For many of us the issues of our salvation per se are secured already in Christ and His promises. Our challenge is more to the point of where, how, and toward whom are the specific realities of our resident salvation and gifts to be directed? Another challenging question appears for us as wise stewards of our time and as leaders (every believer is modeling—leading—something to someone for good or ill) as well: How do we leverage both our time and our efforts for maximum results? Those questions are most effectively dealt with by asking God to reveal to our hearts the people group or human challenge that has trapped or "imprisoned" us.² From whom, or from what cause, must we not walk away without losing our integrity? For me, it is the establishment of His Kingdom on earth through His people in such a compelling way that the rebellious may contend vigorously against us, but they cannot deny the love and cry for justice that drives us, however much they reject the moral demands and lifestyle of self-denial for which His Kingdom calls. What now follows is my knowingly inadequate attempt to lay out that passion for His Kingdom before you and in the process stir up whatever and whoever has "trapped" and captured you.

1. Matthew 4:17; Luke 11:20; Luke 21:31-32.

2. Ephesians 3:1.

My divine entrapment began at the point of my intellectual and spiritual awakenings in the 1960s as a student of political theory and economic justice at Berkeley. Those kind of social and economic questions are the stuff of which this current political-economic crisis now entwining the world is made of. This present political morass must be unraveled and released amidst and in spite of the astounding array of confusion afoot in the current context of the left-right paradigms surrounding us. Here is what this will require of us: we believers must learn to think and act biblically rather than being swept away by the convenient and simplistic thinking of the world's "left-right" political worldviews.

Whatever that unraveling requires, one thing is certain: virtually no one in "the real world" expects Christians to be a significant contributing factor to the process. My protest is that their expectations must not stand; we must engage effectively and with utmost leverage. If indeed we have the mind of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, to count ourselves out of the untangling and unpleasantnesses of the crisis, or expect to be rescued from it by Christ, is a negation of our very placement here on earth as priests to the people and salt and light to their needs.

THE BATTLEFIELD OF THE CURRENT CONFLICT

"If I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proven and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is merely flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

Martin Luther

This book, like many, has gone through multiple revisions. I have been laboring over the last four years to focus specifically on what we can appropriately isolate as the most relevant aspects of the spiritual demise of the Western world in general, and the United States in particular. This is no small task for two prominent reasons: firstly, the

secular world rejects any of the claims of Christ upon it, and secondly, the complexities of public policy and the tenets of political freedom biblically require a separation of the institutions of the church and state without walling off the influence of Christianity upon any aspect of culture. In other words, the institution of the church must not attempt to govern civil society yet it must pour into society Christ's values and principles as an act of love and opportunity for redemption. It has been doubly hard for me since the complexities of various aspects of economic policies and theories likewise make a book of this sort, not specifically designed for economists, a real challenge.

Nevertheless, it is my contention that this current economic crisis, though tailor-made by man, is going to be powerfully used of God. This crisis will challenge His church, and the surrounding culture, to severely re-examine their mutual relationship and the consequences of nations' political economies attempting to successfully function devoid of the penetrating spiritual forces of Jesus' admonition to love God and love people. This crisis is exhibit "A" of the consequences of that omission and the blame for it falls on both sides of the relationship—on the church and the secular cultures. By limiting the church's most frequent concerns to the admittedly critical "moral" issues of abortion, pornography, personal sexual morality, and the like, without at the same time heralding Christ's concerns for justice and the empowerment of both the needy and the indolent, we have generally committed a major strategic error contributing to the church's growing social quarantine. The secularists are not stupid. Their brightest ones well know what the Scriptures say about these issues concerning social justice,³ in spite of their frequent disregard for what the Scriptures say regarding personal morality and character. Any economic system without Christian ethics and values is doomed to de-humanize man as it exploits the most vulnerable.

Here is what I am saying: This economic crisis is God's best current lever to challenge man viscerally since his economic well-being touches every aspect of his life and culture. This crisis has fully engaged the public's attention and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. My fourth major premise, once again, is that this is no mere

3. Isaiah 58.

“recession”; it is an incredible spiritual opportunity and a time to see the reality of God’s provision and intervention in the affairs of man. To miss the engaging of this situation by those Christians able to do so is to fall prey to exactly what the quote from Martin Luther powerfully warned us about at the beginning of this section. May God’s people not flinch “precisely at that little point” that we now face.

THE FOUR MAIN POINTS OF OUR FOCUS

The four general areas of this study will therefore focus on the following issues of concern:

1. There are extremely negative economic consequences when the secular forces of the world attempt to function without the “salt and light”⁴ of Christ’s wisdom addressing their economic presuppositions, ethics, and notions of both environmental and systemic political sustainability. An undisciplined nation is a nation outside of the fuller blessings of Christ and the life giving principles and disciplines making sustainability possible.
2. The “medicating” of the citizens living under the above phenomena grows ever more dangerous. It is numbing their minds with inferior systems of public education, reducing their knowledge of their own history and diminishing the principles required to maintain freedom. It involves media “sound bite” public discussions, void of sufficient content to press the general public into genuine, principle-based thought or discussions, and further erodes our citizens’ abilities to produce sufficiently competent public servants to turn things around.
3. There is an ever-expanding centralization of political power in civil government that further encroaches in the lives of its citizens, and brings acute dangers to both their political liberty and economic sustainability.
4. There is a need to address at least five foundational economic principles that must constantly be reinforced within the economic system, all of which deal with freedom, justice, trustworthy stew-

4. Matthew 5:13-16.

ardship, and the ongoing possibility of upward economic mobility taking place within the nations of the earth.

MY BACKGROUND AND THINKING PROCESS

As a Christian I am assuming the Scriptures to be God's Word, delivered to man through man, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, allowing man to understand their general meaning while recognizing that he has limited claims on his ability to acquire the absolute understanding of them in this dispensation of time.⁵ I am further assuming that the Old Testament is the Word of God, holding the same degree of validity as the New Testament but needing interpretation by the Holy Spirit, the New Testament itself, and the experiences of God stewarding His church and His world across history.⁶ I am further assuming that the principles of the Old Testament, specifically as they address the nation of Israel and its social structures, serve as the primary point of departure for the extrapolation of economic and political principles which are applicable to the modern world.⁷ While I understand that the Law is fulfilled in Christ and in no way is binding upon believers today,⁸ God's principles and admonitions to and for man's well-being are universal and therefore ignored at our great peril.

As one who both worked as a research economist and has continued to hold a binding interest in economic theory and application over the last forty-plus years, I do recognize some of the challenges of applying biblical principles, given to a people largely living in an agrarian-based economy and highly de-centralized political system as well, to our modern times. I nevertheless recognize the general application of all truth to mankind since both his inherent nature and the nature of truth itself neither expires nor is made null and void by man's presumptions concerning himself or his technological achievements.

I have been trained intellectually in political theory, opting out of graduate studies as one needing to experience the "real world" apart from academia. I have spent the last forty-five years attempting to

5. 1 Corinthians 13:12.

6. Matthew 5:17-20; 2 Timothy 3:16.

7. Matthew 5:17-19.

8. Romans 10:4.

build a truly Christian worldview as I pastored, led church networks, lectured on public policy and economics, and worked on various projects of community development and economic advancement through the schools we have started around the world.

My intellectual orientation is that of a “pre-suppositionalist”;⁹ that is, one who believes that until we understand one’s basic assumptions about the nature of reality and are self-consciously aware of those assumptions, it is difficult if not impossible to either advance a meaningful argument, or have an intelligent discussion which moves toward mutual understanding with others. I will attempt to make my presuppositions clear as we go along in this book and discuss the issues at hand. I am also asserting that political freedom and economic freedom are inseparably linked as has been modeled biblically and acknowledged throughout the liberal traditions of Western thought, most clearly pointed out by Adam Smith and those who followed him. This is a brief history of my background and thought process, which I trust will be helpful as you read the book.

A QUICK LOOK AT THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS

“The practical consequences of religion can be integrated easily enough into economic analysis, treating religious values as a key influence in shaping a given individual structure of ‘preferences.’ But the sources of religious belief represent a much less familiar and much less comfortable ground for economic analysis. Yet the successful workings of an economic system may depend heavily on the specific character of religious beliefs that serve to provide normative foundation for the market. Achieving a more efficient economy may depend on having a more ‘efficient’ religion. A surprising possibility is thus raised: it might not be economists but the theologians who are the most important members of society in determining economic performance.”

Robert H. Nelson, *Economics as Religion*, 2001, p. 8

9. Proverbs 23:7.

Many have called the current economic crisis a “recession”, which generally means a consecutive number of quarterly economic declines in a number of important areas in the overall economy of a nation. Both I and many other people dealing in the realm of economics do not believe that; we believe this is the beginning of a global economic reset which will take place over the next decade or so. It is far more serious than a mere recession. We will be commenting on this assertion as we go through the book. The initial run of the current economic crisis was triggered in the United States by a lethal combination of artificially low interest rates tied to an artificially high housing “bubble”, coupled with ridiculously flawed housing loans and driven by shameful greed on the sides of both the federal housing leaders and the financial community. Undergirding this lethal combination was the poor regulation of virtually every facet of oversight, especially in the derivatives market, designed to make sure something like this could not happen. Since all of this is both old news and commonly known, there is little benefit in analyzing this debacle on a deeper level here.

In the longer run, however, there have been major violations of the basic principles of economic and political prudence. These violations make our current “recession” merely a harbinger of the real challenges facing us all in the coming years as the system breaks down on a much more fundamental level. It is called our “debt crisis”, but it is much more than just an issue of public financial insolvency.

God has permitted the governments of the world to defund themselves in their attempts to meet needs they are not called to meet and spend the resources of future generations in an act of civil thievery. Many of the nations of the Western world are therefore both culturally and politically increasingly divided as they attempt to explain how they arrived in this condition and the multiple roles of both citizens and civil government in finding the ways out of the problems. The “left-right” culture wars are further entrenching their positions and increasingly locked into many of the same thinking processes that created the problems. Einstein’s contention that the level of thinking that creates a problem is insufficient to resolve the problem, has become increasingly imprinted upon much of the current debate.

My fifth premise, and my deepest conviction, is that as the central governments of the world are defunded, the real social and economic energy will be found on the local community level. Power is going local and moving away from the centralization process, which has driven the consolidation of social control over the last two centuries. As the centralized governments are defunded, and many of their social systems with them, this will create an historic opportunity for Christians to actually act like the Christians of the first several centuries and step in and care for social needs on a widespread basis. If we do, it will re-center the “salt and light” position God has always wanted His church to take in meeting the needs of people both spiritually and in terms of social service. A true *ecclesia* will emerge that serves society on multiple levels.

Whoever serves most effectively leads the culture. This is what the centralization of civil government was attempting to do in an unbiblical way. It cannot financially afford to do so and it robs the private sector of its biblical mandate for citizens to take a much higher degree of personal responsibility for their neighbors and their community than the ethic of centralization permits or encourages.

ON THE ISSUE OF SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY

From an overview perspective, it is my desire to see economic prosperity touch the greatest number of people possible based on values that neither corrupt them nor hinder the same opportunities for others or future generations. Biblical prosperity is both spiritual and material, and any definition of prosperity that addresses one without the other is incomplete.¹⁰ Short-term thinking tends to be the cause of many of our social and economic problems and long-term strategic thinking will cure many of the ills created by it, as we will later discuss. Selfish political opportunism feeds on short-term thinking and nothing exposes that kind of thinking more quickly than statesman-like questions coming from truly informed people who are thinking on behalf of the whole of a community and the welfare of the nation.

10. Deuteronomy 29:9; Philippians 4:12.

As a generality, in terms of economic emphasis, the left tends to focus on people's security and sense of community and the right tends to focus on the individual's rights to prosper without what it considers undue interference. These two concerns are most quickly joined together in what I have called "Kingdom" economics based on the precepts of Christ's admonition on the greatest commandment already cited. The "one and the many," to use theological language, is always the biblical context upon which all admonitions are built. Created as unique individuals, we are eternally placed in the context of relational community to live out our lives and services to God and one another. Any long-term political-economic solutions must balance the equation of how prosperity must benefit both the individual and the greatest number of people actively participating in the system.

As we further explore the quest for sustainable prosperity for the greatest number of people, we will also discuss the essential need for the possibility of upward economic mobility. That mobility is centered in how economic policy particularly affects the middle classes and their ability to contribute to economic growth through the consumption of what is produced. Economies are likewise based on the levels of trust resident throughout the entire system. When trust breaks down anywhere it tends to spread. Economies are also driven by hope, particularly hope in one's ability to prosper based on increased personal inputs of time, energy, and resource. Hope is to economic investment what love is to relationships.

One of the most important points I want to make in this book, relative to economic theory, is this: Most of the critiques of capitalism are in fact against the abuses of the major corporations in the system in general, and the financial sectors in particular. The major corporations make up only about 20 percent of the GDP (gross domestic product) of most advanced nations' economies. I cannot remember having heard a single vitriolic tirade against those "dirty rotten exploiters from the middle-class business world" that make up at least 80 percent of what capitalism produces. In fact, I do not remember ever having this reality called to my attention, and in my early years at Berkeley, the writings of Marx, Lenin, Eric Fromm, and a host of other anti-capitalist

people heavily influenced me. My heart was looking for social justice but concluded it could not be found viewing society from a non-spiritual perspective.

What I earnestly contend is simply this: Wherever political or economic power is concentrated, either in the private or public sector, is where the public most needs proper regulation and guarantees of both liberty, justice, and protection from vested interests. Capitalism, like any and all other economic systems, reflects the value-base of the people participating in the system. In a fallen world there is no perfect system. There are only those systems generally aligned with Christ's admonitions or misaligned with them.

DUAL CITIZENS OF THE NATIONS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We are all citizens of our nations and many of you reading this book identify yourselves as citizens of God's eternal Kingdom. You hold a dual citizenship with dual responsibilities and obligations,¹¹ sometimes conflicting. I love my nation and I hope all of you have a love for your nation and its people and aspire, as I do, to see it aligned as much as is possible with God's eternal truths and love. However, many Christians have let their sense of responsibility to be salt and light in their nations become a distant obligation, forgetting that Christ commanded us all to "disciple the nations,... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you".¹² While our concern for the things of God's Kingdom properly trumps our concerns for our nation, investing in the social and moral environment of our nations is in fact an investment in spreading the values of the Kingdom and an act of disciplining nations as well. To leave our communities and nation alone to follow the convictions of those who have little or no understanding of biblical truth is both irresponsible and a denial of love for humanity.

To see the Kingdom biblically is to understand the "now and not yet" reality of this current dispensation of time.¹³ The Kingdom was released by Christ at His first Advent and will be completed and consummated at

11. Matthew 22:21; Philippians 3:20; 1 Peter 2:13-17.

12. Matthew 28:18-20.

13. Psalm 145:13; Luke 17:21.

His second coming. In between these dispensations is our time to partner with Him in allowing God's Spirit to use His people to invade time with eternity's values and lifestyle. As citizens of both our nations and God's eternal nation, may we care enough about people and our posterity to invest our time, talent, and treasure in modeling love, informed biblical wisdom, and the courage to stand for both in a fallen world.

THE THREEFOLD CORD: A METHODOLOGY OF EFFECTIVELY DISCIPLING NATIONS

"And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart."

Ecclesiastes 4:12

While our specific focus in this study deals with the analysis of the values and principles required to release sustainable prosperity to the greatest number of people, the underlying thread of engaging people and their social systems with biblical truth (discipling nations) implicitly is woven into the fabric of our journey. The discipling of nations requires the common mobilization of trained believers in the process of releasing the transformation of their own lives and thinking into the personal lives and social systems of the world's cultures. This further presupposes that their efforts will be energized by the specific gifts and callings resident within each believer as they are applying this process. Every believer must release what God has specifically engifted them to contribute to the process of transformation.

As we come to the final chapter in our journey, we will deal with our clearest compass bearings in terms of the most desirable course for an effective methodology that affects and releases the largest number of believers into the kinds of tasks most likely to both disciple nations and remedy our current crisis. In chapter 9 we will therefore re-engage in an overview of the "threefold cord" of discipling nations through 1) compelling prayer, 2) the mobilized transforming of local communities, and 3) the analysis and application of scriptural principles to national social systems.

WHAT I HOPE YOU WILL GET OUT OF THIS BOOK

“When people say they don’t believe in God, it makes sense to ask them which God they don’t believe in; when they say they do believe in God, the same question ought to be gently but firmly pressed.”

N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 1997, p. 161

My earnest desire is that the time invested in both the writing of this book, and your reading of it, will be that we are both better prepared to make a definitive difference to the people and nations of the world. They need answers that transcend mere human wisdom or human self-centeredness. They need Christ and His Kingdom. What I also believe, from the core of my being, is that in the pursuit of demonstrating and encouraging the nations to “come and dine”,¹⁴ it will change us as Christians in the process. That is greatly needed as well.

I further hope to share some part of my love and passion for the truths that create and drive political and economic communities. You know, we are going to spend eternity together in community, and I suspect God’s eternal truths in these public arenas will not disappear altogether. After all, “He makes all things new,”¹⁵ not all new things. We will go forward into eternity as a community of individual members, bound together within nations comprising His magnificent Kingdom.

14. Revelation 3:20.

15. 2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 21:5.