

Introduction: What is and what is not (2020)

Why do we need another journal, whatever its good intention, or whatever its position in the plethora of online and print, self-help books and courses by a host of prophets for whom the media is the message and disclosure of personal lives is kept secret? Do we believe what the modern prophets say? Because they have not disclosed a lived-experience that bears witness to real people in real time as real human beings without lights and cameras and without makeup.

Masterpeace Journal does not advocate a bucolic return to romanticism of the past. The past is gone and the only lesson of history is that we usually do not learn from our mistakes; to wit an extensive timeline of history that has been drenched to saturation in the blood of innocents. Not that *Masterpeace Journal* is the advocate of a mere rant against the present. But some poignant truths about *what is* and *what is not* need to be stated once again and with conviction.

Everyone says "Follow Me" on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, *et al*, but to where?

"To a black hole," I say, "and that black hole looks familiar when I examine the course of history." History posits a clear diagnosis of our so-called enlightened modern culture. Humankind is:

- Materially enslaved
- Economically deceived
- Technologically bamboozled
- Religiously doctrinal
- Philosophically abstract
- Culturally divisive
- Artistically void
- Spiritually confused
- Socially misinformed

"What? Me?" proclaims the pessimist-sceptic who says there is no God but does not understand that in order *not* to believe in God there must be a God *not to believe in*. No wonder the pessimist-sceptic is confused. It's like the mountaineer who says, "That is not an avalanche thundering down upon me."

Yet, if asked whether it is possible to reduce all of mankind's woes to a simple proposition, my answer is yes. I would, however, be quick to add that such an answer is about a thousand pages long, and that may be a very conservative estimate.

My proposition is that mankind's woes can be stated in two words, they are: the woe of *identity* and the woe of *communication*.

That should not come as a surprise. We all know what is meant by "identity theft," and "failure to communicate." After forty years (and counting) of counseling, mentoring, and teaching, I can say with confidence that these two woes are the most common of all laments in the disintegration of relationships, be they family, marriage, friends, employers, employees, teachers, students, pastors and priests and their congregations, whatever their stripe, politicians and voters, and so on up the ladder of perceived social significance.

Therefore it is imperative to abandon the positive yes-only worldview of material mandarins and examine carefully *what is* and *what is not*. Evil cannot be pushed away by positive self-talk, nor can crime, brutality, abuse, addiction, and every other

syndrome or dysfunction be subsumed under the crushing plate of mental disorder to be relegated to maladies of the mind but not the consequence of mankind's fallen state.

Worship at the altar of facts and celebration at the altar of unbelief are not doomsday scenarios that in the end signify nothing.

One of my professors said, "You gotta get out more." But, he was speaking of himself, imprisoned in a windowless lecture room not knowing whether it was sunshine or rain outside. I replied, "It's where I live – out there."

John Gould, one of Canada's renowned drawing masters, said that I must at all times, "remember to draw among real people in real time." Over a period of fifteen years I filled twenty sketchbooks (3000 pages) of coffeeshop people in real time.

It's amazing the conversations I have overheard during those years.

Most were concerned about their place in life (identity) wondering if they really mattered to the healthcare system and to politicians. And they swallowed what was being said in broadcast, print, and internet media, to which they usually added their own opinionated footnotes of bitterness and anger because they knew instinctively they were not being heard anyways (communication). So, might as well spill it a coffeeshop.

Having said that, the reader may think I am a died-in-the-wool pessimist whose rejection is showing for all to see. Nor am I an anarchist, a narcissist, secessionist, fundamentalist, or existentialist. Such is not the case. I am an optimist with occasional bouts of criticism and judgement because being "out there" among real people in real time can be more than overwhelming; it can be very stressful. In fact, I am a Christ-*ist*, that is, Christ-*ian*, known simply as Christian meaning follower of Christ.

The evidence of my optimism is my art. I do not rail with paint and canvas and with pencil and paper against governments, corporations, and social injustice. I embrace the beauty of holiness and the holiness of beauty. There is a separateness that is holy, away from the real or instigated ravages of life. With pencil and paper I have chosen to live where such beauty of holiness is self-evident, be it in a rainforest, on an ocean beach, at the foot of a snow-capped mountain, surrounded by the love of children and faithful friends, and filled with a peace that surpasses all understanding.

The evidence is also my spirituality, both private and public, one not contrary to the other but a mirror of the other, and neither a secret. Mine is an open-book theology, not closed doors.

When I included in my search for meaning a detailed inquiry into where everything had gone wrong, the outcome was of great help because it took the blinds from the window to let sunlight expose the depth of our shortcomings, mine included. It was not a myth or a misrepresented doctrine of sin.

Our present day circumstances of stolen identities and misinformed communication and are not accidental or happenstance. They are consequential. We reap what we sow and often we have no idea what we are sowing. And it is critical thought that will enable us to see the effects of sowing and reaping.

Therefore, *Masterpeace Journal* is a journal of critical thought in art and spirituality. It embodies a learning experience through an awakening of the *Spiritwind* to change one's life to what it was meant to be: inner peace and joy, and empowerment by following the Spirit within, along a path of mentorship. Mentorship comprises Christ-centered content published in the pages of the journal as a basis for qualitative study and practices towards an outcome of inner change and outer evidence of such change.

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