

OPEN CHRISTIAN PRESS

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE AGE

Exposing Modern Deceptions, Counterfeit Christianity, and the Church's Captivity to the Spirit of the Age

PART I

THE SPIRIT AND INTELLECTUAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE AGE

CHAPTER I

The Gospel According to the Age

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First Open Christian Press edition, 2026

Open Christian Press, an Open Christian University imprint

books.openchristian.education

CHAPTER PUBLICATION METADATA

Abstract

This chapter establishes the controlling thesis of the book: modernism, understood as a worldview rather than a mere historical period or the use of modern technology, transfers final authority from God and His revelation to autonomous humanity and thereby functions as a rival gospel. Through biblical exegesis of Genesis 3, Romans 1 and 12, Colossians 2, 2 Timothy 3-4, Matthew 24, 2 Thessalonians 2, Ephesians 6, Hebrews 4, and Jude, the chapter distinguishes legitimate modernisation from philosophical modernism, identifies the counterfeit doctrines of autonomous reason, self-created identity, therapeutic salvation, political redemption, technological transcendence, and progress without providence, and examines their infiltration into church language and practice. It engages the strongest defence of modernity by acknowledging genuine gains in science, medicine, rights protection, education, and communication, while showing that achievement in these domains does not establish moral or theological autonomy. The chapter concludes with differentiated pastoral appeals and a call to repentance, discernment, holiness, faithful witness, and readiness for Christ's return.

Keywords: modernism; spirit of the age; counterfeit gospel; biblical authority; autonomous self; church and culture; Christian discernment

Publication details

Book: The Gospel According to the Age: Exposing Modern Deceptions, Counterfeit Christianity, and the Church's Captivity to the Spirit of the Age

Chapter: Chapter 1: The Gospel According to the Age

Author: Prof. Sixbert SANGWA

Book editor: Prof. Dr. Placide Mutabazi

Publisher: Open Christian Press, an Open Christian University imprint

Edition: First edition

Publication year: 2026

Language: English

Suggested citation

Sangwa, S. (2026). The gospel according to the age. In P. Mutabazi (Ed.), *The Gospel According to the Age: Exposing Modern Deceptions, Counterfeit Christianity, and the Church's Captivity to the Spirit of the Age* (Chapter 1). Open Christian Press.

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Publisher: books.openchristian.education | editor@openchristian.education

When an Age Begins to Preach

A society does not cease to be religious merely because it removes the name of God from its schools, courts, laboratories, entertainment, or public ceremonies. It may simply transfer sacred authority elsewhere. Every civilisation has a highest truth, a vision of the good life, an account of what has gone wrong, a promise of deliverance, and a picture of the future toward which humanity should move. These are not minor cultural preferences. They are the building blocks of a gospel.

The modern age has not merely criticised Christianity. It has constructed rival answers to the questions Christianity answers. It tells us what a human being is, where dignity comes from, what freedom means, which desires deserve obedience, what counts as harm, who may define justice, how suffering should be interpreted, and where salvation is to be found. Its priests may wear academic robes, laboratory coats, judicial gowns, corporate badges, entertainment costumes, political colours, or clerical collars. Its pulpits may be universities, platforms, screens, courts, conferences, advertising systems, or churches that still display a cross while quietly preaching another creed.

The gravest danger is therefore not that the world speaks openly against the gospel. Open opposition can at least be recognised. The greater danger comes when the age enters the sanctuary, borrows Christian language, and alters the meaning of the words. Love is detached from truth and reduced to affirmation. Freedom is separated from righteousness and made to mean autonomy. Justice is severed from divine judgment and absorbed into ideological conformity. Dignity is removed from creation in God's image and grounded in self-definition. Inclusion is exalted above holiness. Therapy replaces repentance. Success replaces faithfulness. Entertainment replaces worship. Technological progress begins to carry the hope once placed in resurrection and the kingdom of God.

The building may still be called a church. The songs may mention Jesus. The preacher may quote a verse. Yet if the self remains on the throne, desire remains the interpreter, cultural approval remains the reward, and the cross is emptied of its demand for repentance and self-denial, the vocabulary is Christian while the gospel is not.

This chapter names that counterfeit. It does not claim that every modern institution, discovery, reform, or technology is evil. It does not romanticise every past society, excuse abuses committed under religious authority, or oppose science, medicine, education, lawful rights, communication, or responsible social progress. The question is not whether something is old or new. The question is whether it remains beneath the authority of the Creator.

The controlling thesis of this book is that modernism, understood as a worldview rather than a calendar period, transfers final authority from God and His revelation to autonomous humanity. It increasingly functions as a rival religion with its own doctrines of truth, humanity, identity, morality, sin, salvation, worship, justice, community, and the future. Postmodernism often attacks modernity's confidence in universal reason, but it commonly retains modernity's deeper revolt against divine authority. Digital culture accelerates both impulses by giving the sovereign self tools to curate reality, perform identity, seek affirmation, and outsource judgment to systems designed by other people.

The gospel according to the age is therefore not one doctrine but an architecture. Its foundation is autonomy. Its sanctuary is the self. Its sacrament is self-expression. Its moral law is consent shaped by prevailing definitions of harm. Its confession is authenticity. Its justification is victimhood, achievement, or psychological wellbeing. Its eschatology is progress. Its heaven is a world without creaturely limits. Its hell is exclusion, discomfort, disapproval, or any boundary that contradicts desire.

The true gospel begins elsewhere. God is Creator, not a projection of human need. Truth is received before it is revised. Humanity bears dignity because it is made in God's image, yet humanity is fallen and accountable. Sin is not merely ignorance, repression, inequality, trauma, or social exclusion, though these may be real dimensions of suffering. Sin is rebellion against God. Salvation is not self-discovery, political liberation, therapeutic integration, material success, or technological enhancement. It is reconciliation with God through the death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, received by grace through faith, accompanied by repentance, regeneration, sanctification, obedience, and hope in Christ's return.

The contrast could hardly be more serious. One gospel tells the creature to return to the Creator. The other teaches the creature to correct Him.

What Is "The Gospel According to the Age"?

The phrase "the gospel according to the age" is deliberately paradoxical. The biblical gospel is God's announcement of what He has accomplished in Christ. The age's counterfeit gospel is humanity's announcement that it can define itself, heal itself, justify itself, and secure its future without submitting to God. It is "gospel" only in the sociological sense that it announces good news, identifies enemies, promises liberation, forms communities, disciplines dissenters, and offers a vision of human fulfilment.

Its message may be summarised in this way: You are not fundamentally a creature who must receive identity, moral order, and salvation from God. You are

an autonomous self whose deepest task is to discover, express, protect, and fulfil the desires that define you. Institutions, traditions, bodies, doctrines, and relationships are good insofar as they affirm this project and oppressive insofar as they restrain it. Human intelligence, political action, psychological technique, economic development, and technology can progressively overcome suffering, ignorance, inequality, dependence, and perhaps even death.

This message appears in different forms. Secular humanism states it without supernaturalism. Consumer culture sells it as lifestyle. Therapeutic culture translates it into wellbeing. Political ideologies frame it as liberation. Technological futurism presents it as enhancement. Religious liberalism baptises it with selected Christian language. Commercialised Christianity turns it into success, influence, health, wealth, spectacle, and personal destiny.

Not every person who uses modern language consciously embraces the whole system. Many people inherit fragments of it without recognising their source. A wounded person who longs for safety is not necessarily a philosopher of autonomy. A young believer confused by cultural pressure is not identical to a teacher who deliberately revises Scripture. A scholar who values critical inquiry is not necessarily a rationalist. A physician who employs modern medicine is not thereby a materialist. A government that protects citizens from abuse is not automatically practising political idolatry. Moral discernment requires distinctions.

Nevertheless, ideas have consequences even when their users cannot name them. A compass may be miscalibrated long before the traveller realises that every direction points inward. When the self becomes the final court of appeal, doctrines are eventually judged by how well they serve identity, desire, safety, recognition, or social belonging. God is no longer worshipped as Lord. He is retained as a spiritual resource.

This diagnosis extends earlier arguments in the author's work. In *When the Mirror Becomes a Throne*, the modern language of self-esteem, confidence, and self-awareness was distinguished from lawful self-knowledge under God and criticised when it becomes a catechism of autonomy, with the self acting as author, judge, and saviour (Sangwa, 2026a). In *When the Serpent Learns to Whisper Wellness*, New Age spirituality was described as a rival gospel that replaces repentance with awakening, sin with misalignment, and the cross with technique (Sangwa, 2026b). Those are not isolated errors. They are manifestations of the same deeper transfer of authority.

The expression "the age" is equally important. Scripture does not teach that matter, culture, institutions, work, or embodied life are inherently evil. God made creation good. Christ entered history in a real body. The risen Lord will renew creation. The biblical contrast is not between spiritual life and ordinary life, nor between ancient customs and modern tools. It is between the present

order organised in rebellion against God and the coming kingdom already inaugurated in Christ.

The church therefore lives in tension. It inhabits societies, languages, economies, institutions, technologies, and political arrangements, yet it must not receive its ultimate identity from them. It may learn, invent, heal, teach, govern, build, communicate, and cooperate for genuine goods. It must also test every claim, reject idolatrous assumptions, expose counterfeit salvation, and refuse to call darkness light.

The issue is allegiance.

“This Age” in Biblical Perspective

The Present Age and the Coming Kingdom

The New Testament frequently distinguishes “this age” from the age to come. The present age is marked by sin, death, deception, hostility to God, and spiritual blindness. The age to come is the reign of God in its unveiled fullness, already breaking into history through Christ’s incarnation, atoning death, resurrection, exaltation, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Believers have tasted “the powers of the age to come” ([Hebrews 6:5](#)), yet they still live amid the pressures of the present order.

This framework prevents two errors. The first is accommodation, as though the moral consensus of contemporary society were the voice of God. The second is escapist contempt for creation, as though faithfulness required withdrawal from learning, work, medicine, public responsibility, or cultural life. Christians belong to the coming kingdom while serving faithfully in the present world. Their calling is neither imitation nor abandonment, but holy witness.

Paul calls Satan “the god of this age” who blinds unbelieving minds ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#)). This does not grant Satan divine equality or legitimate sovereignty. It describes the usurping influence exercised through lies, idolatry, accusation, temptation, and systems of rebellion. Christ has already triumphed over rulers and authorities through the cross ([Colossians 2:15](#)). Yet the defeated enemy continues to deceive until final judgment.

The phrase “the world” likewise carries several meanings in Scripture. It may refer to the created order that God loves, the people among whom the gospel is preached, or the organised moral system that resists Him. In [1 John 2:15–17](#), believers are commanded not to love “the world” in the sense of desires and pride arranged against the Father. The “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s possessions” are not merely private vices. They are the inner engines of cultures, economies, entertainment systems, political ambitions, and

religious institutions. John's conclusion is eschatological: the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.

The church's resistance to the age is therefore not based on fear that Christianity will become unfashionable. It is based on the fact that the age is temporary, morally disordered, and under judgment. What appears permanent will pass. What appears weak, including obedience, holiness, truthfulness, and patient suffering, belongs to the kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Eden as the First Counterfeit Gospel

The spiritual grammar of the counterfeit gospel appears in [Genesis 3:1–6](#). The serpent does not begin by commanding Eve to become an atheist. He begins by destabilising confidence in God's Word: "Did God really say?" He then misrepresents the divine command, portrays God's boundary as deprivation, denies judgment, promises enlightenment, and invites humanity to seize moral autonomy: "you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The temptation is not simply to acquire information. Adam and Eve were already moral creatures receiving God's good commands. The temptation is to possess the authority to determine good and evil independently of God. The fruit becomes attractive after the interpretation of God changes. The Creator is recast as restrictive. The boundary becomes oppression. Desire is elevated as evidence. Consequences are minimised. Self-exaltation is sold as maturity.

This pattern remains spiritually ancient even when its language becomes technologically sophisticated. "Did God really say?" becomes the claim that Scripture is culturally outdated, psychologically harmful, scientifically impossible, politically dangerous, or morally inferior to contemporary insight. "You will not die" becomes the assurance that disobedience has no eternal consequence. "You will be like God" becomes the promise that humanity can author identity, redesign embodiment, establish morality, and overcome creaturely limitation.

The serpent's method is subtle because it mingles truth with falsehood. The eyes of Adam and Eve were opened, but not into sovereign freedom. They awoke to shame, fear, alienation, blame, toil, pain, and death. Counterfeit gospels rarely advertise their final harvest. They sell the first taste.

The Exchange of Authority

[Romans 1:18–32](#) provides one of Scripture's clearest accounts of cultural and moral degeneration. Paul does not describe humanity as lacking all knowledge of God. He describes truth being suppressed in unrighteousness. Creation bears witness to God's eternal power and divine nature, but fallen humanity refuses gratitude and worship. The decisive act is exchange: the glory of the immortal

God is exchanged for images, the truth of God for a lie, and the natural order for disordered desire.

The word “exchange” exposes the religious character of rebellion. Humanity does not move from worship to neutrality. It redirects worship. When the Creator is displaced, created realities carry ultimate weight. Nature, nation, race, sex, romance, health, wealth, politics, science, technology, therapy, the body, or the self may become sacred. Modern societies can be highly secular in institutional form and intensely religious in moral passion.

Paul also reveals that judgment may operate through abandonment. God “delivered them over” to desires and a corrupt mind. Divine judgment is not only a future sentence. It can be experienced when people receive what they insist upon and become unable to recognise the destruction produced by it. A culture may call captivity freedom because its moral vocabulary has already been inverted.

Yet [Romans 1](#) must not be used as a weapon of superiority. [Romans 2:1](#) immediately confronts the self-righteous judge. The biblical doctrine of sin includes the respectable, religious, conservative, educated, and powerful. The age’s errors do not excuse the church’s hypocrisy. A congregation may publicly defend traditional morality while worshipping money, power, ethnicity, titles, or political influence. Idolatry changes clothing more easily than nature.

Conformity and the Renewal of the Mind

The command of [Romans 12:1–2](#) follows Paul’s exposition of God’s mercies. Christian nonconformity is not proud contrarianism. It is worship. Believers present their bodies as living sacrifices because they have received mercy. They are told not to be conformed to this age, but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind so that they may discern God’s will.

Conformity is often gradual. It can occur before doctrine is formally denied. The church learns the age’s emotional reflexes, borrows its definitions, fears its disapproval, adopts its success metrics, and eventually rereads Scripture through assumptions already accepted. The process resembles a river shaping stone. No single drop appears decisive, yet the form changes.

Renewal is more than acquiring information. It is the reordering of perception, desire, judgment, and practice by the Word and Spirit of God. A renewed mind learns to ask not merely, “Is this popular, efficient, therapeutic, profitable, inclusive, or legal?” but “Is it true? Is it holy? Does it honour the Creator? Does it love my neighbour according to God’s definition of good? Does it prepare the church for faithful witness?”

Captive Thought and Hollow Philosophy

Paul's warning in [Colossians 2:8](#) is often misunderstood as hostility to philosophy or scholarship. He warns against being taken captive through philosophy and empty deceit "based on human tradition, based on the elements of the world, rather than Christ." The problem is not disciplined reasoning. Paul himself reasons, argues, cites, interprets, and commands believers to test claims. The danger is an intellectual system that captures the mind because its governing assumptions are not according to Christ.

Every field of knowledge rests on prior commitments about reality, truth, humanity, morality, and purpose. Some assumptions are explicit; others hide behind claims of neutrality. The secular university, for example, can produce valuable research while still forming students within accounts of knowledge and humanity that exclude divine revelation from public authority. Sangwa et al. (2026) therefore argue that secular higher education is not merely a neutral transmitter of information, but a formative environment in which truth, moral norms, identity, and belonging are continually negotiated.

The church should not fear difficult questions. It should fear captivity. Intellectual humility does not require surrendering the Lordship of Christ. It requires examining evidence honestly, acknowledging human limits, correcting error, and refusing the arrogance that treats either academic consensus or anti-establishment suspicion as infallible.

Last-Days Deception and Religious Appearance

The portrait in [2 Timothy 3:1-5](#) is not simply a catalogue of secular vice. It ends with people "holding to the form of godliness but denying its power." The danger includes religious appearance. Self-love, love of money, boastfulness, pride, brutality, lack of self-control, and love of pleasure can inhabit ministries, publishing systems, churches, conferences, and theological institutions.

Paul's charge in [2 Timothy 4:1-5](#) is therefore given before God and Christ, who will judge the living and the dead. Timothy must preach the Word, persist whether convenient or not, correct, rebuke, and encourage with patience and teaching. A time comes when people reject sound doctrine and accumulate teachers according to their own desires. The sequence matters. Desire selects doctrine. Teachers are gathered not because they speak truth, but because they protect preferred loves.

This is why theological error cannot be reduced to an intellectual mistake. Some error arises from ignorance and requires patient instruction. Some is sustained because truth threatens a profitable system, a cherished identity, an illicit relationship, a political loyalty, or a public platform. The watchman must

distinguish confusion from wilful refusal, yet he must not pretend that every disagreement is innocent.

Jesus' first warning in His discourse about the end of the age is "Watch out that no one deceives you" ([Matthew 24:4](#)). He warns of false messiahs, false prophets, lawlessness, betrayal, persecution, and impressive signs capable of leading people astray ([Matthew 24:4–14, 24](#)). The passage does not authorise panic, date-setting, or the forced identification of every headline as prophetic fulfilment. It requires enduring fidelity, gospel proclamation, and discernment when religious power and deception converge.

Likewise, [2 Thessalonians 2:1–12](#) joins lawlessness, counterfeit signs, deception, and refusal to love the truth. Paul's emphasis is moral as well as cognitive. People perish not because truth was unavailable, but because they did not welcome the love of the truth in order to be saved. The church prepares for deception not by collecting sensational rumours, but by loving truth, practising holiness, knowing Scripture, and refusing unrighteousness.

Spiritual Warfare Without Superstition

[Ephesians 6:10–20](#) locates the church's struggle beyond flesh and blood. The powers of darkness work through lies, accusation, temptation, persecution, fear, idolatry, and structures of rebellion. Yet Paul does not instruct believers to speculate endlessly about hidden agencies. He commands them to put on truth, righteousness, gospel readiness, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and persevering prayer.

Spiritual warfare is therefore neither naïve materialism nor uncontrolled suspicion. It recognises demonic deception while testing claims. It refuses to demonise human opponents, because people are not the ultimate enemy. It also refuses to excuse evil systems merely because they possess institutional prestige. The armour of God protects the church from both gullibility and cynicism.

The Word itself is "living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword" ([Hebrews 4:12–13](#)). Its sharpness first reaches the reader. It exposes thoughts and intentions, including the pride of those who imagine that discernment belongs only to detecting error in others. A sword placed in a velvet case may decorate a room, but it cannot perform its work. Scripture must be allowed to cut through progressive compromise, conservative hypocrisy, intellectual vanity, spiritual manipulation, greed, sexual sin, political idolatry, and personal self-deception.

[Jude 3–25](#) holds together doctrinal vigilance and pastoral differentiation. Believers must contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Certain people distort grace into sensuality and deny the Master. Yet Jude also commands mercy toward those who doubt, rescue for others, and fearful caution in the presence of corrupting sin. Contending is not permission for cruelty. Mercy is not

permission for doctrinal surrender. Christian love must know when to teach, when to warn, when to rebuke, when to rescue, and when to refuse participation.

Modernity, Modernisation, Modernism, Postmodernism, and Digital Culture

Clarity requires separating terms that are often confused. Without these distinctions, criticism of modernism can sound like hostility to electricity, hospitals, universities, constitutional government, or communication technology. Such confusion weakens the argument and burdens Scripture with claims it does not make.

Modernity as a Historical Condition

Modernity commonly refers to the social and historical conditions associated with the rise of industrialisation, urbanisation, bureaucratic states, market economies, mass education, modern science, expanded communication, individual rights, and new forms of political participation. It is not one unified doctrine. Modern societies contain competing philosophies, religious traditions, legal systems, political movements, and moral visions.

Modernity has altered the conditions under which belief and unbelief are experienced. Taylor (2007) describes a secular age not simply as an age in which religious belief disappears, but as one in which belief becomes one option among others and is continually experienced under the pressure of alternatives. A believer may still worship, but he does so in a cultural environment where faith must be chosen, explained, and defended within institutions that often treat supernatural claims as private convictions rather than public knowledge.

This condition is neither identical everywhere nor irreversible. Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, North America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East experience modernity through different histories. Indigenous traditions, colonialism, missionary movements, nationalism, global markets, urbanisation, media, and digital platforms have produced distinct mixtures. It would therefore be careless to describe “modern society” as though every nation had travelled the same road.

Modernisation as the Development of Means

Modernisation concerns changes in infrastructure, institutions, knowledge, production, communication, healthcare, transport, education, and administration. Clean water systems, vaccination, electricity, improved agriculture, digital communication, safer construction, professional training, transparent accounting, and evidence-based medical care can serve human

flourishing. A Christian critique should evaluate them morally, but it should not condemn them merely because they are recent.

Scripture does not teach that holiness increases as technology decreases. A plough can feed a family or exploit a labourer. A printing press can distribute the Bible or propaganda. A smartphone can connect a missionary to a remote congregation or train a child in impurity. A financial system can enable responsible exchange or become an instrument of predation. Tools amplify purpose, incentives, character, and power.

Modernisation is therefore not the enemy. The governing question is whether means remain servants of truthful and righteous ends. Efficiency cannot decide what is good. Capability cannot establish permission. Scale cannot confer legitimacy. The fact that something can be engineered does not mean that it should be desired.

Modernism as an Intellectual and Moral Revolt

Modernism is used in several disciplines. In literature, art, architecture, and theology, it may refer to specific movements. This book uses the term more broadly and theologically to identify a family of assumptions that places autonomous human reason, experience, desire, or power in the position of final authority. It does not imply that every thinker usually labelled “modern” holds the same views. Nor does it deny the internal criticism, moral seriousness, or religious commitments found among modern philosophers.

The decisive issue is autonomy. In his 1784 essay on Enlightenment, Kant famously called humanity to emerge from self-incurred immaturity and to have courage to use its own understanding without another’s direction (Kant, 1784/1996). This call challenged intellectual laziness, coercive authority, and unexamined tradition. Those concerns can be legitimate. Scripture itself condemns false teachers, corrupt rulers, inherited idolatry, and human tradition that nullifies God’s command.

The problem arises when emancipation from fallible human guardians becomes emancipation from divine revelation. Reason then ceases to be a creaturely faculty accountable to truth and becomes the tribunal before which God must appear. The question changes from “How should human reason faithfully understand what God has revealed?” to “Which parts of revelation can modern reason permit?”

Secular humanism states the shift openly. *Humanism and Its Aspirations*, also known as *Humanist Manifesto III*, defines humanism as a progressive philosophy of life “without supernaturalism,” guided by reason, compassion, and experience, with ethical values subject to revision as knowledge changes (American Humanist Association, 2003). This position should be represented fairly. Many humanists sincerely seek compassion, intellectual honesty, democratic freedom,

and the common good. Yet the theological difference is fundamental. Human needs and experience become the source and test of moral value rather than the Creator's character and command.

Modernism in this broader sense is not simply confidence in reason. Christianity values reason because God is truthful and humans are made in His image. The error is autonomous reason, reason treated as self-grounding, morally sufficient, and competent to judge revelation from a position of supposed neutrality.

Postmodernism as Critique Without Return

Postmodernism emerged partly as a critique of modernity's confidence in universal reason, objective progress, neutral institutions, and comprehensive narratives. It draws attention to language, social location, historical contingency, power, exclusion, and the ways institutions define acceptable knowledge. These observations can expose real hypocrisy. Claims of neutrality have sometimes concealed cultural prejudice, colonial interests, professional self-protection, political domination, or economic advantage.

Yet postmodern critique often removes confidence in universal reason without restoring confidence in divine revelation. Truth becomes local, constructed, perspectival, or inseparable from power. The sovereign rational self of early modernity can become the sovereign expressive self of late modernity. The authority has moved, but it has not returned to God.

Modernism says that universal reason can free humanity from inherited authority. Postmodernism asks whose reason became universal and whom it excluded. Contemporary expressive culture often resolves the dispute by declaring the individual's inner experience authoritative for identity while using institutions to require social recognition of that identity. The result is a curious mixture: radical subjectivity in self-definition and strong moral absolutism in the demand for affirmation.

MacIntyre (2007) argues that modern moral discourse frequently uses fragments of older moral traditions after the coherent account of human purpose that once gave them meaning has been lost. Words such as rights, justice, dignity, freedom, equality, and authenticity remain powerful, but rival traditions fill them with incompatible content. Public argument then becomes intense because participants appear to share moral vocabulary while lacking agreement about the human good.

This is precisely how Christian words can be captured. "Love" may mean willing another person's good under God, or it may mean affirming whatever identity the person declares. "Freedom" may mean liberation from slavery to sin, or freedom from all externally given moral limits. "Justice" may mean impartial conformity to righteousness, or the redistribution of power according to an

ideology. “Dignity” may be grounded in creation, or in autonomy. Disagreement is concealed until obedience is required.

Digital Culture as an Accelerator

Digital culture is not merely postmodernism on a screen. It is a social environment shaped by platforms, networks, algorithms, data extraction, instant communication, persistent visibility, synthetic media, and the monetisation of attention. The International Telecommunication Union estimated that almost three-quarters of the world’s population was online by 2025 (International Telecommunication Union, 2025). This connectivity brings extraordinary benefits, including access to knowledge, remote education, emergency communication, financial services, evangelistic resources, and relationships across distance.

It also changes the scale and speed of formation. Ideas that once travelled through institutions over years can now shape millions within hours. Platforms do not simply deliver content. Their design rewards some emotions, behaviours, and identities more than others. Visibility, outrage, novelty, affirmation, and continuous engagement become economic assets. Zuboff (2019) describes a business logic in which behavioural data are extracted and used for prediction and influence. UNESCO’s global report on technology in education likewise cautions that technology should serve educational purposes rather than determine them and notes concerns over data, equity, costs, and the displacement of human relationships (Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2023).

Theologically, digital culture intensifies the temptation to become one’s own creator and curator. The self can be edited, displayed, measured, compared, branded, and revised. A person may learn to experience life as material for an audience. The mirror becomes a throne, but the throne is connected to a market that profits from every glance.

The digital environment also weakens the boundary between knowledge and spectacle. A falsehood can arrive with professional graphics, emotional music, synthetic authority, and millions of repetitions. A true statement can be ignored because it is not entertaining. Postman’s warning that a culture can lose truth not only through censorship but through trivialisation has become more urgent in an age of endless feeds (Postman, 1985).

Again, the tool is not the total explanation. Sin did not begin with the smartphone. Pride, lust, greed, false witness, and idolatry are ancient. Digital systems industrialise access, customisation, repetition, surveillance, and reward. They can make temptation intimate, portable, personalised, and continuous.

The Central Battle: Who Has Authority to Name Reality?

Every major controversy examined in this book eventually returns to one question: Who has the right to define?

Who defines God? Is He the holy, sovereign Creator who reveals Himself, or the spiritual image produced by human longing? Who defines truth? Is it correspondence to reality under God, or the product of perspective, consensus, power, feeling, or usefulness? Who defines humanity? Are we created male and female in God's image, fallen yet redeemable, or self-authoring beings whose bodies and identities are raw material? Who defines morality? Is good grounded in God's character, or negotiated through desire, consent, harm, rights, and changing social agreement?

Who defines marriage, family, justice, church leadership, salvation, spiritual power, human progress, and the future? These questions cannot be answered by vocabulary alone. Two people may use the same words while worshipping different authorities.

The biblical answer begins with creation. Because God made all things, He possesses the authority to name them. In [Genesis 1](#), divine speech does not merely describe reality. It establishes order, distinction, purpose, and blessing. The creature's dignity is real, but it is derivative. Human beings exercise delegated dominion, not original sovereignty.

Autonomy, in its strong moral sense, refuses this derivative status. It desires law from the self. Yet no human being is actually self-created, self-sustaining, or self-interpreting. We receive bodies, languages, families, histories, dependencies, and a world already present. Even the declaration "I define myself" uses categories received from communities and institutions. The sovereign self is not independent. It is frequently governed by desires it did not choose, markets it does not control, and platforms that study it more closely than it studies itself.

The biblical doctrine of creaturehood is not humiliation. It is liberation from an impossible burden. A person does not need to invent worth because worth has been bestowed by the Creator. The body is not an enemy to overcome but a meaningful gift to steward. Moral limits are not arbitrary walls around life but boundaries ordered toward communion with God and neighbour. Dependence is not automatically degradation. The Son Himself took the form of a servant, lived in obedience to the Father, and revealed that true greatness is not self-exaltation but holy love.

The battle over definition is also a battle over worship. To name reality contrary to God is not a neutral linguistic exercise. It is an attempt to rule. Isaiah's warning against calling evil good and good evil ([Isaiah 5:20–21](#)) joins moral inversion to pride in one's own wisdom. When institutions claim the

power to rename creation, sin, or salvation, they are not merely updating terminology. They are claiming jurisdiction.

The church must therefore refuse two opposite forms of cowardice. It must not surrender biblical definitions for cultural approval. It must also not use biblical language carelessly, harshly, or selectively. Truth spoken without love can become a weapon of the flesh. Love without truth becomes participation in deception. The Lord Jesus is full of grace and truth, not a compromise between them ([John 1:14](#)).

The Doctrinal Architecture of the Counterfeit Gospel

The gospel according to the age is coherent enough to be recognised, even though its expressions sometimes conflict. Its doctrines can be stated as a series of substitutions.

Autonomous Reason Instead of Revelation

The first substitution concerns knowledge. In the biblical order, reason is a gift of God operating within creation, accountable to reality, morally affected by the fall, and renewed through truth. Revelation does not abolish reason. It gives reason its rightful horizon. Christians are commanded to love God with the mind, test teachings, examine evidence, interpret texts carefully, and reject false witness.

Autonomous reason, by contrast, claims the right to determine in advance what revelation may say. Miracles are rejected because nature is assumed to be closed. Judgment is rejected because contemporary moral intuition finds it offensive. Sexual ethics are revised because present experience is treated as morally decisive. Prophecy is dismissed because history is presumed incapable of divine disclosure. Scripture is permitted to speak only after passing through a court whose laws were written without it.

The error is not asking questions. The error is the hidden enthronement of the questioner. Intellectual maturity requires courage to investigate, but also humility to recognise the limits, moral interests, and fallibility of the human mind. Fallen reason is capable of brilliance and self-deception at the same time.

Self-Created Identity Instead of Creaturely Identity

The second substitution concerns the self. Scripture teaches that identity is received before it is expressed. A human being is created by God, embodied, relational, morally accountable, and summoned into union with Christ. Personal history, gifts, suffering, culture, and vocation matter, but none possesses final authority over the Creator's definition.

The modern expressive self looks inward to discover an authentic identity and then demands outward recognition of that inner truth. Trueman (2020), drawing on Taylor, Rieff, and MacIntyre, describes this development as a shift toward psychological identity in which personal fulfilment depends on the public affirmation of inward desire. Bellah et al. (1985) similarly documented forms of expressive individualism that make personal choice and self-realisation central to moral life.

Not all inward reflection is sinful. Scripture calls for self-examination. Trauma can distort perception. Social expectations can be unjust. Families and churches can impose false identities. Yet the cure for imposed falsehood is not autonomous self-creation. It is truthful identity under God. The believer's deepest identity is not discovered by descending endlessly into desire, but by being united to Christ.

Desire Instead of Obedience

The age often treats desire as revelation. Deep, persistent, or emotionally costly desires are assumed to disclose the true self. Restraint is therefore interpreted as repression unless it prevents demonstrable harm to others.

Scripture gives desire a more complex account. Some desires are good and should be cultivated. Some are wounded and need healing. Some are disordered and must be denied. Some temptations are not chosen, yet obedience remains possible through grace. The existence of a desire does not establish its moral authority.

Jesus does not command His disciples to discover themselves but to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him ([Luke 9:23–25](#)). Self-denial is not self-hatred. It is the refusal to let the fallen self act as lord. The life lost for Christ is not annihilated. It is saved.

Pleasure Instead of Holiness

Pleasure is a gift, but it is a poor god. Food, marriage, rest, beauty, friendship, celebration, and bodily delight can be received with thanksgiving. Hedonism takes a gift and makes it a compass. The governing question becomes what maximises pleasure and minimises pain.

Sangwa (2026c) describes contemporary hedonism as an industrialised orchard of painted fruit. The imagery is apt because the culture of consumption does not merely offer pleasure. It manufactures dissatisfaction, trains appetite, and sells repeated attempts at fulfilment. The result is not necessarily constant enjoyment, but enslavement to novelty.

Holiness is not the rejection of joy. It is joy ordered toward God. The blessed life of Scripture can include tears, persecution, sacrifice, patience, chastity,

generosity, and hope. The counterfeit gospel cannot understand this because suffering has no redemptive horizon and obedience has no eternal reward.

Therapy Instead of Repentance

Therapeutic knowledge can identify trauma, mental illness, harmful patterns, relational wounds, and the need for competent care. Christians should not dismiss genuine suffering or shame people for seeking medical or psychological assistance. Yet therapeutic culture becomes a counterfeit gospel when wellbeing becomes the highest moral end, discomfort becomes evidence of harm, and sin is translated entirely into woundedness.

Rieff (1966) observed a cultural transition in which the therapeutic person seeks psychological release rather than salvation through sacred order. Decades later, Smith and Denton's (2005) study of American teenagers described "moralistic therapeutic deism," a thin religious pattern in which God wants people to be good and happy, remains available in difficulty, and otherwise does not demand much.

The church can reproduce this pattern when sermons offer coping without confession, affirmation without discipline, and healing without reconciliation to God. The wounded need compassion, but compassion must not erase moral agency. A diagnosis can explain behaviour without justifying it. Repentance is not psychological abuse. It is God's gracious summons out of death.

Political Liberation Instead of Redemption

Political action can restrain evil, protect the vulnerable, punish wrongdoing, preserve peace, and correct unjust law. Scripture condemns oppression, partiality, bribery, exploitation, and rulers who devour the people. Christians should not use heavenly hope as an excuse for earthly indifference.

Political religion begins when redemption is transferred to movements, states, revolutions, nations, parties, leaders, or global institutions. Sin is reduced to structures on one side or moral decay on the other. The righteous are identified by political alignment. Opponents become embodiments of evil. The church is tempted to exchange prophetic independence for access and protection.

Progressive and conservative forms of political messianism differ in doctrine but share the impulse to make temporal power carry eschatological weight. One may promise liberation through revolutionary justice. Another may promise restoration through national greatness. Both can require the church to reduce the gospel to a political instrument.

Biblical redemption goes deeper than regime change. It reconciles sinners to God, creates a new people across earthly divisions, disciplines power, commands justice, and promises a kingdom no election can establish. A justice that does not

reckon with sin may replace one ruling class with another while preserving the will to dominate.

Inclusion Without Transformation

The gospel welcomes sinners to Christ. The church is not a club for the already pure. Jesus receives the ashamed, the sexually broken, the greedy, the self-righteous, the violent, the wounded, and the socially despised. His welcome is astonishing because it is joined to a call: “Go, and from now on do not sin anymore” ([John 8:11](#)).

The age’s doctrine of inclusion often requires recognition without repentance. Exclusion becomes the supreme evil, while holiness is treated as a threat to belonging. Yet a community that cannot name destruction cannot rescue anyone from it. A hospital that welcomes every patient but renames infection as health has confused hospitality with abandonment.

Biblical inclusion is incorporation into Christ and His people through grace. It does not require moral perfection before entry. It does require that no identity, desire, practice, status, ethnicity, ideology, or ambition be placed beyond the Lordship of Jesus.

Technological Transcendence Instead of Resurrection

Modern technology has relieved suffering, extended communication, improved diagnosis, increased productivity, and opened new forms of learning. Yet technological culture easily moves from using tools to overcome particular problems toward imagining that creaturely limitation itself is the enemy.

The promise may be framed as indefinite longevity, cognitive enhancement, genetic redesign, virtual identity, artificial companionship, or eventual escape from biological death. These hopes will be examined later in this book. Here the theological point is sufficient: resurrection is not human self-upgrade. It is God’s act of raising the dead, judging evil, redeeming the body, and conforming believers to Christ.

Technological transcendence seeks glory without holiness, life without reconciliation, and power without creaturely dependence. It may postpone death, but it cannot remove judgment. It may simulate presence, but it cannot create communion with God.

Human Progress Instead of Divine Providence

The modern idea of progress assumes that history can move through knowledge, institutions, markets, science, education, and reform toward increasing freedom and wellbeing. There is evidence of genuine improvement in many areas. Global under-five mortality has fallen dramatically since 1990, and modern public

health, sanitation, nutrition, medicine, education, and coordinated action have saved millions of lives (UNICEF, 2025; World Health Organization, 2024). These achievements should be received with gratitude rather than denied for rhetorical convenience.

The theological error is not improvement. It is providence without the Provider and progress without judgment. Technical knowledge does not purify the heart. A society may reduce one form of suffering while industrialising another. It may expand rights while dissolving moral responsibility. It may become more connected while more isolated, more informed while less wise, more capable while less able to answer why its capabilities should be used.

The twentieth century demonstrated that education, science, bureaucracy, and technology can serve healing or organised destruction. Progress in means does not guarantee progress in ends. Human beings remain fallen when they become efficient.

Self-Affirmation Instead of Self-Denial

The age's liturgy repeatedly commands: believe in yourself, validate yourself, protect your peace, speak your truth, manifest your future, and remove whoever obstructs your growth. Some of this language responds to real abuse, manipulation, shame, or learned helplessness. It can help a person recognise lawful boundaries and responsibilities.

Yet when self-affirmation becomes ultimate, correction feels like violence and repentance feels like self-betrayal. The cross then becomes unintelligible. Christianity does not teach that the self is worthless. It teaches that the self is created, fallen, loved, accountable, and redeemable. Grace does not flatter. It crucifies pride and raises the sinner into new life.

Sangwa (2026a) distinguishes healthy gratitude for God-given abilities from the sovereignty of self. The Christian can act courageously without pretending to be self-sufficient. Confidence is relocated from the autonomous ego to God's faithfulness.

Cultural Relevance Instead of Faithfulness

The church rightly translates its message, learns languages, understands audiences, uses appropriate media, and removes needless obstacles to hearing the gospel. Paul became "all things to all people" for the sake of saving some ([1 Corinthians 9:19–23](#)). He did not alter the gospel to secure approval.

Relevance becomes idolatrous when the church fears being considered strange more than being found unfaithful. Doctrine is softened, worship is redesigned as spectacle, moral teaching follows public opinion, and success is

measured by attendance, revenue, visibility, credentials, or influence. The church polishes the world's chains and calls them ornaments.

Faithfulness may be culturally intelligent, aesthetically excellent, intellectually rigorous, and technologically competent. It must still be willing to lose applause. A church that can only survive by hiding what Christ taught has already surrendered the reason for its existence.

How the Counterfeit Gospel Enters the Church

The spirit of an age rarely enters the church by announcing itself as apostasy. It enters through usefulness, compassion, professionalism, relevance, growth, safety, or the promise that Christianity will be more credible after its offensive parts are adjusted. The church may believe that it is merely changing methods while its doctrine of God, humanity, sin, and salvation is being quietly rewritten.

The Laundering of Vocabulary

One of the most effective methods is semantic transfer. A biblical word is retained while its governing meaning is changed. This creates the appearance of continuity. The congregation hears familiar vocabulary and assumes that the apostolic faith remains intact.

Consider love. Biblically, love arises from God's holy character and seeks the true good of the beloved. It can comfort, forgive, provide, confront, discipline, warn, sacrifice, and endure. The age often reduces love to affirmation of self-definition. Under that definition, disagreement becomes hatred even when expressed with patience and costly care.

Freedom undergoes a similar transfer. Scripture describes freedom from condemnation, slavery to sin, fear of death, and bondage to corruption. Christian freedom enables service and obedience. The age commonly defines freedom as release from externally given moral authority. A person is free insofar as nothing, including the body, family, tradition, Scripture, or God, may finally contradict the sovereign will.

Justice is detached from righteousness and divine judgment. Dignity is detached from creation. Authenticity is detached from sanctification. Inclusion is detached from repentance. Compassion is detached from truth. Faith is detached from its object and turned into positive expectation. Blessing is detached from the cross. Leadership is detached from servanthood. Worship is detached from reverence. Revival is detached from holiness. Prophecy is detached from testing. Unity is detached from doctrine.

This is why doctrinal discernment must examine definitions, not slogans. A church can repeat "love, justice, freedom, and dignity" while communicating an anthropology opposed to Scripture.

Education and Professional Formation

Education is never the mere transfer of data. It forms imagination, authority structures, aspirations, and habits of judgment. Students learn which questions are respectable, which explanations are admissible, which desires are treated as normal, and which moral claims require private concealment.

The church sometimes responds in two inadequate ways. One is surrender. Academic prestige is treated as proof that a theory is morally and metaphysically neutral. The other is anti-intellectual retreat. Scholarship is rejected, evidence is ignored, and suspicion is confused with discernment.

Both responses abandon Christian vocation. Believers should study deeply, distinguish data from interpretation, expose hidden assumptions, learn from correction, and produce excellent knowledge under Christ's Lordship. Sangwa et al. (2026) describe this as epistemic stewardship: the Christian educator must preserve academic credibility and ethical restraint while remaining ordered to Christ rather than to relativist pluralism or generic moral uplift.

Many churches are influenced indirectly through professionally trained members who import assumptions from law, psychology, business, education, public policy, medicine, or media without theological examination. The problem is not professional knowledge. It is the absence of a biblical framework capable of receiving what is true, rejecting what is false, and identifying what exceeds the discipline's proper authority.

Media and Entertainment

Stories teach before arguments are recognised. Film, music, advertising, games, celebrity culture, and social media normalise visions of the good life through repeated emotional identification. The audience learns whom to admire, what to desire, which limits are oppressive, what success looks like, and which kinds of people deserve ridicule.

The church may condemn explicit immorality while adopting entertainment's deeper logic. The sermon becomes content. Worship becomes performance. Ministers become brands. Controversy becomes engagement. Members become audiences. Success becomes visibility. A church can reject the world's lyrics while imitating its stage.

This does not make beauty, music, technology, narrative, excellence, or emotional expression sinful. Scripture contains poetry, song, drama, lament, celebration, and symbolic imagery. The issue is whether the medium serves truth and worship or whether truth is reshaped to serve attention.

Therapeutic Psychology

Psychological research and clinical practice can offer valuable descriptions of cognition, behaviour, trauma, attachment, development, mental illness, and relational dynamics. Wise pastoral care should not deny conditions that require qualified treatment. Nor should churches use spiritual language to conceal abuse or shame sufferers.

The infiltration occurs when a therapeutic anthropology becomes normative. Sin is reduced to dysfunction. Guilt is treated only as pathology. Self-esteem becomes a supreme need. Boundaries are detached from covenant responsibility. Forgiveness is discussed without justice or repentance. Reconciliation is demanded from victims while offenders avoid accountability, or, in the opposite error, permanent estrangement is celebrated without regard for repentance, wisdom, or the duties created by family and church.

The biblical pastor neither replaces the clinician nor abandons theology to the clinic. He recognises embodied suffering, social causes, moral agency, spiritual warfare, personal sin, and the grace of God. These realities cannot be collapsed into one explanatory system.

Politics and the Search for Protection

Churches often enter political captivity through fear. They perceive genuine threats to religious liberty, family, safety, livelihood, or national stability. Political engagement can be responsible and necessary. Yet fear can persuade believers that a party, leader, movement, or policy programme must be defended as the last wall protecting Christianity.

Once political protection becomes essential to institutional survival, prophetic speech narrows. The sins of allies are minimised. Opponents are treated as enemies of God. Scripture becomes campaign material. The church may gain access while losing moral authority.

The opposite captivity is also real. Churches may adopt progressive political language to gain respect among universities, foundations, media, international organisations, or professional classes. Gospel proclamation is recoded as activism, and disputed ideological claims are presented as obvious demands of love and justice.

Biblical Christianity cannot be reduced to left or right. It will confront abortion and exploitation, sexual immorality and racism, lawlessness and tyranny, greed and envy, state idolatry and market idolatry, progressive revisionism and conservative hypocrisy. The kingdom of Christ is not politically neutral, because it judges every power. It is not politically captive, because no earthly coalition embodies it.

Technology and the Authority of Convenience

Technology enters church life through legitimate needs: communication, administration, publishing, education, translation, accessibility, financial stewardship, and outreach. These uses can be faithful. The danger begins when convenience becomes a theological criterion.

What is faster is assumed to be better. What scales is treated as fruitful. What attracts attention is called effective. What can be automated is no longer regarded as requiring presence, character, discernment, or accountability. Sermons, prayers, counselling, worship, community, and theological judgment may be increasingly mediated by systems whose designers do not share the church's doctrine of humanity.

The question is not whether Christians should use technology. They already do. The question is what kind of people its use is forming, which responsibilities are being surrendered, and whether the tool is serving embodied faithfulness or quietly redefining it.

Theological Liberalism and the Desire to Appear Credible

Theological liberalism often begins with the ambition to preserve Christianity by making it acceptable to contemporary knowledge and morality. Miracles become symbols. The resurrection becomes a community's experience of hope. Sin becomes alienation. The cross becomes moral inspiration or protest against violence. Scripture becomes a record of evolving religious consciousness. Jesus remains admired after His Lordship has been revised.

The intention may be apologetic, but the method places the age above revelation. Christianity is saved from embarrassment by being emptied of the claims that made it Christianity. The church keeps the vocabulary of faith while the transcendent reference of the words disappears.

This pattern also affects conservative churches in subtler ways. A congregation may affirm biblical inerrancy in its statement of faith while ignoring Scripture wherever it threatens wealth, ethnicity, leadership privilege, family abuse, political loyalty, or celebrity culture. Formal orthodoxy can coexist with practical modernism when the autonomous will still decides which commands will be obeyed.

Commercialisation and the Desire for Growth

Markets can coordinate exchange and support valuable work. Churches require budgets, buildings, administration, communication, publishing, salaries, and responsible planning. Commercialisation begins when market logic defines ministry.

The member becomes a customer whose preferences must be retained. The pastor becomes a chief executive or public brand. The sermon becomes a product. The worship service becomes an experience. The poor become fundraising imagery. Spiritual authority becomes access. Growth metrics become the practical measure of divine approval.

Under these conditions, difficult doctrine is costly. Repentance reduces customer satisfaction. Church discipline threatens retention. Financial transparency threatens leadership control. The gospel is adjusted not by philosophical argument but by the quiet discipline of revenue and reputation.

Social Approval and the Fear of Shame

Many believers do not abandon truth because they have been philosophically persuaded. They fear loneliness. They do not want to lose friends, employment, academic opportunity, professional status, family peace, or social belonging. The age's power is often exercised through shame rather than law.

This fear deserves pastoral compassion. Courage is not effortless. Young Christians may face sustained pressure in classrooms and digital spaces. Professionals may risk advancement. Converts may face family rejection. Yet Christ never promised discipleship without cost.

The church must become a community where believers can bear that cost together. A congregation that preaches courage but offers no friendship, economic care, intellectual support, or protection for the vulnerable leaves individuals exposed. Truth must be embodied in a people.

The Counterfeit Gospel in Ordinary Life

Worldviews are not confined to textbooks. They become habits before they become arguments. The gospel according to the age is preached in ordinary decisions, often without explicit hostility to Christianity.

In the family, it appears when marriage is treated primarily as a contract for personal fulfilment, dissolvable when the self no longer feels affirmed. Parenthood becomes a lifestyle option rather than a covenantal stewardship. Children are regarded as projects, obstacles, consumers, or extensions of adult identity. Elderly and disabled persons risk being measured by productivity and convenience.

In education, students are taught that knowledge will make them employable and autonomous, but may receive little account of wisdom, truth, character, vocation, or responsibility. Credentials become a ladder of worth. Critical thinking is praised, though some moral conclusions remain protected from criticism. Christian education can imitate the same system, adding Bible verses to an anthropology of competition, status, and self-actualisation.

In work, vocation is reduced either to income and advancement or to personal passion. The worker is told to build a brand, maximise opportunity, and remain endlessly adaptable. Institutions speak of values while rewarding output, loyalty, visibility, and compliance. Efficiency can become a moral absolute, even when it destroys family life, exploits the weak, or requires dishonesty.

In media, attention becomes currency. The person learns to react before understanding. Public identity is performed before an audience. Envy is cultivated through comparison. Outrage supplies belonging. Private suffering becomes content. The distinction between testimony and self-promotion becomes difficult to maintain.

In sexuality, desire is separated from covenant, procreation, embodiment, and holiness. The body is treated simultaneously as an instrument of pleasure and a material to be reinterpreted by the inner self. Consent is necessary for justice but made insufficiently powerful when asked to carry the whole moral meaning of sex.

In politics, citizens are catechised to expect salvation through law, leadership, revolution, national restoration, or global coordination. Political opponents are not merely wrong but impure. Moral complexity is compressed into slogans suitable for mobilisation.

In entertainment, stimulation becomes rest, and rest becomes avoidance. People may spend resources they do not have to purchase experiences they cannot sustain because ordinary life feels intolerably unremarkable. Sangwa (2026d) warns that the modern quest for ease can turn legitimate rest into an idol and train Christians to seek the lowest cost of obedience.

In technology, assistance can become dependence. Memory, navigation, writing, discernment, relationship, and spiritual practice are gradually outsourced. The user gains capability while losing awareness of what has been surrendered.

In church culture, these pressures converge. The congregation seeks a message that is positive, relevant, brief, therapeutic, entertaining, and immediately useful. The preacher feels compelled to satisfy the demand. The Bible is not formally rejected. It is edited by attention.

The Strongest Defence of Modernity

A serious Christian argument must not construct a caricature. Defenders of modernity can point to undeniable achievements and legitimate moral criticisms of earlier religious societies.

Modern science has increased knowledge of the physical world. Medicine, sanitation, nutrition, vaccination, surgery, obstetric care, and public health have prevented suffering and extended life. Global under-five mortality fell by

roughly 60 per cent between 1990 and 2024, though severe inequalities remain (UNICEF, 2025). Such progress represents millions of children living who might otherwise have died.

Mass education and literacy have expanded access to knowledge. Communication technologies allow families, researchers, churches, and emergency services to connect across distance. Democratic institutions, constitutional limits, legal protections, and human rights frameworks have sometimes restrained arbitrary power. Campaigns against slavery, racial discrimination, colonial exploitation, domestic violence, child labour, and exclusion from education have corrected real injustices.

Modern historical criticism has exposed propaganda, forged claims, institutional abuse, and unexamined tradition. Psychological knowledge has improved understanding of trauma and mental illness. Economic and technological development has lifted many people from severe material deprivation, though gains remain unequal and can carry social and environmental costs.

Defenders may also charge that religious authority has often resisted correction. Churches have sometimes protected abusive leaders, silenced victims, opposed sound science, baptised racism, defended political tyranny, enriched clergy, marginalised women, exploited the poor, or confused inherited culture with biblical command. Appeals to revelation have been used to stop questions rather than answer them.

Furthermore, modern pluralism can reduce coercion. People of different beliefs can share civic space without one institution controlling conscience. Freedom of inquiry can expose error. Legal equality can protect minorities. Individual rights can give recourse to people crushed by family, tribe, church, employer, or state.

These arguments must be heard. The church has no authority to defend falsehood merely because it is old, religious, or socially conservative. Where Christians have sinned, repentance is required, not public relations. Where evidence corrects misunderstanding, truth should be welcomed. Where law protects the vulnerable, gratitude is fitting. Where technology serves neighbour-love, stewardship should improve it.

Pinker (2018), one of the prominent contemporary defenders of Enlightenment ideals, argues that reason, science, humanism, and progress have contributed to measurable improvements in health, safety, knowledge, and wellbeing. Even critics of his interpretation should not deny the data merely because they dispute the philosophy attached to it. A Christian worldview is not strengthened by empirical dishonesty.

The strongest defence therefore says: modern institutions have often reduced suffering, widened freedom, challenged oppressive traditions, and created

mechanisms for self-correction. Why should the authority of revelation be preferred when religious communities themselves are fallible and sometimes abusive?

This is a serious question. It deserves more than the assertion that the past was better.

Why Achievement Does Not Establish Autonomy

The Christian answer begins by granting what is true. Modern achievements are real. They do not, however, prove that autonomous humanity is morally self-sufficient or that modern institutions are entitled to final authority.

The Logical Error of Total Validation

Success in one domain does not confer authority in every domain. The ability to treat infection does not establish the meaning of marriage. The ability to analyse brain activity does not prove that consciousness is only matter. The ability to extend life does not define what makes life good. The ability to measure public opinion does not determine morality. The ability to build artificial intelligence does not establish what intelligence is for.

Modern science is powerful because it investigates regularities within creation through disciplined observation, hypothesis, testing, and correction. It becomes scientism when its method is expanded into a total philosophy that excludes realities the method was not designed to measure.

Likewise, democracy can distribute political power and permit peaceful correction. It cannot transform majority preference into moral truth. Rights can protect persons from abuse. They still require an account of the human person, the good, duties, and limits. Therapy can alleviate suffering. It cannot reconcile sinners to God. Technology can change conditions. It cannot forgive guilt.

The conclusion “modern institutions achieved good things, therefore humanity should be autonomous from God” does not follow. It is a category error.

Common Grace and the Goodness of Creaturely Knowledge

Christian theology can affirm modern achievements without worshipping modernity because all truth belongs to God. Human beings remain image-bearers after the fall. They can discover, invent, cooperate, govern, heal, create beauty, and restrain evil. God gives rain and fruitful seasons to the just and unjust. Civilisations outside covenant knowledge can display remarkable wisdom and justice alongside grave idolatry.

This doctrine of common grace removes the false choice between total rejection and total surrender. Christians may learn from a non-Christian

physician without accepting materialism, from a human-rights lawyer without grounding dignity in autonomy, from a psychologist without reducing sin to trauma, and from a technologist without treating efficiency as salvation.

The same principle requires humility toward the church. Possessing Scripture does not make every Christian interpretation correct. Leaders remain fallible and accountable. *Sola Scriptura* does not mean that a pastor's reading is infallible. It means that Scripture, rightly interpreted, judges pastors, councils, traditions, scholars, and cultures.

Borrowed Moral Capital

Many modern moral achievements rely on convictions that philosophical autonomy struggles to secure. Human equality, inviolable dignity, universal moral obligation, care for the weak, and the condemnation of oppression require more than preference or power. If humans are merely accidental arrangements of matter and moral values are products of changing need, why should the strong recognise obligations that conflict with advantage?

This does not mean that unbelievers cannot act morally. They plainly can. The question is not behavioural capacity but ultimate grounding. Christianity locates dignity in the image of God, moral law in God's character, justice in His impartial judgment, and sacrificial love in the cross.

Modern moral discourse often retains these conclusions while rejecting their foundation. MacIntyre's diagnosis of fragmented moral language is relevant here. Appeals to dignity, rights, equality, autonomy, utility, authenticity, and social justice may conflict because they emerge from rival accounts of the human good.

A society can spend moral capital it did not create. It can affirm universal dignity for a season while its dominant anthropology increasingly reduces people to preference-bearing units, biological organisms, economic actors, data profiles, or members of identity categories. Eventually, the unresolved foundation matters.

Modern Institutions Are Not Morally Infallible

Institutions that correct old abuses can create new ones. Scientific communities can be distorted by funding incentives, publication bias, professional conformity, or political pressure. Media can expose corruption and manufacture outrage. Courts can protect the weak and redefine moral order. Corporations can innovate and exploit. Governments can provide public goods and expand surveillance. Churches can preach salvation and build systems of control.

The Christian claim is not that secular institutions are uniquely corrupt. It is that every institution is composed of fallen persons and therefore requires moral

limits, accountability, transparency, correction, and judgment. Prestige does not remove sin. Neither does religious language.

The church must therefore reject blind institutional trust and reflexive anti-institutionalism. Evidence should be weighed. Claims should be verified. Documented coordination, financial influence, secrecy, propaganda, and conflicts of interest may be examined. Suspicion, virality, anonymous testimony, and coincidence must not be treated as proof.

Truth is not protected by believing everything powerful institutions say. It is not protected by believing every accusation against them either.

The Failure of the “Premodern Golden Age”

A biblical critique of modernism must not invent a golden age. The ancient world contained idolatry, slavery, war, sexual exploitation, infanticide, tyranny, superstition, and oppressive hierarchies. Medieval and early modern Christian societies contained genuine faith, learning, charity, law, art, and community, but also coercion, corruption, violence, and grave failures to live according to the gospel.

The fall occurred before modernity. The serpent did not wait for the Enlightenment. Pride, self-salvation, false worship, political idolatry, greed, and sexual rebellion are ancient.

What is distinctive about the modern counterfeit is not the invention of sin. It is the intellectual, institutional, technological, and therapeutic architecture through which autonomy is normalised, scaled, and sometimes carried into the church as moral progress.

What the Counterfeit Gospel Produces

A gospel is known by the people and communities it forms. The gospel according to the age promises liberation, yet its fruit often reveals a deeper captivity. Its consequences are doctrinal, spiritual, moral, familial, ecclesial, political, psychological, and eternal.

Doctrine Becomes Negotiable

Once autonomy becomes the hidden authority, doctrine remains firm only where it does not conflict with desire or approval. The deity of Christ may be retained because it inspires wonder, while His exclusivity is softened because it offends pluralism. The resurrection may be celebrated as hope, while final judgment is neglected. Grace is preached as acceptance, while repentance is treated as shame. The Holy Spirit is invoked to validate experiences that contradict the written Word.

A church may still possess a doctrinal statement, but its operating theology is revealed by what can no longer be preached, disciplined, questioned, or obeyed. Practical authority often lies where institutional pain is greatest. If a biblical teaching would threaten revenue, status, relationships, political access, or public reputation, the pressure to reinterpret it becomes intense.

Worship Turns Toward the Self

True worship directs attention to God's character, works, commands, promises, and worth. Counterfeit worship uses God to intensify the experience of the worshipper. The central questions become whether the service was enjoyable, emotionally powerful, visually impressive, or personally affirming.

Emotion is not the enemy. Scripture commands joy, lament, gratitude, reverence, awe, and love. The danger is emotional self-reference, where the presence of God is measured by sensation and truth is judged by atmosphere. The congregation may learn to seek spiritual stimulation rather than communion with God.

Morality Is Reduced to Harm and Consent

Harm and consent are morally significant. Coercion, violence, deception, exploitation, and abuse are evil. Yet they cannot bear the whole weight of morality. Human beings can consent to what degrades them, harms others indirectly, damages future obligations, enslaves desire, or dishonours God. Some harms are delayed, communal, spiritual, or difficult to quantify.

When morality is reduced to immediate consent and measurable harm, covenant, holiness, fidelity, modesty, duty, reverence, and the moral meaning of the body become difficult to defend. The person is imagined as an isolated chooser rather than a creature whose actions affect family, church, society, and future generations.

Identity Becomes Fragile

The sovereign self appears powerful, but it carries an unbearable task. It must create meaning, secure recognition, curate image, interpret desire, and defend identity. Because the self cannot author the social world alone, it becomes dependent on affirmation from others and vulnerable to contradiction.

Christian identity is received in covenantal relation to God. It permits confession because worth does not depend on perfection. It permits correction because truth is not an attack on existence. It permits suffering because life is hidden with Christ. It permits humility because greatness is measured by service.

When identity rests on self-construction, disagreement can feel like erasure. Politics, law, education, media, and church are then pressured to function as

systems of affirmation. The demand is not merely to tolerate conduct but to participate in another person's account of reality.

Family Becomes Instrumental

Autonomy weakens relationships that require enduring obligation. Marriage, parenthood, kinship, and intergenerational care involve duties that cannot always be justified by immediate personal fulfilment. When the self is sovereign, relationships remain secure only while they support the self's project.

The result may include delayed responsibility, disposable intimacy, fatherlessness, neglected elderly people, children formed by screens, and conflict between career ambition and family stewardship. Conservative communities are not exempt. A man may defend male leadership while abandoning sacrificial service. Parents may demand obedience while provoking children. A church may praise family values while protecting domestic abuse.

Biblical family order is not a licence for tyranny. It places every member under Christ and makes authority accountable to love, provision, protection, truth, and self-sacrifice.

Church Leadership Becomes Performance or Control

The age's metrics enter ministry through visibility, growth, influence, credentials, and brand recognition. Leaders may become performers whose authority depends on image, or controllers who use spiritual claims to prevent scrutiny. Both forms place the self at the centre.

The celebrity leader needs admiration. The authoritarian leader needs submission. The therapeutic leader needs approval. The political leader needs access. The entrepreneurial leader needs expansion. The faithful shepherd needs Christ and must be willing to lose status in order to protect the flock.

When the church confuses gifting with character, charisma with calling, popularity with anointing, or success with divine approval, wolves can thrive beneath Christian vocabulary.

Evangelism Loses Its Message

If people are fundamentally good, sin is primarily structural or psychological, and salvation is self-acceptance, the gospel becomes unnecessary or offensive. Evangelism is reduced to moral encouragement, community service, political solidarity, personal coaching, or invitation into an experience.

These activities may have value, but none can replace the announcement that Christ died for sins, was buried, rose bodily, reigns as Lord, commands repentance, and offers forgiveness and eternal life. A gospel without judgment

has no need for atonement. A gospel without sin has no need for repentance. A gospel without resurrection has no victory over death.

Spiritual Discernment Is Replaced by Spectacle

When experience becomes authority, signs, emotions, visions, private knowledge, and extraordinary claims can bypass biblical testing. A manifestation is judged by intensity, accuracy, popularity, or apparent effectiveness rather than doctrine, fruit, method, and submission to Scripture.

This vulnerability is not limited to charismatic contexts. Intellectual spectacle can function similarly. Novel theories, secret knowledge, elite credentials, contrarian claims, and complex language can create an aura of authority. The church may be captivated by the sensational whether it appears supernatural or scholarly.

Eternal Destiny Is Obscured

The most serious consequence is eternal. The age trains people to interpret life within an immanent frame, where fulfilment, suffering, justice, and hope are confined to history. Death becomes a medical problem, a natural end, or a boundary technology may one day overcome. Judgment disappears from consciousness.

Jesus speaks differently. Human beings will give account. The dead will rise. Christ will judge. Eternal life and eternal punishment are real. The age passes away.

A church that hides these truths to protect comfort does not love its neighbour. It behaves like a watchman who sees danger and lowers the alarm because the sound may distress the city.

A Pastoral Word to Different Hearers

The same warning should not be delivered in the same manner to everyone. Scripture distinguishes wolves from sheep, teachers from learners, the arrogant from the doubting, and the unrepentant from the wounded.

To Deliberate Deceivers

Some know that they are altering Scripture, manipulating people, manufacturing testimonies, exploiting fear, or using Christian language to build wealth, sexual access, political power, or personal glory. To such persons, gentle ambiguity is not love.

The Lord sees what platforms conceal. Titles, crowds, miracles, publications, credentials, and influence will not survive His judgment. Repent while mercy is offered. Confess wrongdoing. Stop exploiting the flock. Restore what can be

restored. Submit to discipline. Do not call strategic image management repentance.

The warning of [James 3:1](#) remains severe: teachers will receive stricter judgment. The warning of Jesus concerning those who cause little ones to stumble is more terrifying than the loss of reputation ([Matthew 18:6](#)).

To Compromised Leaders

Some leaders began faithfully but have adjusted under pressure. Perhaps they feared losing members, donors, professional legitimacy, denominational position, political protection, or family peace. Compromise appeared small and temporary. Over time, silence became policy.

Return to the fear of God. The church is not yours to preserve by disobedience. Christ builds His church. Faithfulness may cost position, but unfaithfulness costs more. Open the texts you have avoided. Correct the definitions you allowed to drift. Protect those harmed by your silence. Invite accountability before scandal forces it.

Repentance by a leader may be painful, but it can become a profound act of shepherding. A public correction of error does not destroy credibility. Pretending infallibility does.

To Careless Teachers

Some repeat fashionable ideas because they have not studied their roots or consequences. They share therapeutic slogans, political claims, prophetic rumours, or digital content without verification. They may intend to help, yet carelessness from a teacher can injure many.

Slow down. Read primary sources. Interpret Scripture in context. Distinguish fact from inference. Do not preach beyond knowledge. Do not baptise a claim because it supports your preferred side. Accuracy is an act of love.

The command not to bear false witness applies to material shared against ideological opponents. A lie does not become holy because it damages an enemy.

To Confused Believers

Many believers feel disoriented. The culture changes quickly, experts disagree, churches contradict one another, and every side claims compassion. Confusion is not itself apostasy. The Lord is patient with those who seek truth.

Begin again with Scripture. Read whole books, not isolated fragments. Learn the biblical story of creation, fall, covenant, incarnation, cross, resurrection, church, judgment, and new creation. Seek mature believers whose character matches their doctrine. Ask difficult questions without surrendering the assumption that God is truthful.

Do not let shame keep you silent. The church should be a place where honest questions are disciplined rather than mocked.

To Wounded People

Some have encountered Christianity through abuse, hypocrisy, coercion, racism, sexual exploitation, financial manipulation, or spiritual intimidation. Their distrust did not arise in a classroom. It arose from injury.

The church must not answer such wounds by protecting institutions or demanding quick reconciliation. Truth requires listening, evidence, accountability, safety, and where appropriate, civil reporting. Forgiveness must not be manipulated to obstruct justice. Submission texts must not be used to return victims to danger.

Yet the sin of a shepherd does not change the character of the Chief Shepherd. Jesus is not the abuser who used His name. He receives the crushed, confronts wolves, and binds wounds. The path back to trust may be slow, but Christ is worthy even when His servants have been false.

To Young Christians

Young believers are being formed in an environment where identity is public, comparison is constant, and dissent can bring immediate social punishment. They need more than rules. They need a coherent account of reality, embodied community, wise mentors, meaningful work, truthful friendship, and a vision of Christ more beautiful than the age's promises.

Do not believe that holiness means losing life. Sin offers intensity and steals freedom. Christ's commands are not designed to erase you. They rescue you from being ruled by appetite, applause, and fear.

Learn to be alone without being isolated. Learn to read beyond the feed. Learn to pray without performing. Learn to work without turning achievement into identity. Learn to disagree without hatred. Learn to suffer without concluding that God has abandoned you.

To Parents

Parents cannot outsource formation to schools, churches, or devices. Children are continually catechised by screens, peers, advertising, and institutional assumptions. Prohibition alone is insufficient. A child needs to see a household where truth is loved, repentance is practised, work is honoured, sexuality is spoken of without shame or vulgarity, hospitality is real, and technology is governed rather than worshipped.

Parents must also repent of hypocrisy. A father cannot rebuke digital addiction while living on his phone. A mother cannot teach contentment while

measuring worth through comparison. Children notice the gospel that daily habits preach.

To Scholars and Professionals

Academic and professional excellence can serve the kingdom. Christians should not hide from difficult evidence or produce inferior work as though piety excused incompetence. Nor should they accept a discipline's philosophical assumptions merely because they are professionally rewarded.

Your task is double faithfulness: to reality and to God. Ask what your methods can establish and what they cannot. Identify incentives. Protect the vulnerable. Distinguish expertise from moral authority. Refuse plagiarism, manipulation, selective evidence, and the performance of certainty.

The university, laboratory, court, clinic, newsroom, corporation, and policy institution are fields of discipleship. They teach what counts as knowledge, success, harm, and personhood. Serve there as a steward, not a captive.

To Pastors

Pastors must recover confidence that the Word of God can do what marketing cannot. Preach the whole counsel of God. Explain difficult texts. Teach doctrine before crisis arrives. Guard the flock from progressive revision and conservative idolatry. Refuse celebrity immunity. Establish transparent governance. Protect victims. Train members to recognise false definitions.

Do not confuse volume with courage. Harshness may conceal fear. Patient teaching can be sharper than outrage because it leaves error nowhere to hide. The goal is not to produce angry Christians but holy, discerning, courageous, compassionate disciples.

To Those Seeking Truth

Perhaps you do not yet call yourself a Christian. You may recognise the emptiness of autonomy but fear religious control. You may admire Jesus while distrusting churches. The invitation of the gospel is not to exchange secular self-rule for human tyranny. It is to be reconciled to the God who made you and gave Himself in Christ.

Jesus does not merely offer a better moral system. He offers Himself. He bore sin, defeated death, rose bodily, and calls you to repent and believe. His lordship is not the destruction of personhood. It is the restoration of life to its true centre.

The Church's Faithful Resistance

The church must resist the age without becoming a mirror image of it. Opposition alone is not holiness. A movement can reject progressive ideology

while worshipping power, masculinity, nation, ethnicity, money, conspiracy, or the charismatic leader. The spirit of autonomy can inhabit rebellion against modernism as easily as submission to it.

Neither Imitation nor Ignorance

Faithfulness does not require cultural illiteracy. Christians should understand philosophy, history, science, law, psychology, economics, media, and technology. They should know the strongest arguments of those with whom they disagree. Falsehood is not defeated by misrepresentation.

Ignorance can produce fear, superstition, and unnecessary conflict. It can also make the church dependent on secular experts because believers have refused serious study. Anti-intellectualism leaves the mind undefended.

At the same time, knowledge without submission can produce pride. The Christian scholar remains a disciple. Expertise does not grant authority to revise God's Word.

Neither Hatred nor False Compassion

The church must reject contempt. Every person bears God's image. People experiencing sexual temptation, gender confusion, addiction, trauma, doubt, mental illness, poverty, or ideological captivity are not problems to be mocked. Many have suffered deeply.

Yet compassion cannot be severed from truth. A physician who refuses to name disease because diagnosis causes distress has abandoned care. Christian correction should be accurate, proportionate, patient, and ordered toward rescue.

Hatred dehumanises the sinner. False compassion leaves the sinner in chains. The gospel does neither.

Neither Political Idolatry nor Civic Withdrawal

Christians may vote, advocate, govern, research policy, serve in public institutions, defend rights, resist injustice, and seek peace. They should do so without treating politics as salvation.

Civic withdrawal can abandon neighbours to evil. Political idolatry can make the church an instrument of evil. The faithful path requires principled engagement, truthful criticism of allies and opponents, and willingness to lose influence rather than violate conscience.

Neither Blind Trust nor Unsupported Conspiracy

The age contains real propaganda, corruption, collusion, censorship, financial influence, and hidden wrongdoing. Scripture does not require naïveté. Christians

should investigate documented claims, preserve evidence, follow incentives, and hold power accountable.

They must also reject the appetite for secret explanations that turns suspicion into certainty. Unsupported conspiracy claims damage innocent people, discredit genuine warnings, and violate the command against false witness. A watchman who sounds the alarm at every shadow trains the city to ignore him when fire comes.

Discernment is disciplined. It asks what is known, how it is known, what remains uncertain, and what alternative explanations exist.

Correction, Rebuke, Exhortation, and Restoration

The church's response requires four distinct actions.

Correction replaces error with truth. It defines words, interprets Scripture, presents evidence, and patiently untangles confusion.

Rebuke confronts wilful deception, hypocrisy, exploitation, and refusal to repent. It names sin clearly because ambiguity protects the powerful.

Exhortation calls believers to obedience, courage, perseverance, study, prayer, holiness, and mutual care. It does not merely expose what is wrong. It directs the church toward faithful practice.

Restoration shows what repentance can become. False teachers who truly turn must confess, submit to discipline, and accept that restoration to fellowship does not automatically mean restoration to office. Victims need protection and care. Confused believers need patient discipleship. Churches need truthful review of structures that enabled harm.

The gospel is severe toward unrepentant pride and astonishingly merciful toward the contrite. [1 Corinthians 6:9–11](#) names serious sins and then declares, “And some of you used to be like this.” The church is not a community of people who never needed rescue. It is a people washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God.

The Biblical Alternative

The answer to a counterfeit gospel is not mere cultural conservatism. It is the true gospel and the whole life that flows from it.

God is not the projection of the self. He is the eternal Creator, holy, just, merciful, sovereign, and good. Humanity is made in His image, male and female, embodied, dependent, relational, and accountable. Sin is guilt, corruption, idolatry, rebellion, and bondage. It affects individuals and structures, desires and institutions, oppressors and victims.

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son made flesh, fully God and fully man. He obeyed where Adam failed, bore sin in the place of sinners, satisfied divine justice,

rose bodily, ascended, reigns, intercedes, and will return. Salvation is by grace through faith, not by autonomous achievement. It includes repentance, forgiveness, justification, adoption, regeneration, sanctification, perseverance, resurrection, and glorification.

Freedom is not sovereignty of the will but liberation to love and obey God. Identity is not invented but received in creation and redeemed in Christ. Dignity is not earned by capacity, productivity, recognition, or desire. It is grounded in God's image. Justice is not ideological revenge but conformity to God's righteous character, impartial judgment, protection of the weak, and accountability for wrongdoing.

Love is not affirmation of everything the beloved desires. It is holy self-giving ordered toward eternal good. Inclusion is not the abolition of repentance. It is the gathering of sinners into a transformed people. Worship is not entertainment. It is the response of the whole person and community to God's worth. Hope is not faith in inevitable progress. It is confidence in divine providence, resurrection, judgment, and the coming kingdom.

This biblical alternative is not less humane than the age's gospel. It is more humane because it tells the truth about human greatness and ruin. It honours the body without idolising it, values reason without deifying it, acknowledges suffering without making it sovereign, protects dignity without enthroning autonomy, and offers forgiveness without denying justice.

The true gospel does not ask the sinner to save himself. It announces that Christ has done what the self could never do.

Watchfulness in the Closing Moments of the Age

Christians have often misused eschatology by setting dates, identifying every political development as final fulfilment, or allowing speculation to replace holiness. Such errors should produce repentance, not indifference to prophecy.

Jesus repeatedly commands watchfulness. Readiness is not calculated from secret chronologies. It is expressed through faithful service, doctrinal vigilance, prayer, love, holiness, endurance, and gospel proclamation. The servant is ready when the Master finds him doing what he was commanded to do ([Matthew 24:42-46](#)).

The convergence of doctrinal confusion, moral inversion, spiritual counterfeits, technological power, institutional pressure, and religious apostasy should awaken the church. It does not permit certainty about details God has not revealed. It does intensify the duty to discern.

The author has elsewhere described himself as a "last-hour labourer," not because a date has been discovered, but because Christ's command makes every generation responsible to work while it is day. That posture is appropriate. The

time is short for every mortal person, even if the Lord delays. Death can close the door that history leaves open. Readiness is never wasted.

The church should therefore preach as though souls matter, worship as though God is present, govern as though leaders will give account, use technology as though tools shape users, teach children as though formation is contested, and love enemies as though Christ may call them today.

Urgency must not become panic. Panic narrows judgment and feeds manipulation. Biblical urgency is steady. It keeps oil in the lamp, truth in the mouth, mercy in the hand, and hope fixed on the appearing of Christ.

Conclusion: Technologically New, Spiritually Ancient

The gospel according to the age promises humanity that it can be free by becoming its own authority. It replaces revelation with autonomous judgment, creaturely identity with self-creation, obedience with desire, holiness with pleasure, repentance with therapy, redemption with political liberation, resurrection with technological transcendence, providence with progress, and faithfulness with relevance.

Its power lies partly in the genuine goods it attaches to its revolt. It speaks through compassion, rights, healing, knowledge, efficiency, inclusion, and progress. These goods should not be despised. They should be restored to their rightful place beneath God. Compassion without truth becomes abandonment. Rights without duties become weapons of the will. Knowledge without wisdom magnifies power. Progress without providence forgets judgment. Inclusion without transformation leaves the captive praised but unfreed.

The church's first task is not to become more fashionable than the age or angrier than it. It is to become faithful to Christ. That requires renewed minds, disciplined evidence, holy courage, patient teaching, accountable leadership, protection of the vulnerable, repentance for hypocrisy, and love that refuses both cruelty and deception.

The counterfeit gospel is modern in its institutions, vocabulary, and technologies. Its spiritual logic is ancient. Before there was a university, a platform, an algorithm, a therapeutic industry, or a modern state, the serpent questioned God's Word, portrayed His boundary as oppression, appealed to desire, denied judgment, and promised godlike autonomy.

To understand the modern revolt, we must therefore travel backward before moving forward. The next chapter, "The Ancient Rebellion and the Genealogy of Modernism," traces the road from Eden and Babel through the intellectual streams that taught autonomous humanity to rename rebellion as enlightenment. The machinery is new. The voice in the garden is not.

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