**“Glen’s Parallax Perspectives”** is a series of TV programs offering fresh ways for people to see issues such as foreign policy, social and economic justice, governmental functioning, the environment, and so forth. We provide voices and viewpoints that are rarely heard in mainstream media.

**Mainstream media, politicians, and culture see the world in conventional ways. Therefore, in order to solve problems, we need to see things in fresh ways.** Glen Anderson created this TV series to help people see things differently so we can solve problems at all levels from the local to the global.

This series title refers to “***parallax***“ – the view you get by looking from a different perspective. For example, put one finger in front of your nose and another finger farther away. Close one eye. Then open that eye and close the other. Your fingers will seem to move. This is called a “parallax” view. **This TV series invites you to look at issues from fresh perspectives.**

Each program airs three times a week (currently every Monday at 1:30 pm, every Wednesday at 5:00 pm, and every Thursday at 9:00 pm) for the entire month on Thurston Community Television (TCTV), channel 22 for cable TV subscribers in Thurston County, Washington. TCTV is part of Thurston County Media. You can see their schedule at [**www.tcmedia.org**](http://www.tcmedia.org)

**You can also watch the program described below through your computer** at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org). All episodes of “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” are posted on this blog’s “TV Programs” part and also in one or more of the categories listed in the right side of the computer screen. Also, see much information at the issue category headings at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org).

🡪 Please invite other people to watch this video and/or read this thorough summary at the “TV Programs” part of [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org).

🡪 In addition to summarizing what we said during this article, this article also includes some ideas we did not have time to mention or discuss. Explicit notes identify those as such.

**Here is the October 2019 program:**

**“Being Christian in America in a Time of Crisis”**

by Glen Anderson, the TV series’ producer and host
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**Glen introduced the viewers to this interview:**

He said this month’s interview on “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” takes a fresh look at some of our nation’s social and political issues – especially in light of religious faith.

Many of the public policy issues that our nation is grappling with have been pushed hard from conservative Christian viewpoints, but those are **not** the only voices of Christianity. Moderate, liberal and progressive Christians have insights that differ greatly from the highly publicized views that have gained political power.

During this hour three retired Christian ministers share faith-based insights and perspectives that are very different from those that have been dominating TV and politics. They and other retired clergy members from several denominations meet often to discuss issues and do related work. All three have extensive educational backgrounds and have accomplished much in a variety of ways. **Our guests are:**

• **Rev. Dr. Paul Wee**, a retired Lutheran pastor.

• **Rev. Melody Young**, a retired Presbyterian pastor.

• **Rev. Paul Lundborg**, a retired Lutheran pastor.

This document thoroughly summarizes what we said during the TV interview. Additional information is included in some parts of this document, and links to more resources are listed at the end.

The document you are reading now and the TV interview video are posted to the “TV Programs” part and the “Religion” part of Glen’s blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org).

**Our society and the world’s religions are in crisis. Our interview drew upon our best values and valid theology to propose solutions to many current problems. We began by focusing on a powerful document written and signed by many Christian theologians and religious leaders.**

Glen said that everybody knows our nation is in a serious crisis – actually, we’re in **several** cris**e**s (plural). Different people would identify different reasons why these crises have been getting worse over the years. He said he always encourages people to draw upon our best values and open-mindedly generate ethical solutions. He said we’ll do that during this hour, and he was looking forward to hearing our guests’ insights during this interview.

The four of us agreed to ground much of our conversation on six main points in a 2018 document titled, **“Reclaiming Jesus: A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis.”** The document says, “We offer the following six affirmations of what we believe, and the resulting rejections of practices and policies by political leaders which dangerously corrode the soul of the nation and deeply threaten the public integrity of our faith.” **The document makes these six main points:**

1. WE BELIEVE each human being is made in God’s image and likeness. (Genesis 1:26)
2. WE BELIEVE we are one body. In Christ, there is to be no oppression based on race, gender, identity, or class. (Galatians 3:28)
3. WE BELIEVE how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner is how we treat Christ himself. (Matthew 25: 31-46)
4. WE BELIEVE that truth is morally central to our personal and public lives. (Exodus 20:16)
5. WE BELIEVE that Christ’s way of leadership is servanthood, not domination. (Matthew 20:25-26).
6. WE BELIEVE Jesus when he tells us to go into all nations making disciples. (Matthew 28:18)

Many theologians and religious leaders have signed onto to this document. We encourage people to read it and see more information at [**www.ReclaimingJesus.org**](http://www.ReclaimingJesus.org).

Dr. Wee said the document originated from an Ash Wednesday 2018 retreat on the East Coast in which a number of church leaders recognized the need to speak out – from their grounding in faith – in response to what was happening in our country. He said the group of retired pastors who meet regularly in Olympia found the document so fascinating that they convened a series of conversations with about fifty other persons to discuss each of its six points.

Glen said that this document packs a lot of good substance into only three pages, and he encouraged more people to read and consider it. He said it’s not so easy as to simply breeze through, because it engages our heads and our hearts, but it is quite readable.

Before our three interview guests discussed the “Reclaiming Jesus” statement’s six main points, Pastor Young briefly summarized its overall content and flavor. She said a great many people are aware of the very troubling things that are going on. She said Christians really must take stands on these important issues: stands **against** certain things, and stands **supporting** other things. They felt the need to create a conversation with many more people than just the retired pastors who have been meeting. They held a four-week workshop at Olympia’s Gloria Dei Lutheran Church with about fifty regular participants. She said the participants were intensely engaged in the conversations.

**Point #1:
WE BELIEVE each human being is made in God’s image and likeness. (Genesis 1:26)**

Glen said that the three guests arranged that each of them would take the lead in answering two of the six points, and the other guests can add to these conversations.

The document’s FIRST POINT affirms, “WE BELIEVE each human being is made in God’s image and likeness (Genesis 1:26).” Glen said this first point affirms every person’s God-given dignity and equality, so it rejects racial bigotry as a denial of this religious truth.

Dr. Wee took the lead in discussing this. He said, “This was the first point because it is so basic to everything else.” He said the critique is necessary for the direction our nation has taken now. People of different political parties and independents can openly discuss issues within the Church and disagree but still accept each other. Their recent series of discussions did set some rules for civility.

This first point recognizes the divine presence within each person and each person’s inherent equality. Dr. Wee said human dignity is threatened in a number of ways. People might agree with the basic principle that we are made in God’s image and we are inherently equal, but our actual behavior does not live up to that principle. Thomas Jefferson affirmed that all people are created equal, but he owned slaves.

Glen said the U.S. is experiencing a growing movement of white nationalism, and it has infected the federal government. We see evidence in several ways. That kind of racism is growing in some other nations too. He said in this time of crisis we cannot be silent, so “we must speak up in light of our faith and affirm the better values.”

Pastor Lundborg added that a fundamental principle within Christianity is that “we are created in the image of God, so there is no upper caste or lower caste segments of society. We are meant to live in harmony with each other. We are meant to be a very egalitarian society – and yet some people just cannot tolerate that equality, and they want to be one-up on everybody else on the basis of how you look.”

Glen added that this point about equality is interrelated with all of the next five points.

**Point #2:
WE BELIEVE we are one body. In Christ, there is to be no oppression based on race, gender, identity, or class. (Galatians 3:28)**

Glen invited Pastor Lundborg to flesh out the document’s SECOND POINT, which affirms the Christian principle that “we are one body” in Christ with “no oppression based on race, gender, identity, or class (Galatians 3:28).” Glen said Christians must overcome social divisions within the Church and make this egalitarian unity “an example for the rest of society.”

Pastor Lundborg said this point is very important. The past few years have emphasized this point for Church and for the world. Gender issues have become very significant, and we see them in the bias against women and the “Me Too” movement and the domination of men over women and parents over children. All of these are important. He said our unity in Christ is a gift – we do not create it – so “our task is to live it out.”

He mentioned the Catholic Church’s problems about how priests have treated women and children. He said all of the other denominations – including his own – have stories of that kind too. He said this is a central issue that is both discouraging and disheartening to the rest of the world, which sees that even people within the Church “cannot get their act together on this.”

Dr. Wee emphasized the important fact that Church leaders wrote this letter and addressed it to the Church. He mentioned a New Testament verse (I Peter 4:17) calling for “judgment to begin on the household of God.” He said the Church’s first word must always be a word against the Church. Start by hearing God’s judgment and responding with our own repentance. The Church must do this within itself before addressing the outside world.

Glen agreed and mentioned a truth he had heard many decades ago: “There is no spiritual value in confessing your neighbor’s sins.” He said that people within the Church – whatever part of the Church they might be in – need to hold the Church body accountable.

Dr. Wee said this document is a reflection of what happened in Germany in the 1930s with the rise of an authoritarian government, racism and other serious problems. Al-though some Church people caved in and went along with that, in 1934 136 Church leaders gathered in the city of Barmen and – instead of merely opposing the politics that were afoot – dealt explicitly with the growing Nazism within the Church. He said that the U.S. is not at that point, but now in the U.S. the Church must explicitly state who we stand for. He said it’s very troubling that the Church’s right wing is moving toward nationalism. Our first word must be a word internally.

[We did not have time to explore further the crisis in Germany in the 1930s, or the 1934 Barmen Declaration ([**www.britannica.com/topic/Barmen-Declaration**](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Barmen-Declaration)) or the authentic faithfulness of the portion of the Church that opposed Nazism and is known as “The Confessing Church.” You may search the internet for more information about these.]

Glen said that some people make it seem like the Christian religion is all about abortion and homosexuality. Actually, Jesus said **nothing** about abortion and **nothing** about homosexuality. Instead, Jesus spoke strongly against rich people who failed to share with the poor, and he spoke strongly against people who are outwardly pious but failed to do what God really requires. Glen said large portions of the Church totally ignore what Jesus actually said – and instead they obsessively focus on things that Jesus never said.

Pastor Young said that for decades the U.S. has wrapped itself in “a red, white and blue myth that says we can do no wrong.” The U.S.’s dominant message has been that we are a good country that has been good for the world. But she said this denies what our nation has done, “so part of our challenge today is learning to deal directly with that” and letting go of the hypocrisy.

Glen thanked our three guests for urging the Church and Church people to hold the Church accountable. He thanked Pastor Young for extending this also to the national level by recognizing that Americans need to hold our nation accountable for our nation’s real standards, and not settle for mere flag-waving. The guests agreed. Pastor Young said, “We’ve got to be realistic about who we are and what we’ve done.”

Dr. Wee said we are a good nation and we are good people, but we should not “claim moral supremacy over others. That’s when we get into trouble.” He quoted the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, who wrote that Americans’ “pretentious assumption of virtue and innocence” in contrast to others needs to be exposed so we can change.

Glen said several times during our conversation we will come back to the notion of core values that are really the important values that we should be living out.

We did not have time to include the following ideas, which are relevant to this part of our conversation:

Point #2 rejects all of the ways in which women are mistreated. It actually says sexism is a sin.

When we were preparing for this interview, Pastor Lundborg criticized the evangelical right for distorting who God and Jesus are – and how they want us to function in the world. He called Franklin Graham’s message “dark and sinister.” If we had had the time, Pastor Lundborg was willing to say that the evangelical right used to talk about following Jesus. Now they cherry-pick a few verses from the Bible but totally neglect Jesus in the world. They portray God as angry and ignore the Jesus who is loving and compassionate and caring.

Recently the Religious Right has distorted “freedom of religion” away from what the principle is – and what the federal law (“Religious Freedom Restoration Act”) intended to do. The Religious Right wants to distort “freedom of religion” into giving them legal power to discriminate against other people. See this information I posted to my blog: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/freedom-of-religion-does-not-give-permission-to-hurt-other-people**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/freedom-of-religion-does-not-give-permission-to-hurt-other-people)

The powerful, compelling 2-minute video at this link affirms that Christians must help immigrants/refugees: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/powerful-compelling-2-minute-video-christians-must-help-immigrants-refugees**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/powerful-compelling-2-minute-video-christians-must-help-immigrants-refugees)

**Point #3:
WE BELIEVE how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner is how we treat Christ himself. (Matthew 25: 31-46)**

Glen said the THIRD POINT of the “Reclaiming Jesus” document cites Matthew 25:31-46 and states, “We believe how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner is how we treat Christ himself.” The end of Matthew 25 quotes Jesus saying, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” This document about Reclaiming Jesus says Jesus is clearly commanding us “to protect and seek justice for those who are poor and vulnerable” – all kinds of people who are oppressed or strangers or outsiders.

Pastor Young said that in the Matthew 25 text “Jesus is really setting up a litmus test for our faith. It’s not, ‘have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior,’ – it’s not just that, although that is an entry point for a lot of people – more so, from his words: not just what we believe but what we do, so the litmus test is how we treat other people.”

She added that at the national level we see terrible violations of what Jesus commanded. This includes the equality issue that we discussed a moment before. She said that in many parts of scripture – including the Old Testament’s Leviticus and Deuteronomy – God keeps commanding us to provide hospitality for strangers because we (the people whom God is addressing in the Bible) were once strangers.

Glen said Pastor Young’s insights remind him of the New Testament, where James 2:26 says, “Faith without works is dead.” He said Christianity is not a matter of asserting one’s faith but rather about doing what our faith requires. Instead of glib words about having faith, let’s see whether people actually practice it.

Glen asked Pastor Young to expand upon something she had said while we were preparing for this interview. She had told Glen on the phone that we need to practice hospitality for immigrants instead of the cruelty that has become U.S. policy. And – besides loving other people – we also need to love Creation too. Glen said this is important because we see Creation being abused, along with minorities and immigrants. Pastor Young said Jesus asks us to do the right and human thing – to respect all of Creation and recognize that humans are not more important than the rest of Creation. She said we should participate instead of backing out of efforts to protect Creation.

Glen affirmed that Pope Francis’s great encyclical letter about the climate crisis – Laudato Sí ([**https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\_20150524\_enciclica-laudato-si.html**](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)) – does an amazingly good job of putting humans into the context of the created world, both in terms of theology and also in terms of science. He said this great document also affirms the rightful role of each culture fitting into its own respective culture, and the need to respect the integrity of all of those. He said it is a truly great document that deserves to be read widely. It’s good to have a pope who used to be a chemist and understands scientific truth.

When we were preparing for this interview, Pastor Lundborg told Glen that the Old Testament was written in a difficult environment, so people’s survival depended on hospitality, and Jesus was raised in that cultural context. We took a moment now for Pastor Lundborg to say that in recent years he has been very much interested in hospitality as an important part of the Christian faith. He said that nowadays the Church needs to understand that to be a follower of Jesus requires practicing “good relationships all around.” He said that the people of the Hebrew Bible were in the wilderness for forty years, and living in a desert made survival issues vitally important. Those people learned and started practicing the value of hospitality. “Welcoming the stranger is a way of practicing great compassion for others, and it becomes the work of God.” He said, “In the New Testament Jesus fleshes that out even more clearly.”

Pastor Lundborg affirmed the importance of Christianity interacting cooperatively with other religions (Judaism, Islam, and others) instead of competing with them. He affirmed the cooperation of different faith communities locally and beyond. Glen agreed and said mainstream politics and mainstream religion tends to ignore the value of interfaith relationships.

Glen said a good example of seeing traditional religious matters from fresh perspectives is the book written by Laurel Dykstra, titled ***Set Them Free: The Other Side of Exodus***. He said American Christians who read the Bible’s book of Exodus tend to identify with the Israelites and their righteous cause, but actually, the U.S. is Egypt, the oppressor from which people need liberation. Glen said her book is well researched and biblically sound, but it is contrary to the nice assumptions that American Christians make.

Pastor Young said the U.S. is categorizing people who want to come to the U.S. by asking whether they are bringing wealth and whether they have skills we can exploit. She said this is a total denial of the dignity of every human being.

Glen said although we have been critical of the Church, many people of faith – people of a wide variety of faiths – are actually practicing the kind of hospitality that their faiths call them to do – the kind of hospitality we have been advocating during this interview. He said even here in Olympia:

• Gloria Dei Lutheran Church has welcomed a refugee family from Ukraine and is helping them get settled here.

• Also, the federal government is trying to depart a nice Guatemalan mother and son, so Temple Hatfiloh and its members and many volunteers from other congregations are providing sanctuary for them.

He said that nationwide, more than 1,100 congregations have agreed to provide sanctuary to migrants. Also, the nationwide mainstream Lutheran denomination (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, [**www.elca.org**](http://www.elca.org)) has declared itself to be a sanctuary for immigrants facing deportation. (See [**https://elca.org/sanctuarychurch**](https://elca.org/sanctuarychurch)) He said the media should report on those courageous faith-based actions. He affirmed that “this is the prophetic message that needs to be lived out.”

Dr. Wee said the ELCA is trying to figure out how to implement this nationwide stance, since the national church body does not legislate for individual local congregations. He affirmed Olympia’s Temple Beth Hatfiloh and Rabbi Seth Goldstein for their bold work in providing sanctuary, and he affirmed our local Muslim mosque, the Islamic Center of Olympia, for their wonderfully welcoming hospitality to non-Muslims, sharing special meals with visitors on special occasions. He recognized Abraham and Hagar as early sources of Islam, just like Jews and Christians recognize Abraham and Sarah as early sources of Judaism.

One good article reporting on this nationwide effort is at this link –[**https://truthout.org/articles/over-1100-congregations-have-agreed-to-provide-sanctuary-to-migrants/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=f32cee1c-036c-410c-9972-6ab89b6ea28a**](https://truthout.org/articles/over-1100-congregations-have-agreed-to-provide-sanctuary-to-migrants/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=f32cee1c-036c-410c-9972-6ab89b6ea28a) – and mentions examples throughout the U.S. and mentions the ELCA specifically. The article includes a paragraph with a few brief biblical quotations:

“It’s a position, he says, that is deeply rooted in Gospel. Leviticus 19:34 states that “the foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native born.” Likewise, Mark 12:30-31 advises us that there is no commandment greater than loving our neighbors. Exodus 22:21 emphasizes the point further: “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Then there’s Deuteronomy 10:19, “You shall love the immigrant.”

We did not have time to include the following ideas, which are relevant to this part of our conversation:

Pastor Young wrote this about **hospitality to the stranger:**

We are terribly concerned – horrified – about what is happening at our border. The cruelty, the inhumane treatment of desperate families and the incarceration of children. … The scripture is clear in both the Old and New Testaments, time and again we are told to show hospitality to strangers and care for those in need. We are to offer sanctuary, not suffering. We are not to draw lines between “us” and “them.” We are all God’s children, loved equally! There is no hierarchy in God’s love! How can we be so hateful? What does it say about the state of our so-called “Christian” society? How much longer can we tolerate such atrocities?

She wrote this about **tolerance and respect:**

Jesus said, “Love one another.” He didn’t say love those who look like you, or speak like you, or believe like you. His command was to love all of God’s creation. That goes for the vast diversity in the human family, as well as the rest of creation on this planet. So it speaks not only to human interaction, but to global environmental issues as well. I believe we must reject the hateful rhetoric of voices like Jerry Falwell and Franklin Graham, and of course this whole resurgence of white nationalism, who preach violent intolerance based on race and religion. It frightens me that many in that camp claim the title Christian, when my faith calls me to be antithetical, totally opposed to such distorted views.

This THIRD POINT in the “Reclaiming Jesus” document explicitly deals with how we treat immigrants, poor people, and other marginalized people. The document says 2,000 verses in the Bible assert that our religion requires us to protect the poor. Indeed, many parts of the Bible urge people of faith to welcome strangers – including foreigners.

The great American rabbi, author and political activist Arthur Waskow wrote an article about “Seeing God in Every Person.” This is relevant to our discussion, so I posted it to my blog and wrote some introductory information. See this link: **http://parallaxperspectives.org/for-many-many-reasons-we-need-to-see-god-in-every-person**

**Point #4:
WE BELIEVE that truth is morally central to our personal and public lives. (Exodus 20:16)**

The FOURTH POINT in the “Reclaiming Jesus” document says, “We believe that truth is morally central to our personal and public lives. Truth-telling is central to the prophetic biblical tradition, whose vocation includes speaking the Word of God into their societies and speaking the truth to power.”

While preparing for our interview, Dr. Wee expressed his concerns about the breakdown of truth, the breakdown of democracy, and the rise of authoritarianism. Now he asked us to remember the times in history when truth has been tramped over. For example, during the 1930s Germany’s propaganda ministry totally distorted history and promoted propaganda against persons with disabilities, against Jews, against Gypsies and others. He said that once people start to accept being lied to, then the society – especially young people – absorb that as part of their thinking and part of their culture. He said that the Bible commands us to speak the truth in love and speak truth to power. Also, “we need to correct ourselves when we stray from this.” We must “be truthful.” He said the Old Testament’s great prophets “stood up before the kings” and told them to their faces that they had neglected the orphans, the widows, and the poor. We must speak the hard truths. “What we’re seeing today at the highest levels of government is totally unacceptable to us.”

Glen said we need to pay attention to honest science – clear truths that have been proven – instead of letting Trump make serious decisions because he simply trusts his gut and dismisses the consensus of the world’s top scientists. A lot of people believe Trump’s gut instead of scientific truth.

We did not have time to include the following ideas, which are relevant to this part of our conversation:

Point #4 explicitly rejects “the practice and pattern of lying that is invading our political and civil life. … [W]hen public lying becomes so persistent that it deliberately tries to change facts for ideological, political, or personal gain, the public accountability to truth is undermined. … The normalization of lying presents a profound moral danger to the fabric of society.”

Lying is widespread in government, business, media, and other sectors in our society.

In many ways, right-wing Christians have lied about what authentic Christianity is about. Glen wrote this article about how right-wing Christianity is the opposite of what Jesus actually taught and practiced and promotes doctrines and policies that are dangerous for a free society: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/right-wing-christianity-is-the-opposite-of-what-jesus-taught-and-practiced**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/right-wing-christianity-is-the-opposite-of-what-jesus-taught-and-practiced)

**Point #5:
WE BELIEVE that Christ’s way of leadership is servanthood, not domination. (Matthew 20:25-26)**

The document’s FIFTH POINT says, “Christ’s way of leadership is servanthood, not domination.” This point says Jesus distinguished his way from the world’s domineering oppressors and tyrants. Jesus said, “Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.” (Matthew 20:26) This radically different approach rejects abuses of power and affirms human dignity – and honest democracy with checks and balances.

Pastor Lundborg said the expression “servant leadership” is the opposite of the worldwide culture that accepts authoritarian figurehead leaders. Sometimes people prefer that, so this is a significant issue. Jesus’ alternative model of washing his disciples’ feet and practicing servanthood welcomes people into one’s presence. Pastor Lundborg said, “The servant is non-threatening. The servant is welcoming.” He urged the Church needs to practice servant leadership internally and also to promote it as a model for our government to adopt.

Glen said authoritarian, oppressive leaders have emerged not only in here but also in Brazil, Turkey, India, and elsewhere. India’s leader is a bully – a hard-core fundamentalist Hindu who is all for big business and tramples on people, especially non-Hindus.

Pastor Young has written about the breakdown of democratic structures. She has written about the U.S. Constitution, checks and balances, and maintaining a decent and workable society. Now she added additional thoughts for our interview. She said the Constitution’s Preamble commits our nation to “establish justice, insure domestic tranquility … promote the general welfare,” and do other good things for our nation. She said the Constitution was written with checks and balances built into it, so the government would practice “respectful dialogue could produce well-informed decisions that would be for the common good.” But she said nowadays our national culture does not listen well to each other and does not practice respectful dialogue. These negative behaviors have become common in our government.

We did not have time to include the following ideas, which one or more of us had previously said or written about and are relevant to this part of our conversation:

Point #5 explicitly opposes “autocratic political leadership and authoritarian rule,” and it calls that “a theological danger that threatens democracy and the common good.” This point also calls for accountability instead of “personal recognition and gain.” Those “are not just political issues,” but also “raise deeper concerns about political idolatry, accompanied by false and unconstitutional notions of authority.”

Glen is especially concerned that the “America first” doctrine, “American exceptionalism,” and super-patriotism reveal the idolatry of this nationalism. Such idolatry violates the First Commandment. It is bad theology and bad politics.

People who want the government to overpower religious ethics cite parts of the Bible’s Romans 13 chapter, but they ignore the context. See Glen’s blog post about deconstructing Romans 13:1-2. See some introductory information and a smart article at this link: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/reject-authoritarian-rule-and-the-idolatry-of-worshiping-nationalism**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/reject-authoritarian-rule-and-the-idolatry-of-worshiping-nationalism)

Glen is concerned that to a frightening extent, the religious right wing has taken over our nation’s government.

Worse yet, many conservative Christians are absolutely devoted to Trump with an almost-religious devotion. They believe God has appointed Trump to force our nation to do what they see as God’s will. Even though Trump is morally reprehensible in many ways – a chronic liar, a chronic cheater and fraudster, a chronic abuser of women, perpetually corrupt, and so forth – they compare him to Cyrus the Great, the Persian emperor who conquered Babylon and helped the Jews even though he was not a believer of the Jewish faith.

The article at this link provides a very profound critique of Trumpism and our nation’s current crisis: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/american-anomie-chris-hedges-thoughtful-article-about-some-aspects-of-our-current-crisis**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/american-anomie-chris-hedges-thoughtful-article-about-some-aspects-of-our-current-crisis)

The article at this link provides insights into fundamentalist Christians’ support for Trump: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/insights-into-fundamentalist-christians-support-for-trump**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/insights-into-fundamentalist-christians-support-for-trump)

This article is about some evangelical Christians who have sold their souls to Trump: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/insights-into-evangelical-christians-who-sold-their-souls-to-trump**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/insights-into-evangelical-christians-who-sold-their-souls-to-trump)

Although Trump does not read much, he did read about how Hitler gained power. The article at this link reports on the truly alarming similarities between Trump and Hitler’s strategies for grabbing power: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/truly-alarming-comparisons-between-how-trump-and-hitler-gained-power**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/truly-alarming-comparisons-between-how-trump-and-hitler-gained-power)

In 1934 Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s sermon on II Corinthians 12:9 could be summarized thus: Christianity stands or falls with its revolutionary protest against violence, arbitrariness, and pride of power and with its plea for the weak. Christians are doing too little to make these points clear rather than too much. Christendom adjusts itself far too easily to the worship of power. Christians should give more offense, shock the world far more, than they are doing now. Christians should take a stronger stand in favor of the weak rather than considering first the possible right of the strong.

One of the guests had previously pointed out that the document we were discussing has six points that are formatted similarly to the points in the Barmen Declaration. They **reject** some things and **affirm** the opposite. You can search the internet for information about the Barmen Declaration. Here is one source of information: [**https://www.britannica.com/topic/Barmen-Declaration**](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Barmen-Declaration)

Before we taped this program, one guest said Billy Graham’s son Franklin Graham has deviated from Billy’s message. Franklin Graham’s message is “dark and sinister.” The evangelical right used to talk about following Jesus. Now they cherry-pick a few verses from the Bible but totally neglect the authentic Jesus in the world. They portray God as angry and ignore the Jesus who is loving and compassionate and caring.

**Point #6:
WE BELIEVE Jesus when he tells us to go into all nations making disciples. (Matthew 28:18)**

The SIXTH POINT in the “Reclaiming Jesus” document recognizes that “[o]ur churches and our nations are part of an international community whose interests always surpass national boundaries.” Pastor Young explained that “one of the greatest commandments in scripture is to love one another – and there is no hierarchy in God’s love of us. We are to love as we are loved. That eliminates distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them.’ We are not to draw lines between who’s in and who’s out. So the notion of ‘America first,’ for example, really runs counter to our understanding of our faith and the way we should function in the world.”

Glen affirmed, “This is not just your political agenda; this is really the Christian message.” He said this sixth point relates to the statement’s first and second points too: no racism, no hierarchy, etc. This pertains to the international level. He quoted a great bumper sticker: “God bless the whole world – no exceptions.”

Pastor Young said, “God is in the world-loving business, not the America-loving business.”

Glen said otherwise we end up with idolatry, the worship of the nation-state. He said some people want to make this “a Christian nation,” but “Actually, the national religion seems to be nationalism – and that’s just flat-out idolatry.”

Pastor Young remembered the statement that “when we confuse our theology with our political ideology we mess up both of them.”

Glen agreed with her that it is “very much entrenched in American culture,” and it is especially entrenched in some parts of the conservative political community and the conservative religious community.

Dr. Wee said that the U.S. has a centuries-long self-concept of our nation’s destiny and being “a city on a hill” and “a light to the world.” He quoted an early American from the 1600s and said the intention was that we should set an example for the world, but throughout U.S. history people have exploited those kinds of terms to justify, for example, President McKinley’s seizing foreign territories in the 1898 Spanish-American War because of the assumption that the U.S. is morally superior and entitled to exert power over other parts of the world. He said, “This is idolatry – flat-out idolatry.”

He said when you discuss these matters with people on the street, they’ll talk about what is “in the national interest.” But he said “the national interest” must be “subservient to the interests of the whole – the common good – the good of the world community.” He urged supporting “the United Nations and the other international mechanisms much more than we do.”

Glen said Trump is doing the opposite of what Dr. Wee was encouraging. Trump bailed out of the Paris Climate Agreement, the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with Russia, and other international agreements that make the world more safe and fair. He said, “The United States is the ONLY nation in the world that is not part of the Paris Climate Agreement.” We were a part of it but Trump pulled us out of it. “Trump has been canceling treaties that protect us from nuclear war.” The INF treaty had been working well since Reagan and Gorbachev signed it in 1987. Glen said that “in case after case after case,” Trump is rebuffing other nations and forcing the U.S. to “go it alone” instead of being a responsible member of the world community. He called Trump’s behavior “arrogance” and showing “a sense of entitlement” that is actually very dangerous. It violates Pastor Young’s call for us to recognize that in the world community we are all in this together.

Pastor Lundborg noted that the term “globalization” has recently taken on a negative connotation. Perhaps this negativity comes from global financial dealings, he said, but he affirmed that “knowing people from other countries – other cultures – is an enriching experience.” We are all part of the world out there.

Dr. Wee said, “Sometimes ‘globalization’ means we will use our neoliberal economic system to control the globe.”

We did not have time to include two additional ideas that are relevant to this part of our conversation:

The sixth point explicitly rejects “America first” and calls it “a theological heresy for followers of Christ.” This point says “[w]e reject domination rather than stewardship of the earth’s resources” and calls for sharing with all people.

Christian Zionism has been driving U.S. foreign policy for several decades – and increasingly so, especially with Trump more than previous presidents. The right wing of the Church has been driving this. For decades the U.S. has interfered with efforts to hold Israel’s government for horrible human rights abuses and horrible violations of international law.

**Separation of Church and State:**

Glen said the point we discussed just now raises the issue of the separation of Church and State. The U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment protects complete impartiality in religious matters. The Constitution’s First Amendment protects people’s religions and the government from hurting each other. Government must not show preference for religion, and religion should not try to control government, but this “separation of Church and State” is being trampled upon now. He said that when we were preparing for this interview, all three guests had expressed concerns about protecting our society from religious domination of our government.

Glen expressed appreciation for a 75-year-old non-profit organization, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State: [**www.au.org**](http://www.au.org) Americans United has been educating the public, working at local governmental levels, working through the courts, and working hard and effectively to protect religion and government from abusing each other.

Pastor Young said, “The Church is to be neither the master nor the servant of the State, the governing body, but rather the conscience.” She said she is Presbyterian and is proud that in earlier days Presbyterians were known as “troublers of government.”

Glen said the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said what Pastor Young said just now. King’s words were: “The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state.”

Dr. Wee added that if religion is to be the conscience, we must interact, so that’s not strictly a “wall” of separation. He said you speak to government, and Glen added, “But you don’t run it.” Dr. Wee said we can partner with government in some ways. For example, the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) has done good work for eighty years. He suggested “institutional separation but functional interaction.” He said the First Amendment requires institutional separation, but we interact with the state at many points.

We did not have time to include some additional ideas that Glen could have offered for this part of our conversation:

The “Reclaiming Jesus” article says, “When politics undermines our theology, we must examine that politics.”

Glen is concerned that the religious right wing has far too much power over our nation’s government. We must not let the right wing turn the U.S. into a theocracy.

Our nation’s governance is in a severe crisis now, partly because people are not behaving with civility and are not listening well enough to other people. This lack of civility has allowed hatred and fear to become serious problems.

Glen’s blog offers these information sources:

Prayers sponsored by governments or schools actually undermine authentic religion! [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/prayers-sponsored-by-governments-or-schools-undermine-authentic-religion**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/prayers-sponsored-by-governments-or-schools-undermine-authentic-religion)

Republicans and the Religious Right want to impose their theocracy upon the U.S. [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/republicans-and-the-religious-right-want-to-impose-their-theocracy-upon-the-u-s**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/republicans-and-the-religious-right-want-to-impose-their-theocracy-upon-the-u-s)

Right-wing Christianity merged with the Republican Party and is hurting America. See this [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/right-wing-christianity-merged-with-the-republican-party-and-is-hurting-america**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/right-wing-christianity-merged-with-the-republican-party-and-is-hurting-america) and see this [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/conservative-christianitys-merger-with-republican-party-hurt-both-of-them-and-our-entire-nation**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/conservative-christianitys-merger-with-republican-party-hurt-both-of-them-and-our-entire-nation)

Militarism is the U.S.’s national religion! [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/militarism-is-the-u-s-s-national-religion**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/militarism-is-the-u-s-s-national-religion)

Few Americans know Constitution prohibits religious litmus tests for officeholders. [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/few-americans-know-constitution-prohibits-religious-litmus-tests-for-officeholders**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/few-americans-know-constitution-prohibits-religious-litmus-tests-for-officeholders)

Trump appointed William Barr to be Attorney General, but Barr wants to impose “God’s Law” upon America. That’s UNCONSTITUTIONAL! [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/trumps-nominee-for-attorney-general-wants-to-impose-gods-law-upon-america-thats-unconstitutional**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/trumps-nominee-for-attorney-general-wants-to-impose-gods-law-upon-america-thats-unconstitutional)

See the blog post titled, “A minister, a priest and a rabbi walked into a bar …” at [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/a-minister-a-priest-and-a-rabbi-walked-into-a-bar**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/a-minister-a-priest-and-a-rabbi-walked-into-a-bar)

Politics can be a source of disagreement, but we must make it possible to talk politics in civil ways, not just avoid talking about politics.

See more information at the “Religion” part of Glen’s blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)

**Jesus’ message actually was quite radical:**

Glen said that he keeps finding that Jesus’ actual message was very radical – and very, very different from the message that many conservative Christians put forth. When Jesus proclaimed the “Kingdom of God,” he was NOT calling for a theocracy. He was **not** urging any one religion to dominate the nation.

Glen said that instead of that heavy-handed domination, Jesus’ call for the “Kingdom of God” was urging us to create the kind of society that would practice God’s best values. Jesus kept showing how God urges love and compassion for all people, fairness and equality throughout our society and our economy, forgiveness and reconciliation, and so forth. Jesus taught that we create this nonviolently, not by military violence.

Glen said that is how he understands Jesus’ invitation for us to join the “Kingdom of God.” He said he liked something one of our guests had said just before we started taping: a reference to the “kin-dom” of God. We’re all in this together. That’s very different from wanting one religion to dominate the government. Jesus was calling upon us to live in society in ways that practice God’s best values, such as love, compassion, fairness, inclusiveness, egalitarianism, forgiveness, and reconciliation. We need to practice these best values throughout our society, our economy, and all areas of life.

Pastor Lundborg said “kingdom” is a poor choice of words nowadays because it creates the image of a hierarchical “top-down” system of power. He said really we should think of a community – a relational thing – “the realm of God,” rather than a structural entity. He said the writers of the “Reclaiming Jesus” document disagree with the Evangelical Right, because the Religious Right sees themselves as controlling what the President and the government should do. This is “a very different approach.”

Glen agreed with Pastor Lundborg that that was **not** what Jesus was doing. Jesus was promoting “a liberation movement. He was showing the power of love and egalitarianism. He broke down barriers. He lived in a society where there was discrimination against women, discrimination against children, poor people, people with disabilities, and foreigners. He kept breaking down all those barriers. He kept welcoming people in with egalitarian oneness. That’s what it’s about! That’s the realm of God.”

Pastor Young said she is concerned that so many people hear only the conservative Right Wing of the Church, so they think that’s what Christianity is about. She tells them that’s not what Christianity really is about. So then people say, “Then where are your voices?” She said lifting up the authentic voices is what she and others are trying to do right now.

Glen said he believes “ordinary people have better sense than the voices on TV that are loud and the voices in the government that are loud.” He said a larger portion of our population – whether in the Church or not in the Church – or in other faiths, as well – have this more compassionate and egalitarian sense. He said, “A large portion of the Church has been hijacked and significant parts of our government have been hijacked by people who do not share these values.”

He quoted Muriel Lester, a great British Christian pacifist from long ago, who stated:

**“O**ur job as peacemakers is to stop war, to purify the world, to get it saved from poverty and riches, to make people like each other, to heal the sick, and comfort the sad, to wake up those who have not yet found God, to create joy and beauty wherever we go, to find God in everything and in everyone... To disarm – not only our bodies by refusing to kill, or make killing instruments in munitions factories – but also to disarm our minds of anger, pride, envy, hate and malice...”

Glen said he will post to his blog many links to additional resources that build upon what we are saying during this hour. These links will be part of the thorough summary of what we said on TV. [*You are reading that thorough summary now*.] It will be at the “TV Programs” part and the “Religion” part of [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org) The blog post will allow anyone anywhere at any time to watch this interview and/or read the thorough summary.

If we had had time during the interview, Glen would have wanted to add this to this part of our conversation:

Jesus’ teachings were revolutionary in that they wanted to turn the world upside down. His Sermon on the Mount was an example, and before that, Mary’s “Magnificat” celebrated God’s upside-down reordering of society. Jesus’ execution shows what can happen when you challenge powerful political and religious power structures. His resurrection showed the power of faith, nonviolence and community in defying death and triumphing over death.

The Religious Right seems not to recognize God’s grace. Jesus said God makes the rain fall on the just and the unjust. Galatians 3:28 says, “In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female.” If that book of the Bible were being written nowadays it would add, “neither straight nor gay.”

The Early Church was totally pacifist until after 300 A.D. People practiced communal economics by pooling their resources, sharing with people in need, and so forth.

**Christian nonviolence:**

We did not have time to include the specific topic of Christian nonviolence and some additional ideas that Glen could have offered:

Many Christians see nonviolence as an inherent and necessary part of authentic Christianity based on Jesus’ teaching and ministry, and the experience of the Early Church. Some Christians were executed for refusing to participate in the military. There is no evidence of any Christians joining the military until many, many years after the Church had become established.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote:

“The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate.... Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness can not drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate can not drive out hate; only love can do that.”

See these additional resources related to nonviolence:

“A Solid Case for Nonviolence as Ethical, Practical and Powerful” -- [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/a-solid-case-for-nonviolence-as-ethical-practical-and-powerful**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/a-solid-case-for-nonviolence-as-ethical-practical-and-powerful)

“Profound Nonviolence for a Truly Just Society” -- [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/profound-nonviolence-for-a-truly-just-society**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/profound-nonviolence-for-a-truly-just-society)

“Christianity and War” -- [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/christianity-and-war-see-this-interesting-article**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/christianity-and-war-see-this-interesting-article)

Although Mohandas Gandhi (the Mahatma) was Hindu, not Christian, his nonviolence has been adopted by people of other faiths. One person summarized his commitment to nonviolence in the “Soul Force Vows” that are posted here: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/gandhis-soul-force-vows**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/gandhis-soul-force-vows)

Grace is a crucial part of the nonviolent society we need to create. Wendell Berry wrote: “Rats and roaches live by competition under the law of supply and demand. It is the privilege of human beings to live under the laws of justice and mercy.”

**Liberation Theology:**

Glen said our conversation thus far has made several points that are relevant to Liberation Theology, the movement from Christians in Northeastern Brazil and Central America that has affirmed that God wants to liberate us from oppression and injustice – and God also wants to liberate our faith from some constraints. Liberation Theology is grounded in a fresh, grace-filled, and grassroots way of understanding and practicing our faith. It relates well to the issues we have discussed, but because it stretches further it is worth exploring a bit now.

Dr. Wee agreed that it is relevant to our conversation. He said it goes back to the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s. The Church said all people have dignity, so nobody should be poor or hungry, and it called on people to be free. It said we should think about sin not as a matter of personal misbehavior but rather in the systems and structures of how we run politics and economics.

He said that when bishops in Pueblo and Medellín and Brazil grappled with the Second Vatican Council’s conclusions, they took seriously what it meant for their people and their faith. “Christian base communities” formed to take meaningful actions, and women took leadership roles. He experienced Liberation Theology in practice first-hand when he lived in Brazil and Central America. He said the lay-led “base communities” drew upon their understanding of the Bible and applied the Bible and their faith to help them understand, for example, why their drinking water supplies were so foul. They took action, but this was dangerous, so many of the lay catechists were killed in Guatemala and El Salvador.

He said Dom Helder Camara, the Roman Catholic Archbishop from Recife, Brazil, famously said, “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.” Dr. Wee said the Archbishop “was dealing with the root causes within the system, and once you touch the system of privilege and power you are automatically branded.”

Pastor Young added, “We tend to let our institutions do our sinning for us.”

Glen said that Liberation Theology “seems to relate to the larger scope of what we’re talking about here.” Dr. Wee said that in Latin America “people suddenly realized that we can be what we are called to be: free people.”

Liberation theology is a faithful way to challenge the status quo. It provides a religious critique of the dominant system. Read some insightful articles about liberation aspects of Christianity at this post on Glen’s blog: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/insightful-articles-about-liberation-aspects-of-christianity**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/insightful-articles-about-liberation-aspects-of-christianity)

Glen mentioned that a great quotation that emerged in several movements in recent decades is relevant to our conversation: “Another world is possible!” People have realized that “we are not locked into the status quo.”

He invited Pastor Young to share some words she brought that really pertain to this topic we are discussing here. She said they are the lyrics to a song in many hymnals to the famous tune of Sibelius’s “Finlandia.”

This is my song, O God of all the nations –

A song of peace for lands afar and mine.

This is my home – the country where my heart is.

Here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine.

But other hearts in other lands are beating

With hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.

This country’s skies are bluer than the oceans.

The sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine.

But other lands have sunlight too and clover.

And skies are everywhere as blue as mine.

So hear my song, O God of all the nations –

A song of peace for their land and for mine.Glen expressed appreciation for this song’s “egalitarian inclusiveness – the oneness of the human family, and the affirmation that we’re all in this together.” He said these themes are rooted in our conversation’s core values.

He said we did not have time to add other information that we wanted to include if we had had the time, so please visit Glen’s blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org), to read this information as part of the thorough summary he will write, based on our TV interview. The interview video and this thorough summary (with additional information) will be at the blog’s “TV Programs” part and the “Religion” part. [*You are reading that thorough summary now*.]

**Other faiths – and more information about stereotypes and difficulties within Christianity:**

We did not have time to include the specific topic of some other faiths suffering from the kinds of problems we are discussing here: rigid fundamentalism taking away people’s rights, religious support for nationalism that threatens peace and civility, and other cruel divisiveness and oppression in the name of various religions. Here are just a few thoughts that Glen could have offered:

During this hour we have been talking about some tensions within Christianity. Glen wants people to also recognize that some other faiths are experiencing these kinds of tensions. Some conservative factions are pulling away from their faiths’ authentic messages and provoking social and political problems. We see these played out in a number of different religions and different nations.

Karen Armstrong’s book ***The Battle for God*** is about fundamentalism in various religions. They are promoting cruel right-wing governments in many places around the world. She deals with the psychology underlying fundamentalism.

Glen believes that all of the great faiths actually share some core beliefs, including the oneness of the entire human family and the emphasis on love and compassion and peace. They express these in different ways through different scriptures and stories, but at their core they are very similar.

More than 30 Religious Peace Fellowships have been organized to create opportunities for a wide variety of different faiths to work for peace and humane values within the context of their own faith traditions, theologies, and religious bodies. Some are grounded in various Christian denominations (Lutheran Peace Fellowship, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, Baptist Peace Fellowship, and many others). Also, beyond Christianity, the Jewish Peace Fellowship, Muslim Peace Fellowship, Buddhist Peace Fellowship, and others work within their own respective faith communities. These are independent from their faiths’ formal organizational structures, but they help people within each faith tradition interact with each other and organize for good purposes within their various religious bodies. To find their names and contact information, visit [**www.forusa.org**](http://www.forusa.org), see their “Chapters and Affiliates” section at [**https://www.forusa.org/directory/**](https://www.forusa.org/directory/) and type in your denomination (*e.g*., Episcopal or Presbyterian or Jewish or Muslim or Buddhist).

You can watch one of Glen’s previous TV program episodes (“Interfaith Voices for Peace”) at this link: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-interfaith-voices-for-peace**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-interfaith-voices-for-peace) and a recent TV episode (“Spiritual and Conscientious Groundings for Doing Good Work”) at this link: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-program-spiritual-and-conscientious-groundings-for-doing-good-work**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-program-spiritual-and-conscientious-groundings-for-doing-good-work) and another TV episode (“Let’s Understand the Islamic Faith”) at this link: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-lets-understand-the-islamic-faith**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-lets-understand-the-islamic-faith)

Very often, when news media want to get a “religious” viewpoint on some political or social issue, they ask one of the prominent conservative Christians to comment. They almost never interview religious people such as the three guests on this TV program – Christians who are liberal or progressive – and they almost never interview liberal or progressive people of other faiths.

The right wing has hijacked Christianity and grossly distorted its message. They have made Christianity seem like the opposite of what it was intended to be. That gives Christianity a bad reputation, especially for people who don’t know what Christianity really is.

Some of those unbelievers – and many mainstream Christians – would enjoy hearing the message that our three guests provided during our TV interview. This better way to understand Jesus’ message is much more accurate than the mean-spirited distortions that have been promoted by the right wing.

The word “evangelical” has been misused. Literally, it pertains to supporting the “Good News,” but it has become corrupted to pertain to the Religious Right instead of affirming and supporting the actual “Good News” that our three guests have been affirming during this interview.

The right wing’s distortion of Christianity has alienated many young people away from the evangelical churches, and some conservative Christians are concerned about the harm that the right wing has been causing.

Read “The Deepening Crisis in Evangelical Christianity” on my blog at [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/the-deepening-crisis-in-evangelical-christianity**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/the-deepening-crisis-in-evangelical-christianity)

Much of this TV interview focused on the bold 6-point document about “Reclaiming Jesus.” To follow up on that, a huge number of very prominent Christian theologians and church leaders issued “A Call to Prayer, Fasting, and Action” that would move people to deeper commitment to those principles and align people with God’s will as expressed in the 6-point document. See [**www.ReclaimingJesus.org**](http://www.ReclaimingJesus.org) for information about that follow-up document and other opportunities.

The Russian historian and writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote the following quotation, titled “The Shadow in Us All.”

“If it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?”

Instead of letting conflict scare us away from politics, we need to talk politics ethically. We need God’s grace to renew our own lives so we can act responsibly.

The Church needs to take seriously our role in society. We can be a safe place of moral deliberation. Conversations need safe spaces for serious conversations, with rules for civility. Churches need to be places of moral deliberation. Religious people should take seriously our religious bodies’ role of promoting conscience so we can speak from our hearts and minds based on sound theology.

**More information:**

Commonly I list here at the end a number of links to additional sources of information, including those I had mentioned in the various topic sections above. This time, I am not listing them redundantly here at the end. Instead, I invite you to read through the sections above and click on any links you might find interesting.

**Cable TV subscribers in Thurston County WA can watch this interview three times a week during October 2019:**

* **Every Monday at 1:30 pm**
* **Every Wednesday at 5:00 pm**
* **Every Thursday at 9:00 pm.**

This video, the thorough summary you are reading now, and the summary’s links to the additional information will remain on my blog for many years into the future. Visit [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org), and see either the “TV Programs” part or the “Religion” part.

I hope people everywhere will watch this interview, read the thorough summary, and see the additional resources. I hope people will share these with their friends.

I offer a series of six workshops about how to organize nonviolent grassroots movements. Session #1 in that series of workshops includes information about nonviolence as understood by Mohandas (“the Mahatma”) Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Christian pacifists. It includes a fresh way to understand that prove Jesus was urging people to practice creative nonviolent resistance. See the fascinating explanation of a famous part of Matthew’s Gospel on pages 7-8-9 of my essay here: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/a-solid-case-for-nonviolence-as-ethical-practical-and-powerful**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/a-solid-case-for-nonviolence-as-ethical-practical-and-powerful)

For information about taking the workshops I mentioned in the paragraph above, see this: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/sign-up-now-for-6-practical-workshops-in-nonviolent-grassroots-organizing**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/sign-up-now-for-6-practical-workshops-in-nonviolent-grassroots-organizing)

Here is the VERY BEST, MOST PROFOUND critique of Trumpism & our current crisis I’ve EVER seen: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/american-anomie-chris-hedges-thoughtful-article-about-some-aspects-of-our-current-crisis**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/american-anomie-chris-hedges-thoughtful-article-about-some-aspects-of-our-current-crisis)

To Achieve Social Justice, We Must De-Polarize Our Society: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/to-achieve-social-justice-we-must-de-polarize-our-society-2**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/to-achieve-social-justice-we-must-de-polarize-our-society-2)

Also, you can see more articles at the “Religion” part of Glen’s blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org).

**I will post a few more articles to my blog by mid-October, and then I will update this thorough summary by inserting those links.**

**Glen’s closing encouragement**

Glen thanked our guests:

* **Rev. Dr. Paul Wee**
* **Rev. Melody Young**
* **Rev. Paul Lundborg**

He also thanked the people who have been watching.

He said human beings care about the world around us, and we care about our place in the world. Many people – but not all – understand the world through religious beliefs and/or through various kinds of spiritual values. These help us interact with the world. Our religious and spiritual values should help us promote a humane and civilized society.

Sometimes human institutions go haywire. Let’s pay attention, ground ourselves in our best values, and solve the problems.

The interview you have watched – and the resources I’ve posted to my blog – will help us do that.

You can get information about a wide variety of issues related to peace, social justice and nonviolence through my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)or by phoning me at
(360) 491-9093 or e-mailing me at **glenanderson@integra.net**

I end each TV program with this encouragement:

**We're all one human family, and we all share one planet.**

**We can create a better world, but we all have to work at it.**

**The world needs whatever you can do to help!**