

2nd Wind by Ben Huot

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By Ben Huot

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Apostle Paul on What We Know

For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when that which is complete has come, then that which is partial will be done away with. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child. Now that I have become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, even as I was also fully known.

—1 Corinthians 13:9-12 WEB

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Philosophy

No Systems

One of the many things that is just assumed about Christian theology is that it should be studied systematically or by topic. The problem with this is that it isn't organized that way. The Bible is not a legal code, a bullet point list, or an infographic. It is literature.

It is objectively true literature about theological ideas, including sin and God, but it is still literature. I don't think scripture was designed this way by accident, or solely because things were written differently during ancient times. The Bible is literature, both to inspire and humble God's people throughout history.

Another thing we assume about the Bible is that our culture is typical of most the world today, or most of the world of the past or future. We live in a very unsustainable society, which is running through resources so fast, it is unlikely to be recognizable a hundred years from now. Likely, the only part of the world that will be inhabitable will be Canada.

Some of our ideas today were invented long ago, but our uses of them were either not economical viable in their cultures, or they were rejected on moral grounds. We measure our success by what we call freedoms, which are another way of saying we are wealthy.

Science is not the ultimate way to solve problems. It is just in fashion today. One of the earliest scientists was considered heretical, by at least the Western Church, for half of Church history. The adding of his ideas to the church doctrine is likely what led to modern atheism. The Enlightenment was based on

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scholars reading ancient Greek and Roman writings and reintroducing them into Western Civilization.

Looking at English and British history, it is likely there was a concerted effort about a millennium ago, to bring advanced technology into the world. There are too many lucky turning points, in English and British history, to explain by chance. England was also the location of the Industrial Revolution, because it had the only economy where this kind of technology was economically useful, at the time of its introduction.

The Information Revolution is based on all the ideas and technologies of the Industrial Revolution. Computers require a scale of manufacturing never attempted before in history. Machines basically make other machines and eventually they will literally program themselves, if the industry can pull that off. This is why we do not have family wage jobs in America making computers.

We will never get past the ideas of colonialism / capitalism, because that is inherent in the world system, that makes the current level of technology possible. This is likely why many of our adversaries deliberately try to defeat us using lower level technology weapons. Capitalism is about taking in cheap raw materials and making luxury items, with a huge markup. Even simple household items like dishes are designed with that same concept.

We are seeing the problems with what Science has brought into the world, but we seldom hear about the success of the Agricultural Revolution. When people had their own farms, they were much more self sufficient, crime was much lower as it was very inefficient, and most people were busy enough doing work,

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to keep themselves out of trouble. Today we live in a culture of entertainment, because we have too much time on our hands and we do not value education.

So one of our problems today is we are all in a rush to do everything. Jesus was very relaxed most of the time and when He was stressed out, He would go by Himself to pray to His Father. He had good self esteem, because He knew He was God and what Heaven is like.

Jesus knew even if every person rejected Him, He still had a huge number of angels, who would drop everything to save Him, no matter what the cost. He knew He was loved by His Father who loved Him, in a way only a perfect father could.

Jesus was offered shortcuts by the devil several times, but He was patient to wait for the right time and place. He even had the self control to be silent, when saying even a few words would likely have saved Him from the cross. Jesus may have had times when He experienced joy on earth, but He chose a time and place to live among us where there was little time, money, or energy for entertainment.

Our culture has more in common with that of the Anti-Christ than that of God. When you follow God, at least you get a chance to rest. We can thank God for inventing the day off work concept. A city that never sleeps is not a place of peace.

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Mixing Beliefs

I have been accused of one of the biggest fears of Christians today: synchronism. Basically a lot of the current Christian thinking is a response to certain perceived problems of the recent past. There are certain things in church leaders' and scholars' experiences that stay with them and give them a cause for concern. That is all fine and good.

The problem is this is backward leaning and so it doesn't prepare young people well, for future challenges to their faith. It is partially a failure of imagination. There are few new ideas, in the academic Christian world today and little changes over decades. There are so many people problems in churches and so little time to devote to research.

One of the big scares today comes from Progressive Christianity and Christian Nationalism, both of which could at least be understood better if Christians were not so paranoid about studying philosophy, specifically existentialism.

Just like any other subject, the general knowledge level is not very useful or technically accurate. If you want to have your own ideas or make a meaningful contribution to ideas in the humanities, philosophy would be a good place to start. The best self help books are generally based on philosophy, for example.

Philosophy has a long history of being studied within the Church, across the major churches, denominations, and worldwide until the Enlightenment and the rise of modern atheism. It is only recently that it has been treated with suspicion. This is equally influenced by an American objection to education in general.

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Later, the Church had some very painful splits in the major denominations in America, over whether the Bible is objectively true. They also had a great fear of what was then called the New Age movement, which for some reason thought it came from Eastern Philosophy. Ironically, the most popular elements of Neo-Paganism as well as progressive politics come from Christianity directly.

So there is this concern that if you study too much in certain areas, in certain colleges, that you might lose your faith, or give up on it's fundamentals. I think this whole approach is a losing way of engaging the cultural wars (which I often think the Church should be on the other side of). I think when people lose their faith, it comes from not having a deep enough faith, because they have not encountered and overcome obstacles before. The other major factor is they get involved in a lifestyle or habit of sin or addiction.

I think many young people raised in the Church hang onto their parents faith and need the support of their church too much. I think the Church needs to strengthen young adults faith by bringing challenges to their faith while they are still in their church. Part of this could be done by the study of philosophy. Don't actually try this, as it will backfire and people will think you are trying to destroy their church.

So following a philosophy is about admitting that you have a limited point of view as a human being and you are being up and front about it. I believe the Bible and God are objective truth, but we, as humans, can never be completely objective. To think so is to place yourself into the place of God in your life.

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It is important to understand scripture, to understand its context, but one context often omitted is our point of view. We have to be honest that we are seeing a imperfect view of scripture, by simply being human and fallen.

Existentialism is a field of study in philosophy, that is about what is unique about human existence or free will. Many of the Apostle Paul's writings sound very much like Existentialism. The wisdom books of the Bible are philosophy.

Philosophy is not as much about answers, as it is about questions. The definition of what philosophy means is, in itself, a philosophical question and branch of philosophy. If you don't study philosophy today, you will follow society's views, not your own or God's. A good way to question the ubiquity and penetration of Science, into all facets of life, is through Existentialism.

So rather than take you away from your faith, philosophy and, in particular, Existentialism, will enable you to resist compromise of your faith, as you change and society changes, over the course of your remaining decades in your life.

Questioning things is good and Godly. It just depends on who you are questioning and Who you are accepting answers from. Just as rebellion against God is bad, but rebellion against injustice is good. Anger against other people is bad, but anger at sin is good.

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Folly of Pure Reason

Can you find holes
In the arguments of others?
Do you think everything
That you fail to understand
Must necessarily be false?

To reduce everything to reason
And human reason at that
Reflects a very limited understanding
That makes the world a very sad place

If we as people of faith
Can accept a certain degree of mystery
Maybe we can stop the infighting
And maybe society won't see us so negatively

Other people can honestly come to different conclusions
When reading the same words
It is preposterous to think that everyone who disagrees
Must necessarily be an agent of disruption

Our biggest problem today is complexity
Coupled with the demand to understand everything
And the need to be convinced of its necessity

What is it like to wake up
And know you are not in a dream?
Is it worth it to be right
To give up on finding community?

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Is being able to explain everything
Worth giving up on being able to experience God?
Why do we continue to engage in debate
When we call ourselves believers?

Do we know what belief means?
We can never have complete proof
For anything so beyond us
Like anything spiritual especially God

Our job as believers is not to solve problems for God
God will keep His Church alive
Despite our actions not because of them

We are merely God's hands and feet
We give money to the church as a form of worship
Not because God needs our money
God is not limited by any numbers
God can make 10 times as many believers instantly

So what is a proof for faith
If we do not solely rely on reason?
Scripture shows how God wants to relate with us
And the consequences for rejecting Him

Our life experiences reflect the history of Israel
And we encounter similar issues and respond similarly
As the heroes of the faith

The existence of love and beauty are a surprise
In a world where we quickly understand
The reality of pain and evil

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The fact that we never feel satisfied
And constantly long for more
Is a drive to push us toward God
This is what advertisers key in on

Many of us intuitively realize there must be a creator
As something coming out of nowhere is not reasonable
No matter how you move goal posts
Or adjust the laws of physics

Even the idea of an infinite universe
Is not testable or calculable
So that requires faith to explain as well

Whenever someone exerts effort for an activity
That they do not directly gain from
And sacrifice their time, money, or health
This is proof for the spiritual world
And specifically the Christian God

Unbelievers do not understand the Bible
Because God has different motivations
He also has different values
And expresses Himself in different ways

God is also wild and spontaneous
The most religious person barely knows God
God cannot be predicted or contained
We see a little of this reflected in His creation

God works on completely different time scales
He mostly works peacefully, subtly, and through ordinary means
God is always consistent and follows through with His promises

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God never changes His values or character

God never explained why we suffer to our satisfaction
But no one else has either
Unless you consider Jesus Christ

There are as many reasons to believe
As there are to not believe
How else could there be free will?

For me it comes down to this
God is more real to me than I am
I don't ask if God exists
I ask if I exist

I feel closest to being satisfied
When I learn more about God
Or I spend time with Him
Afterwards I feel good about myself

I cannot say the same is true
With everything else I do

God is the only one I completely trust
He knows everything we do
But He does not keep records
Like everyone else does

When the Holy Spirit is within you
He never forces or manipulates you
Into doing anything you do not want
Unlike most people in power today

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Questions without Answers

Shifting left while shifting right
Going forward while turning to the side
We try to make the upside down straight

We seek to contain the mystery
And solve the difficult situation
Sometimes words are not enough
There are times when silence gives better answers

When does three equal one
Or when are fate and freedom the same?
Some argue about elephants and human limits
Others use the tools they have been trained with

Being right doesn't always bring community
And convincing others does not always change hearts
How can we think we can understand God
When we cannot even describe our own minds?

When nonsense is spoken in public
People start to talk about us poorly
When we are thought to be irrational
We think we have lost their respect

Why do we need to explain ourselves?
Why does everything need to make sense?
In a world controlled by science
The greatest minds cannot accept defeat

How do we learn to follow

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If we all want to be leaders?
How do we become one group
When all our ideas are non-negotiable?

What do you call it
When you are driven solely by faith
But still want to explain yourself?

Why didn't Jesus give an account for Himself
Or tell us why we suffer
In a way we could accept?

Some things we will never understand
Some things we are more interested in avoiding
Than getting a good explanation for

When we see every aspect of life
As a problem to be solved
What happens when the math fails
Or when the theory comes up short?

Years are passing like weeks
And months like days
Everything is speeding up
All around us

Today no one can understand everything
Even just that which people have proven
Would it make us happier to have all mysteries solved?

Why do we constantly try to justify our feelings
Or find good reasons for what we believe?
In a world that thinks answers are an instant away

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We are very efficient but have lost our freedom along the way

If you could defend everything you do and think
Do you think even a single person more would believe?

When you are afraid at night
Of whatever it is acceptable to be afraid of
Does it bring you comfort
To understand where your beliefs come from?
Does the analysis of religion bring joy or peace?

When I started this intellectual journey
I had long since given up on convincing
Myself or anyone else to change their mind

I believe people at least today
Decide first what they want to believe
And then find reasons to justify themselves

No one would rely upon their mind
For something as important as their closest held beliefs
If you let someone convince you to change religions
You will likely change your mind many more times

Our brains have a mental framework
We create in early childhood
And everything needs to fit into that framework
Or we have an existential crisis
Or a dark night of the soul

To expect someone to change this framework
By merely giving a convincing speech
Is to expect people to never believe deeply about anything

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We know how people change their minds
Because powerful people exploit this for their gain

People change their mind
When they hear the same thing repeated often enough
Or they have a traumatic life experience

When was the last time you actually decided
On something important on the level of faith
After listening to someone give a good argument?

If this is true than you better get good at debate
Because otherwise someone smarter than you
Will find holes in your intellectual framework
And you might be convinced just as easily
To change who or what to believe in again

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Mental Illness

Not My Fight

Some call it patriotism
Without the enlistment
Some call it the world system
Or electronic stalking
It is our economy and our god

A synchronized system
Of dueling and contrasting ideas
A set of equations that cannot be solved
A cancer that cannot be destroyed

So much is one a part of the other
There is no way forward
That a person could conceive of

When people think of creativity
They often think of art or music
But people can be creative with ideas too

Some think this sacrilege or irresponsible
Much as many would see all rebellion as evil

Sometimes there are things so deeply wrong
With the world in which we reside
That the solutions are so subtle
That no person can perceive them

We see today our options as to embrace God
And at the same time embrace destruction
We see the other option to embrace God's values

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But then we cannot accept His followers

I was born angry and highly motivated
I was always interested in learning
And it was natural for me to believe in God

But I knew there was something deeply wrong
With the world I was born into from a young age
At least as early as I discovered the evil done to animals
To make our lives better and safer

When I joined the Army
I thought the world was fixable
Without redesigning it from scratch
Or a disaster forcing its reconstruction

Afterwards I was thankful that I was free
From the worst dangers a person could face
But I still believed that I had something to contribute
And I continued to think and write about these problems
As I found it impossible to volunteer for charities
Due to disabilities I acquired in my service to my country

But over time this energy that came from this anger
Slowly dissipated and I finally found community
In a very unlikely place very close by me
But undiscovered until after COVID

I had finished my life's work
Putting all my energy and abilities
Into this big project
But when I hear some of the things
People think in this community

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It makes me feel I don't belong

I did hear an idea that might help
This is not my fight
Or isn't at least so any longer
God will bring judgement and revenge
At this point I think it might as well be
On His people as on those His people
Currently see as the problem

But more likely God will solve this
In an entirely different way than anyone can imagine

It is likely we are creating what will later be known as hell
And we are creating such a vile place
By our words and actions

And this will be a big reason why
God will create a New Heaven and New Earth

Either way it will be as surprising as His first coming
And if we suffer as Christians in this part of the world
It will be largely our own making

But Christians will be treated better
Than in the rest of the world
Because those God's people see as the enemy
Have learned more from God than us in many ways

I am already both Christian and mentally ill
Later on in my life that might be said of all of God's people
I remember reading 1984 and Animal Farm as a kid

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I would never expect the Church to endorse
That method of running society

We seem to have learned very little about fascism
During the entire time we were fighting it for decades
Even if we called it by another name

Anyway my fight is over
And all I can do now is save myself
From worrying about something I have no control over
Despite living in a country claiming to be free
There is little I can do to change things

My teachers were either ignorant of life or lied to me
We cannot change the world or make it a better place
Because our leaders have convinced enough people
That it would be fun to watch the world burn
When faced with a tough challenge

The wealthiest people in the world
Thought it would be too expensive
Wait until they lose more than they even realize they have
And they have to fight over discarded plastic

Although the parts of the world hit hardest
Will be places they both think don't matter
And have the highest concentration of Christians
Who really are being persecuted

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Fragments of Paranoia

Christians, therapists, liberals, and conservatives see life so differently and are in conflict with each other over social issues. The mentally ill, especially those with Schizophrenia, are often targeted, so as to avoid the issues no one wants to talk about. These issues include the nature of evil and how we all contribute to suffering in the world. No one wants to believe the scale of the problem and what we would need to sacrifice, to really fix the problem.

The mentally ill have few if any people to speak for their issues and concerns. The resources people do find that claim to speak for those who suffer from Schizophrenia in particular are very unpredictable and often give counterproductive advice. Many confuse being a sociopath with having psychotic symptoms. Many give advice like taking vitamins or religious practices as the primary or only treatment.

Schizophrenia is about fear, but it is more a biological response, than a kind of emotion. It comes from the part of the brain designed to help in a crisis situation and the response is as much physical as chemical. Every physical sensation is intensified and perceptions are distorted due to delusions like paranoia, hallucinations like voices or sounds, or incoherent speech or writing.

Most people have another social part of the brain, that can interpret social cues, developed since the cave man days. But this part of the brain is damaged, or does not work correctly, in a person with Schizophrenia. The response you often see from someone with Schizophrenia, who is getting stressed out, is that

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they leave the group and do not return. Stress reduction is critical to the treatment of Schizophrenia, because the medicine only works, when the person being treated is under low levels of stress.

Relating to other people is one of the greatest challenges, for a person with Schizophrenia. This makes Schizophrenia a very lonely illness. Many people with Schizophrenia cannot read or write, even though they likely have the intelligence, skills, motivation, and interest, because the brain cannot organize the information, in a useful manner.

People like myself, who also suffer from Schizophrenia, can read and write effectively, with great effort, but are limited more by paranoia. This means we think other people we interact with, including those we work with and love, are plotting against us. Many of us are distrustful of the world, in general, but the surveillance capitalism of this latest world system is especially disturbing.

Computers and the Internet in general are mostly counterproductive, to those who are hypersensitive, to over stimulation. Too much of a good thing can be bad, as is the case in most addictions.

Some people are trying to remove the stigma, from being mentally ill. They are starting to refer to us in terms like differently abled or neurodivergent, which implies we are not disabled. This is very disconcerting for me, because my greatest challenge is not people discriminating against me, but the actual symptoms of the disease. If we are considered normal, we will likely lose funding and services.

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Some people want to try to find ways to adapt society, to make it less difficult, for people with mental illnesses, including Schizophrenia. The problem I see with that is that the kind of society that would put me on an equal level as others would be a society that did not function in a way that would be good for anyone.

I would be at home in a society operating on fear in some ways, but this would likely be a very short lasting and unstable society, as well as very brutal. The other direction is to create a situation where the mentally ill person is relaxed as much as possible, but this situation would vary widely depending on their delusions, past trauma, and interests. Sleep is probably the most relaxing state, but people with Schizophrenia often do not sleep as well, as people without the disease.

More funding for social programs would help, but people only seem to want to pay for making the world's most powerful military even more powerful and continuing social security as a retirement program, rather than a social safety net. People also want pay less in taxes, get tougher on blue collar crime, and further legalize vice crimes.

For some reason Americans seem to think that only government suffers from bureaucracy and don't realize that very efficient governments tend to be dictatorships, ruled by fear and violence. Also Christianity does not promote economic efficiency at all costs. The only dictatorship approved by the Bible is God ruling directly, but not through other people. The downfall of Israel was when they decided to have a king. The traditional values of Christianity are compassion and humility.

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Christianity does teach us to work hard and be responsible, but this is the opposite of a billionaire without a job and too much time on his hand. Not helping out the weaker people in society was one of the big reasons why God put the Israelites into exile, from their homeland and into the land of their enemies.

So things can be done to improve the situation, but they are too boring and take too long to hold the American public's attention. We are after all a society of businessmen and they have made us fat and lazy, so we buy more things. They don't want to distract us from our addictions and improving life might achieve that.

Delusional Ideas

Sometimes my thoughts
Are alive with sound
Sometimes I am not alone
With my thoughts

What is it like to never be alone?
How do I know when God is speaking?
Life can be confusing to many

When I can remember my dreams
I have a hard time describing them
When I am awake I seem to be more lucid

It is difficult to get a good rest
And I am usually tired afterwards
It is hard to get filled up
As I am hungry after eating

When you reach the limits
Of what the medicine can do
How do you get rid of the fear?
Or do you just try to channel it?

I have many unusual ideas
As many who know me would say
But it is really just the same ideas
But arranged in a different order

Some of my ideas are clearly delusional
As I am also fully aware of and do not contest

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But many other people fear things I do not

I guess I need to find out what fears
Are acceptable and what ones are not
I guess majority rules
When everyone is paranoid no one is

Imagination and delusion are not the same
Just as intelligence and sanity are unrelated
Who defines what is a normal thought?

We are after all starting into predictive policing
And soon there will be thought crimes
We have all lost all shreds of privacy
And none of us will ever be alone

A lack of companionship
But a constant barrage of propaganda
And always under someone's turn at watch duty

Just because you are paranoid
Doesn't mean someone is not trying to get you
Just because you are out of your mind
Doesn't mean you don't have something worth saying

Each of us has our times of confusion and distress
But having Schizophrenia is like being that way all the time
Schizophrenia runs deeper than emotions
It is a fact of biology and does not pass

We need to find a way to accept
We are little removed from the caveman
We still think like we did

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Before the Agricultural Revolution

This is really important
Because after the Information Revolution
We will be back in the Stone Age

In the modern world we see history as progressive
But most cultures throughout most history
Perceived time as going through cycles

Every few generations the same problems arise
And similar means are used to overcome them
Until something happens that disrupts basic functionality
Like weather, technology, or disease

We think we are making a better society
For those at the margins
But I do not think this is true

The Information Revolution
And the making of an economy based on all free stuff
Is disruptive not just because it is an economic bubble

Our society is destroying trust in the system
Average people now believe in things
That if I said them as a child
I would be diagnosed as mentally ill

When you cannot control access to information
You cannot build enough trust
To base a relationship on
This is why computers are the death of counseling

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Computers also are designed to be addictive
And criminal activity is made more efficient
So it is almost impossible to protect or shelter
The weaker elements of society like the mentally ill

Economic efficiency has been the driver of technology
And the drive behind the ideas of the modern world
Most people are not aware of it

But making things more efficient
Has a profound influence
On how we think and what we believe

We will eventually have to choose between
Our wealth and our freedom
Which is ironic because we define freedom as wealth

This is the connection between capitalism and democracy
We have the freedoms we do because we are wealthy
And we define our freedoms as others would define wealth

But the system is already unwinding
If you listen carefully
You can hear the voices of people screaming
In some black site near you

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Religion

Fire and Brimstone

I have for many years really objected to preachers constantly preaching sermons, to scare people into repentance and salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ. It seems so negative a reason to choose to follow God. It also seems very much contrary, to how we think of Jesus acting.

The reality is though, for all the time we read about Jesus being gentle, He also stood up for truth, even when it was offensive to others. Importantly though, He knew how to pick His battles wisely. Jesus is not only a Human servant but also an all-powerful Leader.

I used to think of a leader as someone who was full of themselves and many likely do have problems with narcissism. But one of the reasons why we have so unqualified leaders is because we are unreasonably critical of them in general.

In many jobs, that we give awards, make ceremonies, or give special compensation for are really just lousy jobs. These are very important jobs for the public, but not very good for the person in the uniform. Some examples include special forces, firefighters, middle managers, and pastors.

So even as I would never want to be a leader, I have enough life experiences now to realize that a lot of their job must be very difficult and very lonely. They have to give up most their time and privacy. They also are legally or at least morally responsible for their organizations. They often have to carry out bad or unpopular decisions given by their bosses.

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I am lucky now that I do not have to be in the working world. I can live a life where, although I have extreme limitations, I also have a kind of freedom few will ever have. None of us choose this though. My life has turned out completely different than I thought it was going to (mostly for the better) and so has the world (I am still waiting to see how that one turns out).

Some people think it unkind, or even somewhat over the top, to preach a hell and brimstone sermon, to people who are in crisis or near death. Some people would think using fear as motivation is in bad taste.

The thing is that most countries' legal system and national defense are largely based on the fear of prison, death, or big fines. Most advertising manipulates people into thinking they never have enough so they are never satisfied. The news reporters (now mostly software) want people to be terrified of whatever national or international crisis they choose to focus on. Politicians exploit people's fears, based on the ideology they grew up with.

If a person is forced to survive a difficult situation, like a war or serious chronic illness, it is best to have as much training as possible. This is true even if some of the training might scare the person.

So while preaching to people in a stressful situation will likely increase their stress, you have to consider the gravity of the situation. Evangelical Christians generally believe that a person will go to hell or the underworld, if they do not repent of their sins and believe in Christ. In this context, while it is not ideal to turn to God, at the very end of your life and be motivated by fear, the severity of the consequences can make it easier to understand where the pastor is coming from.

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In a similar vein, even things we think are unlikely to happen, we put great effort into avoiding, and plan out strategies for years, and even spending national budgets on. Asteroid impacts are a good example. So we must consider the severity of the possible outcome, before we outright dismiss what might seem paranoid to us at first.

Now if the motivation is for money or fame, then the situation and response would be justifiably very different.

Not Our Church

Many see the Church in decline in America. They are worried about it and desperately grasping at straws. We have some sort of deep fascination that the early Church had all the answers.

The truth is what we often consider the early Church was from an entirely different culture than that of the New Testament. The early Church's experiences are what we read in Acts and the letters of the New Testament. They had the same problems we have today. That is why they are still important for us to study today.

It might be hard for the Church to accept, but the decisions we are now making will only make the situation for us and later Christians worse. The devil doesn't even need to attack us, because we are already divided against each other. We see false teaching under every rock.

I know when I see paranoia, as I suffer from Schizophrenia. What we have in the Church they call in medicine an autoimmune disorder, like arthritis or diabetes.

The Church will not save itself. But the Church belongs to Christ, not us. He will save us and carry us kicking and screaming into a new reality.

I would recommend to the Church or any other organization facing great changes and uncertainty to focus on the fundamentals: go to church, read the Bible, and pray. It would be much better to focus on what is happening in the Church, rather than what is happening in society. We need to be patient and wait

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for God to move. We need to not give up or get discouraged and pass the torch on to another generation.

One thing would be nice is if we had more unity. But that has backfired many times, as we have tried that on our own. I think it would be wise to just leave that part to God. Otherwise, we can easily just go into circles trying to resolve those issues.

I learned recently that people are more important than ideas. This is a way of summing up what Jesus taught. The Church's mission today appears to be to be a counter to the Internet.

The Church is the last outpost of community in our world today. Today one of our biggest problems is people are isolated. We also expect people to figure out everything on their own.

As far as developing strategies, the Apostles did not try to form plans for effective Church planting, but rather followed the lead of the Holy Spirit.

I have learned more and more lately that little acts of kindness matter much more than people would think. I continue to learn that I cannot solve the world's problems if there is no will in our leaders or the population. But I can pray and stay loyal to Christ and His Church.

Many people today are trying to overcome their limitations and I have tried for many years as well. Ultimately these limitations are designed by God for our own benefit. I think God has very different expectations of us than we do of ourselves. We think we have to stockpile supplies, to prepare for Christ's second coming, but Jesus tells us to do simple acts of kindness.

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Christianity is starting from scratch now culturally and evangelization wise, as there is now a new worldwide culture. We need to bring the Gospel to the latest generation and this means bringing Christ to an entirely different culture. We often see this in terms of technology, but the social changes are the more profound and lasting changes.

The Church is busy translating the Bible into every human language, but maybe there should be a focus on bringing Christ to artificial intelligence. But even these ideas are poor attempts at trying to imagine future problems and issues. We just need to remember that it is not our Church to save.

The future is becoming less predictable, because we are getting into situations we have no previous analogous experiences to draw from. This seems to have parallels to all the major conceptual leaps that occurred during the time of the Apostles. And in some ways this is may be a foreshadowing of how little we know about God as well. Maybe we need to learn a little more humility.

Persecution and Privilege

How do I show the depths of my sorrow
That my God has reaped the hate
That His followers have sewn?

People talk about how unfair life is
Nothing turns out like we think
Our fate is unpredictable to us

But Christ had the most unfair life
He was born into poverty and weakness
But He turned His temporary defeat
Into His plan for our eternal victory
Over our greatest enemy and cause of suffering

To say life should be different
Or to blame God for suffering
Is to jump to conclusions
Without hearing all the evidence

Our story is not finished
In fact it never will end

To worry about our time in this reality
Is like suffering in a dream
Even with the memory of it in the morning
It is just not relevant to our waking world

When they ask you to rate your pain on a scale
I can imagine unlimited pain
So I don't think I would ever say a 10

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Sometimes even what is temporary
Can feel like it is an eternity

Sometimes when you have a total experience
Like military training, psychiatric hospitalization, or live in a
retirement home
If you feel you have no where to go to get relief
If there is no escape from your situation
All you know is despair and isolation

This can be like being pulled under in the ocean
Or being put under general anesthesia
You can struggle all you want
But you have no power
And you are at the mercy of another

So to be upset that we are no longer respected
Just because we claim the title of Christian
Is not something we ever should have expected

We can only follow Christ
If we first die to the world
This is what baptism symbolizes
If we are no longer of this world
Why would we care what the world thinks?

Certainly this is complicated because most have to work
But we certainly don't need to own our own business
Or even be American citizens
Many Christians throughout history have been imprisoned

God doesn't love the person living in literal garbage

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Any less than He does a billionaire evangelist
We are so far from understanding God
We are so rushed and distracted by the unimportant
That we fail to see with God's eyes

Persecution does not mean being uncomfortable
Neither does it mean being rejected socially
Even losing your job over your faith is not suffering

Furthermore we have to ask ourselves continually
Whether we are suffering because of our pride or our faith
If it is our pride we need to change who we are
If it is our faith we should be happy to share in Christ's shame
As this is confirmation we will also live with Him for eternity

Of course actual persecution is terrifying
Even not having access to modern medication
Or any of those not working correctly is scary
But it just shows how much we need God
And how real and immediate this need is

So God does give a better answer to suffering
Than any of the other major world belief systems
Jesus Christ is the answer
He is the blueprint for how we are to react
To the difficult struggles we are faced with in this life

Not only are we promised forever in paradise
If we only humble ourselves before God

We are given coping strategies coming from God Himself
And the people who saw lived alongside Him for years
Who made big mistakes as well

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But went on to make much better decisions
And we now know them as heroes of the faith
And some are even authors of Scripture itself

Remember when things get hard
That this is not the end
Things will get better
Death is the beginning not the end
Our afterlife can be full of peace and joy
If only we choose to believe in this life

Faith is hard in a culture
Where we are brainwashed into believing
That only things that are visible are real
And only thing that generate money are worth doing
That the only way to change things
Is to get large scale agreement

We need to downsize our dreams
So we can have a greater influence on the world
We need not occupy positions of power and authority
To truly change the world we need only pray
God is the real one in control not us

Ideas and Relationships

There are 2 groups
That I am very familiar with
That both believe in things
They cannot fully explain
Or fully prove by evidence alone

Many of us do try to explain
But I think this counter productive

Some things can be left to mystery
Sometimes we feel a need to investigate
And give an account for everything that happens
We don't need more surveillance or more data
Especially since we already have drawn our conclusions

There is no point that I see
In trying to prove faith to unbelievers
Or to educate religious people in science
I actually don't think you can have both
At least not the way our minds work today

I think it does a disservice to religion
To find facts to support faith
I think it also does science a disservice
To try to find faith based analogies

Any bridge between faith and science
Is a bridge going straight down into a rabbit hole
It is the kind of discussion that never ends with just words
But one that can and does end relationships

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Can we believers and unbelievers just let our experiences
Decide what we believe to be true
I believe faith depends much more on God than us
And I think science depends as much on
What the average person can understand
Than it does on being able to reproduce the same results

I think that dialogue between people in conflict
Has to start first with building a relationship
We need to find shared interests and values
Outside of either science or religion
Maybe this is a job for philosophy

But before we can do this we need to decide
Do we want peace more than being right?
Do we believe people are more important than ideas?

Do we have enough confidence
In our own understanding of the world
That we can accept that other may not share our views?

And while still holding our beliefs as strong as ever
Believe that our views will win out over time
Because they just make more sense and solve problems better?

We need to have the courage to be patient
And be willing to learn new things in this exchange
Knowing neither side will likely
Make a major change in their views
And accepting that this may be
As much as we can do for our cause

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So if we can let the best ideas win out
On their own merits over time
We show how much we actually care
About not just our ideas but the people involved

We should have learned by now
That seeing this as an intellectual battle
Was going to end in failure for both sides

If you want to change someone else's mind
You need to realize that proving them wrong
Rarely ends in them agreeing with you

These are important issues
That people's identities are woven into
And should not be changed
Just because someone has a better argument

Time might be the greatest test for ideas
But other good tests would be

Does it identify our problems correctly?
Does it solve our problems effectively?
Does it help us make better choices?
Does it give us ways to improve ourselves?