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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 3

The War Against Truth, Revelation, and Meaning

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Abstract

This chapter examines the modern conflict over objective truth, divine revelation, stable meaning, reliable evidence, and the authority to name reality. Building upon the preceding diagnosis of modernism as a rival gospel and its historical genealogy, it argues that the transfer of final authority from God to autonomous humanity inevitably produces a struggle over language, knowledge, credibility, and information control. Through sustained engagement with [John 8](#), [John 14](#), [John 17](#), [Isaiah 5](#), [Ephesians 4](#), and related passages, the chapter develops a biblical account of truth grounded in God's character, manifested in Jesus Christ, authoritatively communicated in Scripture, and faithfully witnessed through truthful speech and just judgment. It distinguishes objective truth from certainty, perspective from relativism, testimony from personal sovereignty, expertise from expert idolatry, and responsible moderation from censorship. It critically engages subjectivism, perspectivism, social constructionism, postmodern language theory, propaganda, framing, information disorder, institutional gatekeeping, algorithmic amplification, and the contemporary crisis of trust. Current evidence concerning declining trust in news, platform-mediated information, online manipulation, publication bias, misinformation, and digital repression is considered without treating institutions as infallible or every counter-narrative as credible. The chapter also confronts falsehood within churches, including fabricated testimonies, exaggerated miracles, deceptive fundraising, plagiarism, rumours, and the misuse of spiritual authority to silence examination. It concludes with a constructive biblical discipline of truth-seeking, correction, repentance, restitution, faithful witness, and readiness for Christ's return. In the last second before midnight, the church must not defend truth by falsehood, confuse suspicion with discernment, or surrender revelation to the managed vocabulary of the age.

Keywords: biblical truth; divine revelation; post-truth culture; propaganda; misinformation; language and power; Christian discernment

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When the Dictionary Becomes a Battlefield

A generation can lose truth without burning every Bible, closing every church, or outlawing every sermon. It need only change the meanings of the words by which the Bible is heard. If love comes to mean unconditional affirmation, repentance will sound hateful. If freedom comes to mean release from every given moral limit, obedience will sound like bondage. If inclusion means recognition without transformation, holiness will appear cruel. If harm includes the discomfort of contradiction, correction will be reclassified as violence. If truth becomes a possession of the self, the sentence "God has spoken" will be heard not as liberation but as an invasion.

The dictionary then becomes a battlefield. The struggle is not merely over vocabulary, because vocabulary carries judgments about reality. A word can function like a window through which something is seen, or like stained glass that colours everything before the observer notices. It can also become a courtroom. Once the approved definition has already assigned innocence to one side and guilt to the other, debate begins after the verdict has been delivered.

This is one reason the present age can proclaim tolerance while becoming increasingly unable to tolerate moral disagreement. It can praise diversity while narrowing the range of publicly acceptable conclusions. It can celebrate authenticity while requiring institutions to certify selected accounts of the self. It can condemn propaganda while employing emotionally loaded categories that place dissent outside respectable conversation. It can appeal to expertise when expertise supports a preferred policy, then dismiss expertise as captured when it does not. It can accuse established media of manufacturing consent while alternative media manufacture outrage. The same society may distrust every institution and yet place astonishing confidence in a short video, an anonymous document, a forwarded voice note, or a charismatic personality who claims to reveal what "they" do not want the public to know.

The crisis is not a simple contest between official lies and hidden truth. It is a wider disorder of authority, evidence, language, trust, and desire. Powerful institutions can suppress, select, distort, and protect themselves. Dissident communities can also exaggerate, fabricate, misread, and reward suspicion. Governments can invoke safety to silence lawful criticism. Platforms can invoke freedom while profiting from fraud, rage, and humiliation. Religious leaders can denounce secular manipulation while inventing testimonies, inflating numbers, circulating false quotations, or declaring every question an attack upon God's anointed.

The church must therefore enter this conflict with clean hands. It cannot expose propaganda by propaganda, defend Scripture with fabricated evidence, or rebuke the world's semantic manipulation while quietly redefining submission, blessing, revival, prophecy, and accountability for its own convenience. The God of truth is not honoured by useful falsehood.

Chapter 1 established that the modern age increasingly functions as a rival gospel by transferring final authority from God and His revelation to autonomous humanity. Chapter 2 traced the spiritual and intellectual streams through which that transfer acquired philosophical vocabulary, institutional force, psychological intimacy, and digital scale. The present chapter takes the next necessary step. Once the throne of authority has been contested, words, evidence, and credibility must also be contested. The central question becomes: who may define what is real, which testimony counts, what may be spoken, and which interpretation will govern conscience?

The answer cannot be secured by shouting "truth" more loudly than one's opponents. It requires a theology of truth, an ethic of evidence, a discipline of language, a doctrine of human fallibility, and a church willing to repent of its own false witness. It requires courage without recklessness, suspicion without cynicism, trust without idolatry, and intellectual humility without surrender. Above all, it requires submission to the One who did not merely teach true propositions but declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" ([John 14:6](#)).

Truth Is Not Created by the Speaker

Truth is often treated as though it were a tone of conviction. A person speaks sincerely, passionately, or painfully, and the intensity of the utterance is taken as evidence of its truth. Yet sincerity concerns the relationship between a speaker and what the speaker believes. Truth concerns the relationship between a claim and reality. A person may sincerely report what never happened, confidently interpret what was misunderstood, or passionately defend what is false. Sincerity matters morally, because deliberate deception differs from honest error, but sincerity cannot make reality conform to belief.

At its most basic, truth is that which corresponds to what is. The statement that a door is open is true if the door is open and false if it is not. Tarski's well-known semantic formulation, developed within a technical philosophical context, expressed this ordinary intuition: a true sentence says of what is that it is so (Tarski, 1944). Christian theology receives this correspondence within a larger doctrine of creation. Reality is not an independent realm that stands above God and obliges Him to conform. God is the Creator and measure of all things. He knows reality perfectly because all things depend upon His will, wisdom, and sustaining power. Truth is therefore grounded finally in the God who cannot lie ([Numbers 23:19](#); [Titus 1:2](#)).

This does not reduce every kind of truth to one form of sentence. Truth has several related dimensions. Propositional truth concerns claims that can be affirmed or denied. Historical truth concerns what occurred in time. Empirical knowledge concerns realities investigated through observation, measurement, comparison, and testing. Moral truth concerns what is good, evil, just, faithful, or required. Personal knowledge concerns knowing someone rather than merely knowing statements about that person. Relational faithfulness concerns integrity, reliability, and keeping covenant. Biblical language can bring these

dimensions together. God speaks truth, acts faithfully, reveals Himself, judges rightly, and fulfils His promises.

Meaning is also not identical to truth. Meaning concerns what words, actions, symbols, or texts communicate. A sentence can be meaningful and false. A lie must normally possess enough stable meaning to deceive. Interpretation is the human activity of understanding meaning and assessing truth. Interpretation is unavoidable, but it is not unlimited. The existence of interpretation does not imply that every reading is equally faithful. A medical scan requires interpretation, yet the body constrains what a competent interpretation may conclude. A legal text requires interpretation, yet grammar, context, purpose, precedent, and evidence constrain the judge. Scripture requires interpretation, yet its words, literary forms, historical settings, canonical unity, and divine authorship exclude many meanings that readers may wish to impose.

Perspective names the location from which a knower sees. Every creature knows from somewhere. We inhabit bodies, languages, histories, communities, disciplines, and traditions. Perspective can reveal dimensions of reality that another observer has overlooked. A victim may know an institution's cruelty in a way its administrator does not. A local community may understand a policy's consequences differently from an international consultant. A woman, a man, a child, a worker, an immigrant, a physician, and a pastor may bring different knowledge to the same event. These differences should cultivate humility and listening.

Yet perspective does not create separate realities. Several witnesses may see different sides of one collision, but they do not thereby create several collisions. Their accounts can be partial, complementary, mistaken, or contradictory. The task of truth-seeking is to hear them, test them, compare them with available evidence, and seek an account adequate to what occurred.

Opinion is a judgment held with varying degrees of confidence. Probability expresses uncertainty about whether a claim is true. Certainty is the strength with which a person holds a belief, not a magical quality that guarantees correctness. Evidence is that which supports or undermines a claim. Testimony is evidence supplied by a witness. Consensus is substantial agreement among relevant persons, often experts, and can be weighty evidence when it emerges through transparent and competent inquiry. None of these should be confused with truth itself. A consensus may recognise truth or preserve error. A minority may expose truth or defend fantasy. The number of believers neither creates nor abolishes reality.

This distinction is spiritually indispensable. When Paul writes, "Let God be true, even though everyone is a liar" ([Romans 3:4](#)), he does not commend private arrogance. He declares the absolute faithfulness of God against the universal fallibility and sinfulness of humanity. Scripture does not teach, "Let me be true though every institution lies." The self is included among the possible liars. Christian nonconformity begins not with confidence in one's independence but with repentance before the God who judges every heart.

The God of Truth and the World He Made

A biblical doctrine of truth begins before human speech. God is not truthful because He obeys a standard external to Himself. Truthfulness belongs to His holy character. He neither deceives nor misperceives. His knowledge is neither partial nor acquired. He does not discover facts, revise hypotheses, or learn what creation has become. "His understanding is infinite" ([Psalm 147:5](#)). Every creature is uncovered before Him ([Hebrews 4:13](#)).

Because God created by His Word, creation possesses an intelligible order. The world is not divine, but neither is it absurd. Human beings can investigate it because the same God who made the world made the human mind. This is not a promise that every inquiry will be easy or every interpretation correct. The fall affects desire, judgment, institutions, and attention. Nevertheless, the possibility of knowledge rests upon a created correspondence among the knower, the world known, and the God who knows both perfectly.

Revelation is God's gracious communication of what creatures could not know adequately by autonomous discovery. Creation displays His power and divine nature ([Romans 1:19-20](#)), conscience bears moral witness ([Romans 2:14-16](#)), and providence leaves humanity without excuse. Yet saving knowledge depends upon God's special revelation, climactically in Christ and authoritatively in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures.

Revelation does not mean that every private impression is divine speech. The church's contemporary crisis is worsened whenever "God told me" is used to bypass evidence, close discussion, secure obedience, or protect a leader from correction. The Holy Spirit illuminates the written Word and guides believers into truth, but He does not make the believer individually infallible. A claim to revelation must be tested by Scripture, doctrine, fruit, context, and the order God has given to His church ([1 John 4:1-6](#); [1 Corinthians 14:29](#)).

This distinction protects both faith and truth. It refuses the rationalist assumption that God may speak only within boundaries established by autonomous reason. It also refuses spiritual authoritarianism, where a human voice claims divine immunity. Sola Scriptura places universities, governments, media organisations, councils, pastors, prophets, traditions, experiences, and private interpretations beneath the written Word. It does not enthrone the isolated reader. It summons the whole church to careful, humble, contextually responsible obedience.

The author's earlier work on rationalism and empiricism rightly insisted that reason and observation are valuable but cannot become the sole arbiters of spiritual truth (Sangwa, 2024a). That claim should not be interpreted as permission for irrationality. The alternative to autonomous reason is not the abandonment of reason, but reason restored to creaturely service. The alternative to reductionist empiricism is not indifference to evidence, but recognition that reality is larger than what one method can measure.

Christ, the Truth in Person

Jesus' declaration, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" ([John 14:6](#)), is often quoted to defend the exclusivity of salvation. It does that, but its significance is even larger. Christ does not say merely that He speaks truth or points toward truth. Truth is inseparable from His person as the eternal Son who reveals the Father.

This personal character of truth does not dissolve truth into relationship or private encounter. The Jesus who is Truth makes definite claims. He identifies Himself as pre-existent ([John 8:58](#)), interprets Scripture as God's Word ([Matthew 22:31-32](#)), names hypocrisy, promises resurrection, announces judgment, exposes false teachers, and commands repentance. To know Him is not to escape propositions but to receive the One whose words are spirit and life ([John 6:63](#)).

The conflict in [John 8:31-47](#) reveals that the battle over truth is moral and spiritual as well as intellectual. Jesus speaks to people who claim descent from Abraham and possess religious confidence. He tells those who continue in His Word that they will know the truth and the truth will set them free. His hearers resist because they interpret freedom politically and genealogically. They have never been enslaved, they say, although their national history and present occupation make the claim painfully ironic. Jesus locates the deeper bondage in sin.

Truth liberates because falsehood is not merely inaccurate information. It is part of moral captivity. The person who practises sin becomes its slave. The hearers cannot receive Christ's Word because they desire to kill the One who tells them the truth. Their epistemic failure grows from disordered allegiance. They have evidence before them, but truth threatens identity, status, and desire.

Jesus then identifies the fatherhood behind falsehood. The devil "does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies" ([John 8:44](#)). This does not mean that every human error is a conscious demonic plot. People misunderstand, forget, infer badly, and repeat what they sincerely believe. Yet deliberate falsehood shares the enemy's moral character. Deception kills because it separates people from reality, justice, repentance, and God.

The cross is the supreme exposure of propaganda. Religious leaders present Jesus as a threat to order. Political authority asks, "What is truth?" ([John 18:38](#)) while Truth stands before him. A crowd is mobilised. False testimony is sought. The innocent is condemned as dangerous, and the murderer is released. Yet the apparent victory of the lie becomes the means through which God defeats the liar. Christ bears sin, rises bodily, and establishes that no managed narrative can overturn the Father's verdict.

Christian truth-telling is therefore cruciform. It does not seek victory through manipulation. It may suffer misrepresentation without adopting the enemy's methods. It tells truth even when truth costs reputation, access, security, or life. It refuses the fantasy that the kingdom needs a lie to survive.

Sanctified by the Word of Truth

In His high-priestly prayer, Jesus asks the Father, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" ([John 17:17](#)). The statement joins truth and holiness. Scripture does not exist merely to win debates or classify opponents. It separates God's people from the world by renewing belief, desire, worship, and conduct.

The Word is truth because it proceeds from the God of truth. Its authority does not depend upon the moral approval of the age, the vote of a council, the prestige of a university, or the psychological comfort of the reader. Human beings must interpret it, but they do not create its authority. The church recognises the voice of its Shepherd; it does not appoint Him.

This is why semantic capture is so dangerous inside Christianity. A church may continue quoting biblical words while detaching them from biblical judgments. Grace can become exemption from repentance. Faith can become positive expectation. Blessing can become material increase. Prophecy can become fortune-telling. Worship can become emotional stimulation. Justice can become the programme of a political coalition. Unity can become silence about doctrine. Love can become the refusal to warn.

The words remain in the sanctuary, but their meanings have been converted. Scripture is then made to bless what it was given to expose. The church does not formally deny revelation. It domesticates revelation by a revised dictionary.

Paul describes the opposite in [Ephesians 4:14-25](#). Maturity protects believers from being "tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit." The answer is not merely collecting correct propositions. The body grows by "speaking the truth in love" and putting away lying. Truth is ecclesial, moral, and relational. It forms a people whose members refuse to manipulate one another.

Love does not soften truth into ambiguity. Truth does not harden love into cruelty. The apostolic phrase does not offer two competing virtues that must be balanced by compromise. Love seeks the genuine good of the neighbour under God, and therefore cannot consent to deception. Truth is spoken as one who has received mercy, and therefore cannot delight in humiliation.

Reason, Evidence, and the Humility of the Creature

The war against truth produces two opposite temptations among Christians. One is capitulation to whatever carries institutional prestige. The other is retreat into anti-intellectual suspicion. The first treats credentials as infallibility. The second treats outsider status as proof of truth. Both evade the difficult labour of judgment.

Scripture honours reasoned examination. The Bereans receive Paul's message eagerly and examine the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so ([Acts](#)

[17:10-12](#)). Proverbs warns against answering before listening and observes that the first account seems right until another examines it ([Proverbs 18:13-17](#)). Israelite law requires multiple witnesses in grave matters and punishes malicious testimony ([Deuteronomy 19:15-21](#)). These are not secular additions to faith. They are expressions of God's justice.

Evidence is morally important because people can be harmed by what others say about them. A rumour may destroy a marriage, ministry, career, or reputation. A false accusation can imprison the innocent. An exaggerated testimony can manipulate the sick. A fabricated statistic can redirect public resources. A distorted quotation can make an opponent appear monstrous. The ninth commandment, "Do not give false testimony against your neighbour" ([Exodus 20:16](#)), therefore reaches far beyond perjury. It governs forwarding, editing, captioning, preaching, reporting, reviewing, and posting.

Human reason remains finite and fallen. Finite means that no creature sees everything. Fallen means that intellectual error is not always innocent. We prefer conclusions that protect identity, profit, desire, and belonging. Research on misinformation confirms that belief revision is shaped by cognitive, social, and affective factors, and that false information can continue influencing reasoning even after correction (Ecker et al., 2022; Lewandowsky et al., 2012). This evidence does not replace the biblical doctrine of the heart, but it illustrates how deeply belief can become attached to narrative.

Deliberation can improve discernment. Experimental work has found that careful reflection often reduces belief in false headlines rather than merely rationalising partisan preference (Pennycook & Rand, 2019). The practical implication is not that reason saves, but that haste is dangerous. "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger" ([James 1:19](#)) is also an epistemic discipline.

The Christian scholar, journalist, pastor, and citizen should therefore practise calibrated confidence. Some claims are certain because God has clearly revealed them. Some are strongly supported by converging evidence. Some are probable. Some remain contested. Some are possible but unproved. Some are contradicted by reliable evidence. Faithfulness requires saying which is which.

A hypothesis should not be preached as a fact. An inference should not be introduced as a quotation. A possibility should not be announced as fulfilled prophecy. An anonymous message should not be shared merely because it confirms what the receiver already fears. The servant of truth must be willing to say, "I do not know," "the evidence is incomplete," "I was mistaken," and "I withdraw the claim."

Such humility is not weakness. It is resistance to the original temptation to know good and evil as though one were God.

"My Truth": Testimony Without Sovereignty

Few expressions capture the moral atmosphere of the present age more clearly than "my truth." The phrase should not be dismissed without listening.

A person may use it to mean, “This is what I experienced,” “This is how the event appeared to me,” “This is the testimony that powerful people refused to hear,” or “This is the interpretation by which I have tried to make sense of suffering.” In communities where victims were silenced, where official histories concealed abuse, or where respectable institutions protected their own reputation, the insistence that a neglected voice must be heard may be morally necessary.

Scripture repeatedly listens to those whom power overlooks. Hagar names the Lord as the God who sees her ([Genesis 16:13](#)). The blood of Abel cries from the ground ([Genesis 4:10](#)). The Lord hears Israel’s groaning under oppression ([Exodus 2:23-25](#)). The prophets condemn courts that disregard the poor, and Jesus receives people whose testimony respectable society had already disqualified. Biblical truth is not the property of the powerful.

Yet testimony must not be confused with sovereignty. A person owns the responsibility to speak honestly about experience, but no person owns truth itself. Experience is real, while interpretations of experience may be partial, mistaken, or morally shaped. Pain deserves compassion, but pain does not produce omniscience. A memory may be sincere and incomplete. A perception may be vivid and inaccurate. A community may correctly identify an injustice and still misunderstand its cause or prescribe an unjust remedy.

The distinction is not a weapon for silencing victims. It is a protection for every person, including victims. When an allegation is treated as unquestionable merely because it is emotionally powerful, the accused may be condemned without evidence. When testimony is dismissed merely because it threatens an institution, the wounded may be abandoned. Biblical justice refuses both errors. It listens without prejudice, investigates without contempt, requires corroboration proportionate to the claim, protects the vulnerable, and remembers that God judges both the false accuser and the powerful offender.

Modern psychology has documented the fallibility of memory, the persistence of misinformation after correction, and the influence of social identity, repetition, familiarity, and emotion upon belief (Ecker et al., 2022; Lewandowsky et al., 2012). These findings do not mean that testimony is worthless. Courts, history, pastoral care, and ordinary relationships depend upon testimony. They mean that testimony should be received as evidence, not enthroned as revelation.

The phrase “my truth” becomes spiritually dangerous when it means, “My inward certainty is morally final.” At that point, the self no longer offers testimony about reality. It claims jurisdiction over reality. Correction becomes aggression because disagreement threatens an identity built upon unquestionable interpretation. Repentance becomes nearly impossible because the self has granted itself authority to acquit its own desires.

The gospel offers something more merciful than emotional sovereignty. It allows the wounded person to be seen without declaring every interpretation infallible. It allows the guilty person to confess without being annihilated, because forgiveness rests in Christ rather than self-justification. It allows the falsely accused to appeal beyond the crowd to the Judge who knows all things. It

permits every person to say, “This is what I experienced,” while requiring every person also to pray, “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me” ([Psalm 139:23-24](#)).

Personal testimony is precious. It becomes idolatrous when it asks to sit where only God may sit.

Relativism, Subjectivism, Perspectivism, and Constructivism

Several intellectual positions are often gathered under the label relativism, but precision is necessary. Subjectivism locates truth or value primarily in the individual subject. Cultural relativism emphasises the variation of beliefs and practices across societies and may be descriptive or normative. Perspectivism stresses that knowledge is always approached from a situated viewpoint. Social constructivism examines how categories, institutions, and meanings are produced through social interaction. Postmodern theories often investigate language, power, difference, historical contingency, and the instability of supposedly neutral classifications.

These positions are not identical, and each can disclose something important. Human beings are situated knowers. Language is learned within communities. Institutions classify people and events. Historical circumstances shape which questions are asked, which evidence is preserved, and which voices receive credibility. Categories such as currency, citizenship, professional status, legal ownership, and institutional rank depend upon social recognition. Berger and Luckmann (1966) showed how social worlds become institutionalised and experienced as objective realities. Searle (1995) distinguished brute facts, such as physical properties, from institutional facts that exist because communities assign functions through rules and recognition.

Such insights can expose the misuse of the word natural to protect custom, the misuse of neutrality to conceal interest, and the misuse of objectivity to silence inconvenient testimony. Colonial administrations classified peoples for political purposes. Racial hierarchies borrowed scientific vocabulary. Churches have sometimes treated cultural habits as divine commands. Professional guilds can define competence in ways that protect insiders. Media organisations inevitably select which events deserve attention. A Christian account of the fall should expect power to shape institutions and language.

The error begins when construction is made total. A currency is socially instituted, but the paper still exists. A legal status is constructed, but the human person is not created by the state. Social meanings can shape the interpretation of the body, but they do not create the body’s material and creational reality. A court can redefine marriage in law, but it cannot rewrite the Creator’s purpose. A university can exclude revelation from authorised knowledge, but it cannot make God absent.

Hacking (1999) cautioned that claims of social construction differ greatly according to what is being described and what political work the claim is intended to perform. The question “Is this constructed?” is therefore insufficient. We must ask what has been constructed, by whom, through which mechanisms, upon what underlying reality, and with what moral consequences.

Perspectivism likewise contains a truth and a temptation. Nietzsche’s suspicion of claims to detached knowledge challenged intellectual pretence. Human beings do not observe reality from nowhere. Yet the inference from “all human knowing is perspectival” to “there is no objective truth” does not follow. A map is drawn from a perspective and may still correspond accurately to terrain. Several maps may emphasise roads, elevation, vegetation, or political boundaries without creating several earths.

Relativism often presents itself as humility, but it can become a concealed absolutism. The statement “There is no universal truth” is offered universally. The claim “All morality is culturally relative” is used to condemn cultures that affirm universal moral law. The assertion that every truth claim is an exercise of power is itself a truth claim seeking power. A theory may expose the location of other speakers while treating its own location as exempt.

The moral difficulty is even greater. If moral truth is only the product of preference, community, or power, no final standard exists by which slavery, genocide, abuse, exploitation, or deception may be condemned when a dominant society approves them. One may oppose oppression because one’s group dislikes it, but one cannot say that the oppressor is objectively wrong. The language of justice then borrows authority from a moral order the theory cannot acknowledge.

Biblical faith offers neither naïve objectivism nor relativist surrender. It affirms that God knows perfectly and creatures know dependently. It affirms that human location matters and that sin distorts every community. It commands listening, interpretation, evidence, correction, and humility. Yet it also declares that truth is not imprisoned within perspective because God has spoken into history. The creature’s view is partial; the Creator’s Word is not.

This is why revelation is mercy. Without it, the powerful may define reality and the powerless may answer only with counter-power. With revelation, both ruler and victim stand beneath a Judge who cannot be bribed. Scripture does not make human interpretation unnecessary. It makes human interpretation accountable.

Language, Reality, and the Politics of Meaning

Words are not neutral containers. They carry histories, associations, moral judgments, and social consequences. Through words, covenants are made, laws are enacted, children are taught, defendants are accused, reputations are destroyed, wounds are confessed, and the gospel is preached. James compares the

tongue to a small fire capable of setting a forest ablaze ([James 3:1-12](#)). The metaphor is not exaggeration. Language can move armies, divide churches, incite violence, or rescue the falsely condemned.

Language changes naturally. New technologies require new words. Older terms acquire specialised meanings. Translation adapts expression across contexts. Not every semantic development is deception. The decisive question is whether changing language clarifies reality or conceals a moral revolution.

A redefinition can settle an argument before the argument begins. If disagreement is defined as hatred, the dissenter has already been judged. If correction is defined as violence, biblical discipline becomes abuse by definition. If every unwelcome emotion is harm, institutions are authorised to suppress whatever causes discomfort. If inclusion requires moral affirmation, a church cannot include sinners while calling them to repentance. If tolerance is redefined from patient coexistence to celebratory approval, refusal to celebrate becomes intolerance.

Isaiah pronounces woe upon those who “call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness” ([Isaiah 5:20-21](#)). The judgment concerns more than private vocabulary. Israel’s leaders had corrupted justice, pursued wealth, celebrated excess, and become wise in their own eyes. Semantic inversion served moral inversion. Words were rearranged so that sin could appear respectable and righteousness could appear dangerous.

The modern dictionary has become a battlefield because public morality increasingly depends upon contested definitions. Love may mean willing another’s genuine good under God, or it may mean affirming every self-description. Justice may mean impartial conformity to righteousness, or it may be reduced to the redistribution of power among identity groups. Equality may mean equal dignity and impartial treatment, while equity may mean the adjustment of outcomes according to a theory of structural disadvantage. Each term can identify legitimate concerns, yet each can also become an instrument of ideological compulsion when its meaning is insulated from examination.

Dignity is frequently invoked without an account of what a human being is. In Scripture, dignity is bestowed by creation in God’s image. It belongs to the unborn child, the disabled person, the prisoner, the foreigner, the elderly, the sinner, and the enemy. If dignity is grounded instead in autonomy, self-consciousness, productivity, social recognition, or desired identity, those unable to exercise such capacities become vulnerable.

Freedom can mean liberation from slavery, coercion, ignorance, sin, or unjust domination. It can also mean the absence of every externally given moral limit. Biblical freedom is not the power to become one’s own god. It is release from condemnation and slavery to sin so that one may serve God and neighbour ([Romans 6:15-23](#); [Galatians 5:13](#)).

Safety is a genuine good. Governments, schools, churches, and platforms should protect people from violence, exploitation, harassment, fraud, and credible threats. Yet safety language can expand until exposure to disagreement is treated as danger. A culture unable to distinguish threat from offence will eventually grant authorities power to silence in the name of protection.

Harm is similarly complex. Words can injure, lies can destroy, and humiliation can produce lasting trauma. Christians should not hide cruelty behind free speech. Nevertheless, if harm includes every challenged belief or disturbed feeling, truth itself becomes harmful whenever it confronts sin. The prophets, John the Baptist, the apostles, and Christ would all violate a morality that equates discomfort with injury.

The word misinformation names false or misleading information shared without necessarily intending deception, while disinformation usually refers to falsehood spread deliberately. These distinctions can improve analysis (Fallis, 2015; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Yet the labels can become substitutes for argument when authorities attach them to disputed claims without disclosing evidence, standards, uncertainty, or avenues of appeal. Conversely, critics may call every correction censorship and every rejected claim suppressed truth. Both manoeuvres replace examination with labelling.

Extremism can identify movements committed to violence, totalitarian control, or dehumanising ideology. It becomes dangerous when defined so broadly that firm religious conviction, peaceful dissent, or unpopular moral teaching is treated as a precursor to violence without evidence. The state has a duty to restrain wrongdoing, not to possess the conscience.

The same warning applies inside the church. “Touch not the Lord’s anointed” can be detached from its biblical context and used to immunise leaders from accountability. “Submission” can be redefined as absolute obedience to a pastor. “Honour” can mean silence about abuse. “Unity” can mean protection of reputation. “Grace” can mean the suspension of consequences. “Spiritual covering” can become a structure of dependency not taught in Scripture.

When language is captured, people may continue using Christian words while living within another moral universe. The sign on the building has not changed, but the road beneath it now leads elsewhere.

From Language Games to Regimes of Truth

Twentieth-century philosophy intensified attention to the relationship between language, meaning, social practice, and power. These thinkers should be read carefully rather than reduced to slogans.

Wittgenstein’s later philosophy emphasised that the meaning of a word is often found in its use within a “language game” and form of life (Wittgenstein, 1953/2009). His work challenged the assumption that every meaningful word names a simple object. Words function within practices, rules, relationships, and contexts. The word promise, for example, cannot be understood apart from social practices of obligation and trust.

This insight is compatible with much ordinary biblical interpretation. The meaning of covenant, sacrifice, justification, church, or kingdom cannot be recovered by consulting an isolated dictionary entry alone. Words operate within sentences, narratives, institutions, and the canon as a whole. Yet

contextual meaning does not imply that communities may make words mean anything. Language games remain answerable to the realities and practices they describe. A community can misuse a word, lie through a word, or alter a word to conceal what it is doing.

Derrida examined the dependence of meaning upon difference, context, and traces of other signs, challenging the fantasy of perfectly self-present meaning (Derrida, 1967/1997). His work drew attention to exclusions and tensions within texts and conceptual oppositions. Christian interpreters need not fear close reading or awareness of ambiguity. Scripture itself distinguishes wise interpretation from careless reading. Yet if instability becomes so extensive that determinate meaning cannot be responsibly affirmed, communication, promise, command, confession, and criticism all become impossible. Deconstruction can expose concealment, but it cannot serve as a final theology of revelation.

Foucault investigated the relationships among knowledge, institutions, discipline, classification, and power. He showed how prisons, clinics, schools, and other institutions do not merely discover neutral categories but participate in producing norms and subjects (Foucault, 1975/1995, 1980). This analysis can illuminate how professional authority becomes self-protective, how institutional routines shape what counts as normal, and how claims of benevolence can coexist with surveillance and control.

Christians should receive such criticism where it tells the truth. Religious institutions also create vocabularies that can protect power. A victim may be called rebellious. A whistle-blower may be described as bitter. A question may be labelled divisive. A leader's preference may be presented as divine order. The church dishonours Scripture when it dismisses every analysis of power merely because the analyst was not a Christian.

Yet Foucault's legacy also raises a decisive question. If truth is understood chiefly through regimes that produce and regulate knowledge, by what truth is one regime judged oppressive? Power can explain why a claim is authorised; it cannot by itself determine whether the claim corresponds to reality or whether the power is just. The exposure of domination requires a standard not reducible to another arrangement of domination.

Lyotard described the postmodern condition through distrust of comprehensive legitimating narratives (Lyotard, 1979/1984). Such suspicion can expose empires that baptise conquest as progress, governments that call repression security, and churches that describe institutional growth as divine approval. Yet Christianity cannot become faithful by abandoning its metanarrative. Creation, fall, covenant, incarnation, cross, resurrection, judgment, and new creation are not one tribal story asking for private permission. They are God's account of reality.

Rorty proposed solidarity without appeal to timeless foundations, hoping that liberal societies could cultivate compassion through conversation, redescriptions, and enlarged imagination (Rorty, 1989). His rejection of cruelty is morally serious. The difficulty is that solidarity without truth remains vulnerable to the communities that define some people outside the circle of

concern. Compassion needs more than preferred vocabulary. It needs a reason why every neighbour possesses value even when society does not recognise it.

Postmodern language theory therefore performs a double service and a double danger. It unmask claims that pretend to stand outside history, language, and interest. It also tempts the reader to believe that unmasking is the highest form of knowledge. Suspicion becomes a sacrament. Every confession is interpreted as strategy, every doctrine as power, every moral claim as positioning.

Scripture goes deeper than suspicion because it judges both the claim and the critic. It exposes power while exposing envy, hypocrisy, resentment, pride, and the desire to dominate in those who oppose power. No class, identity, institution, or counter-institution receives moral innocence. The Word discerns the thoughts and intentions of every heart ([Hebrews 4:12-13](#)).

The Christian answer is therefore not to deny that language and power interact. It is to refuse the claim that power is ultimate. Above every regime of truth stands the God of truth. Above every institution stands the Judge. Above every dictionary stands the Word through whom all things were made.

The Post-Truth Condition

Falsehood is ancient. Cain lied about Abel. Jacob deceived his father. Jezebel arranged false witnesses. Political rulers commissioned flattering histories. Empires circulated propaganda, religious authorities concealed corruption, and crowds repeated rumours. The present age did not invent deception.

What has changed is the environment through which deception travels. The modern person inhabits an information system marked by abundance, speed, permanent connectivity, weakened shared authorities, commercial competition for attention, and tools capable of producing persuasive text, images, audio, and video at extraordinary scale. The public square resembles a hall of mirrors in which every reflection arrives with a caption announcing that it is the original.

The term post-truth does not mean that facts have ceased to exist. It describes conditions in which factual accuracy is repeatedly subordinated to emotional appeal, identity, political loyalty, strategic usefulness, or social belonging. A claim is welcomed because it feels morally satisfying, protects the group, humiliates an enemy, or confirms what the audience already fears. Its value lies less in whether it is true than in what sharing it performs.

Research on misinformation consistently identifies the interaction of cognitive, social, affective, technological, and political factors (Broda & Strömbäck, 2024; Ecker et al., 2022). False information may persist after correction because people build explanations around it, encounter it repeatedly, or receive it from trusted members of their group. Correcting a claim does not automatically dismantle the narrative into which the claim has been fitted.

The information ecosystem also rewards emotion. McLoughlin et al. (2024) examined more than one million Facebook links, tens of thousands of posts on X, and controlled experiments. They found that misinformation sources tended

to evoke more outrage than trustworthy sources and that outrage facilitated sharing, including sharing without first reading the linked material. This does not prove that outrage is always wrong. The prophets were morally outraged by injustice, and Jesus denounced hypocrisy. It shows that outrage can perform its social function before truth has been examined.

The spiritual application is severe. A Christian may share a false story because it appears to defend Christianity, expose immorality, confirm prophecy, or discredit an ideological opponent. The motive feels righteous, so verification is treated as unnecessary. Yet a lie does not become holy when it is enlisted in a holy cause. God does not need counterfeit evidence.

Current patterns of news consumption intensify the challenge. The Reuters Institute's *Digital News Report 2026*, based on surveys across 48 markets, reported that social and video networks had become the most widely used weekly source of news globally, reaching 54 per cent of respondents. Seventy-seven per cent consumed online news video weekly. Ten per cent used standalone AI chatbots for news, rising to 16 per cent among people under thirty-five. At the same time, overall trust in news had fallen to 37 per cent, while trust in news from social media and AI chatbots was lower still (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2026).

These figures should be interpreted carefully. A global survey does not describe every country or person, and platform use is not evidence of deception. Social media can expose abuse, distribute eyewitness evidence, connect isolated communities, and widen access to information. AI tools can explain complex material and help users locate sources. The concern is mediation. Increasing numbers receive public knowledge through systems whose ranking processes, commercial incentives, source selection, and summarising practices remain partly invisible.

Information abundance can therefore produce epistemic poverty. People possess more messages and less time to examine them. They become familiar with conclusions but not evidence, names but not contexts, clips but not arguments, and confidence but not knowledge. The mind is not starved because nothing is available. It is starved because attention has been broken into fragments too small to nourish wisdom.

Post-truth culture also dissolves boundaries among reporting, commentary, activism, entertainment, advertising, pastoral speech, and personal branding. A creator may perform journalism without editorial accountability. A political message may arrive as comedy. A commercial recommendation may resemble testimony. A preacher may present speculation as prophetic insight. The audience receives a continuous stream in which every form competes under the same measures of visibility and engagement.

The answer cannot be nostalgia for an age of perfectly trustworthy gatekeepers. Such an age never existed. Newspapers have published propaganda. Broadcasters have protected governments. Clergy have suppressed evidence. Academic institutions have excluded truthful dissent. The answer is disciplined truth-seeking under God, strengthened rather than weakened by awareness of the present environment.

Propaganda: When Persuasion Becomes Management

All communication seeks some response. A teacher wants understanding, an evangelist calls for repentance, a lawyer presents a case, a public-health official recommends action, and a journalist directs attention toward an event. Persuasion is not inherently manipulative. The moral question concerns truthfulness, transparency, freedom, evidence, and the treatment of the audience.

Propaganda is difficult to define because the word is often reserved for messages one dislikes. A useful distinction identifies propaganda as communication designed to manage perception and behaviour through selective, emotionally charged, or strategically misleading representation, especially when the communicator conceals relevant purposes, evidence, or alternatives (Ellul, 1965; Stanley, 2015). Propaganda may contain false statements, but it can also manipulate through technically accurate fragments arranged to produce a materially false impression.

Lippmann (1922) observed that citizens act upon “pictures in their heads” formed through mediated information. Bernays (1928) described the deliberate organisation of public opinion through public relations. These works emerged in societies experiencing mass media, industrial communication, and political mobilisation. The central insight remains: most people cannot investigate every event directly, so those who select images, categories, authorities, and frames exercise considerable power.

Agenda-setting research showed that media influence can operate not only by telling audiences what to think but by shaping which matters they think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Framing theory further examines how selected aspects of reality are made salient in ways that define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and recommend remedies (Entman, 1993). Selection is unavoidable. No report can contain every fact. Manipulation begins when selection is designed to prevent the audience from perceiving material realities necessary for responsible judgment.

Propaganda frequently works through repetition. Familiarity can be mistaken for truth. It works through moral association, attaching a proposal to compassion, progress, safety, patriotism, science, justice, or faith before the proposal’s actual content is examined. It works through false binaries: either accept this policy or favour chaos; either affirm this identity claim or hate the person; either trust this institution entirely or reject all expertise; either support this leader or betray the nation.

Scapegoating condenses complex failures into a morally convenient enemy. Euphemism makes violence administratively clean. Demonisation makes ordinary human beings appear beyond compassion. Ridicule discourages inquiry by making the cost of asking greater than the cost of remaining ignorant. Information flooding overwhelms the capacity to distinguish significant evidence from noise. Manufactured urgency reduces the time available for

examination. Appeals to unnamed experts borrow authority without permitting scrutiny. Selective testimony gives the appearance of lived experience while excluding contrary witnesses.

Censorship by distraction may be more effective than prohibition. A society can lose important truth not because the truth is hidden, but because it is buried beneath endless novelty. A sermon, report, or documented abuse may remain technically accessible while attention is directed toward spectacle. Postman (1985) warned that public discourse could be trivialised by entertainment. In the digital environment, trivialisation is no longer limited to television. It is personalised, portable, and continuous.

Propaganda also uses moral asymmetry. The sins of opponents are interpreted as proof of their nature, while the sins of allies are treated as isolated mistakes. Evidence standards rise or fall according to political usefulness. A rumour about the enemy is shared as plausible; verified wrongdoing by one's own side is dismissed as hostile framing. This is not discernment. It is partiality.

Scripture condemns such unequal judgment. “Differing weights and varying measures are both detestable to the Lord” ([Proverbs 20:10](#)). The principle reaches intellectual life. If we demand primary evidence from opponents but accept anonymous messages from allies, we use differing weights. If we condemn emotional manipulation in secular media but practise it in fundraising or revival promotion, we use differing measures.

The church should therefore examine not only whether its message is doctrinally true but whether its methods are truthful. A preacher can quote a true verse while applying it deceptively. A ministry can show real poverty while implying that one donation will solve what it cannot solve. A Christian campaign can use a genuine threat to provoke irrational fear. A testimony can contain a real healing while concealing medical uncertainty or failures among others who were promised the same result.

The gospel persuades, but it does not manipulate. Paul renounced “shameful, secret things,” refused to act deceitfully or distort God’s Word, and commended himself to every person’s conscience by an open display of the truth ([2 Corinthians 4:1-6](#)). Apostolic proclamation appealed, reasoned, warned, and pleaded, but it did not manufacture conversion through concealed methods.

The servant of Christ must ask a question deeper than “Did the communication work?” He must ask, “Was it true, just, transparent, and worthy of the God whose name it carried?”

Expertise, Consensus, and the Temptation of Infallibility

Complex societies cannot function without expertise. A bridge should not be designed by popular vote. A diagnosis requires medical knowledge. Historical claims require competence in sources and context. Biblical interpretation benefits from languages, textual criticism, history, and theological discipline.

Peer review, professional standards, transparent methods, replication, and institutional memory can protect the public from error.

The fashionable contempt for expertise is therefore reckless. Watching several videos does not make a person an epidemiologist, engineer, jurist, historian, or biblical scholar. A confident outsider may notice what specialists missed, but outsider status does not confer competence. Humility includes recognising when another person knows more.

Consensus is also meaningful. When qualified investigators using different methods converge upon a conclusion, that agreement should normally increase confidence. The Christian who rejects every consensus merely because it is institutional can become proud in the name of independence. Proverbs commends counsel, and the New Testament recognises teachers whose service equips the church.

Yet expertise is not omniscience, and consensus is not revelation. Specialists remain finite persons working within institutions shaped by incentives, funding, reputational hierarchies, disciplinary assumptions, and social pressure. Peer review filters work; it does not canonise it. A published result may be methodologically weak. A respected theory may fail replication. A minority may be wrong, but a majority may preserve error because challenging it carries professional cost.

The reproducibility debates in several disciplines illustrate institutional fallibility without justifying contempt for science. Ioannidis (2005) analysed how study design, small samples, selective reporting, and flexibility can increase the probability of false findings. A large collaborative project later reported that many psychology findings did not reproduce with effects as strong as those originally published (Open Science Collaboration, 2015). Subsequent reforms have promoted preregistration, data sharing, registered reports, replication, and greater transparency (Munafò et al., 2017; Nosek et al., 2015).

The correct conclusion is not “science cannot be trusted.” The fact that scientific communities identify weaknesses and develop corrective practices demonstrates the value of disciplined inquiry. The conclusion is that science is strongest when it acknowledges fallibility, makes methods visible, invites replication, distinguishes data from interpretation, and permits correction.

The same applies to theology. A confession, commentary, seminary, or respected teacher may offer profound wisdom without becoming infallible. *Sola Scriptura* does not excuse the untrained individual from learning; it places learner and expert beneath the text. The scholar’s expertise makes interpretation more informed, not immune from judgment.

Institutional prestige becomes idolatrous when it is used to end inquiry rather than guide it. The phrase “experts say” is incomplete unless relevant questions are answered: Which experts? In what field? What methods did they use? How strong is the evidence? What uncertainty remains? Were conflicts of interest disclosed? Does the conclusion extend beyond the discipline’s competence? Is the claim descriptive, predictive, moral, or political?

A physician may estimate medical risks with expertise while possessing no special authority to define the meaning of personhood. An economist may model likely effects while lacking authority to determine which sacrifices are just. A platform engineer may identify patterns of harmful use without possessing moral sovereignty over speech. A theologian may interpret Scripture with learning while living in disobedience to what he teaches.

The institution's temptation is to turn competence into jurisdiction. The populist's temptation is to turn suspicion into knowledge. The Christian alternative is tested trust. We receive expertise with gratitude, examine its scope and evidence, remain open to correction, and refuse to grant any human authority the final word that belongs to God.

Gatekeeping, Censorship, and the Managed Public Square

Every institution sets boundaries. Journals reject manuscripts. Churches discipline false teachers. Schools establish curricula. Platforms moderate fraud, harassment, sexual exploitation, and threats. Governments restrain incitement and crime. A community without any gatekeeping does not become free of power. It allows the strongest, loudest, wealthiest, or most violent actors to dominate.

The strongest defence of moderation is therefore serious. False medical claims can delay treatment. Fabricated accusations can destroy lives. Coordinated harassment can silence vulnerable people. Terrorist propaganda can recruit. Fraudulent schemes can exploit the desperate. The systematic review by Borges do Nascimento et al. (2022) found that health misinformation during emergencies was associated with incorrect interpretations, delayed care, misallocation of resources, anxiety, divisive rhetoric, and vaccine hesitancy. Institutions that ignore such harms abandon responsibility.

UNESCO's guidelines for governing digital platforms attempt to hold two duties together: addressing misinformation, hate, and other risks while protecting freedom of expression and access to information. The guidelines emphasise transparency, due diligence, accountability, human-rights safeguards, and independent oversight (UNESCO, 2023). This balance is necessary because regulation without rights can become censorship, while freedom without responsibility can become an ecosystem of exploitation.

Gatekeeping becomes oppressive when its standards are vague, secret, selectively applied, ideologically insulated, or impossible to appeal. A lawful disagreement may be conflated with danger. A contested claim may be removed without disclosure of evidence. A publisher may avoid a subject not because the work is poor but because association carries reputational cost. A university may praise critical thinking while protecting favoured conclusions from criticism. A church may call investigation rebellion.

State censorship is especially serious because the state possesses coercive power. Freedom House reported in 2025 that global internet freedom had declined for the fifteenth consecutive year, with manipulation of online information among the most persistent forms of deterioration. Tactics included paid commentators, deceptive news sites, blocked access, surveillance, and AI-generated misleading content (Freedom House, 2025). These practices differ among countries and should not be collapsed into one global plot. They demonstrate, however, that information control is not imaginary.

Corporate moderation differs from state censorship, but its scale gives it public significance. A private platform may own its infrastructure, yet when a small number of services mediate political communication, news discovery, professional visibility, and social belonging, their rules shape the practical boundaries of speech. The moral issue is not merely whether they may moderate. It is whether their authority is transparent, proportionate, accountable, and open to correction.

Deplatforming can sometimes limit demonstrable harm. It can also convert disputed ideas into forbidden identities and strengthen the belief that institutions fear examination. Suppression does not prove that a suppressed claim is true. Authorities have removed falsehood. They have also suppressed truth. The act of removal is evidence of power, not evidence of the claim's accuracy.

Christians should therefore reject two simplistic conclusions. "It was censored, therefore it is true" is false. "It was moderated, therefore the decision was just" is equally false. Truth must still be investigated.

The author's earlier writings have repeatedly warned that terms such as misinformation and conspiracy can be used to dismiss inconvenient claims (Sangwa, 2024b, 2024c). That concern deserves preservation, but it must be strengthened by the evidentiary discipline required by Scripture. Some claims dismissed as conspiracy have later been documented. Other claims called suppressed truth were fabricated, exaggerated, or unsupported. The watchman who cannot distinguish them may warn the flock away from a shadow while a wolf enters from the other side.

The managed public square also exerts pressure through employment, accreditation, funding, search visibility, and social shame. The author's recent work on the pressure to privatise Christ observes that faith may be permitted as therapy or heritage while Christ's public lordship is treated as threatening (Sangwa, 2026). This pressure does not always amount to legal persecution, and it differs greatly across countries. Yet the pattern is spiritually recognisable. The age tolerates religion most easily when religion accepts the age's authority to define its permissible meaning.

A faithful church should use lawful freedoms, defend the conscience of others, and oppose genuine threats without pretending that every restriction is martyrdom. It should also prepare believers to speak truth peacefully when speaking carries cost. The goal is not unrestricted self-expression. It is faithful witness under the lordship of Christ.

Algorithms, Attention, and Invisible Gatekeepers

Digital platforms do not merely store information. They rank it. A search result, recommendation feed, trending list, or automated summary is an ordered presentation shaped by design choices. The system may consider relevance, popularity, recency, location, prior behaviour, predicted interest, commercial value, or safety rules. Each criterion can serve legitimate purposes. Together they form an architecture of visibility.

An algorithm is not an independent spirit. It is a designed procedure embedded within institutions, datasets, business models, legal constraints, and human decisions. The moral danger lies in treating its outputs as though they emerged neutrally from reality. Every ranking answers a practical question about what should appear first, what should be hidden, and which behaviour should be rewarded.

Engagement-based systems face a structural tension. Content that provokes anger, fear, wonder, tribal loyalty, or scandal may attract more interaction than careful qualification. The platform need not intend deception. If its economic model rewards time, clicks, reactions, and repeated return, emotionally compelling falsehood can receive an advantage. Research has found that false news can diffuse farther and faster than truth in some social-media settings and that human sharing behaviour, not only automated accounts, contributes substantially to the pattern (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Cinelli et al. (2021) documented echo-chamber dynamics across multiple platforms, although the degree and mechanisms varied by platform.

Personalisation can improve usefulness. A farmer may receive local weather, a student relevant scholarship, and a believer teaching in a familiar language. Yet personalisation can also make public reality increasingly private. Two citizens may inhabit different streams of facts, authorities, enemies, and emergencies. Each perceives the other as irrational because neither sees the environment in which the other's convictions were formed.

This is not proof that every platform deliberately engineers ideological captivity. It is an inference from incentive structures and observed effects that requires platform-specific evidence. The distinction matters. A Christian critique should be forceful enough to name structural danger and disciplined enough not to claim secret intention where only mechanism has been demonstrated.

The user also bears responsibility. It is easy to blame an algorithm for showing what the heart repeatedly chooses. A platform learns from attention, but attention reveals desire. The outrage economy has customers. The rumour market has evangelists. The spectacle continues because millions return to its altar.

The Christian response begins with stewardship of attention. "Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk, not as unwise people but as wise, making the

most of the time, because the days are evil” ([Ephesians 5:15-16](#)). Attention is not an unlimited private possession. It is part of the life entrusted to God. What repeatedly receives attention trains love, fear, imagination, and judgment.

Believers should therefore interrupt the machinery of reaction. Read beyond the headline. Locate the original source. Ask what has been omitted. Compare contrary evidence. Distinguish reporting from commentary. Refuse to reward humiliation. Do not share merely because a message is urgent, prophetic, or emotionally congruent. A pause before forwarding may be an act of spiritual warfare.

Chapter 20 will examine artificial intelligence, surveillance, synthetic media, and automated judgment more fully. The present point is narrower: information authority now operates through technical systems that often remain invisible to those they form. The gatekeeper has not disappeared. It has become personalised.

The Crisis of Trust

Trust is necessary because no person can verify everything independently. We trust pilots, engineers, translators, physicians, witnesses, publishers, pastors, and family members. Even radical scepticism depends upon trusted sources. The question is never whether to trust, but whom, how far, for what, and under which conditions.

Public trust has weakened across many institutions. The OECD’s 2024 cross-national survey found that, across participating countries, more respondents reported low or no trust in national government than high or moderately high trust, while confidence varied significantly according to perceived responsiveness, reliability, integrity, openness, and fairness (OECD, 2024). The Reuters Institute’s 2026 report likewise recorded low global trust in news and growing concern about distinguishing reliable from false information (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2026). These surveys should not be universalised beyond their samples, but they indicate a substantial problem.

African contexts require particular care. Media systems are shaped by colonial histories, state broadcasting, commercial pressures, linguistic diversity, uneven digital access, political contestation, foreign ownership, donor influence, and vibrant informal networks. Survey research in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa found widespread perceived exposure to disinformation and low trust in both national and social media, while also showing variation among countries and users (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019). Imported accounts of “the public” or “the media” can therefore obscure regional differences.

Some distrust is justified. Institutions have lied, concealed conflicts of interest, protected abusers, manipulated evidence, and punished whistleblowers. A church that demands trust after hiding misconduct commits a second injury. A government that classifies embarrassment as security trains citizens to doubt genuine security claims. A media organisation that applies

visible double standards should not be surprised when audiences seek alternatives.

Yet generalised cynicism is not wisdom. The person who believes nothing can be manipulated as readily as the person who believes everything. Cynicism creates hunger for the confident outsider, the secret document, the heroic whistle-blower, and the total explanation. It promises independence while transferring trust to personalities who may have fewer safeguards than the institutions they criticise.

Trust should therefore be differentiated. A source may be reliable in one field and unreliable in another. An institution may possess sound procedures while failing in a particular case. A witness may be truthful but mistaken. A leader may have served faithfully and still require accountability. Trust can be provisional without becoming hostile.

Biblical faith is not generalised trustfulness. Jesus did not entrust Himself to everyone because He knew what was in humanity ([John 2:24-25](#)). Paul appealed to public evidence, named false teachers, and required leaders to be tested. Yet Scripture also condemns slander, suspicion without cause, and refusal to believe truthful witnesses.

The church can help repair trust by becoming demonstrably trustworthy. It should publish accurate accounts, correct mistakes publicly, disclose conflicts, protect complainants, investigate allegations fairly, distinguish confidentiality from concealment, and refuse to baptise reputation management as spiritual wisdom. Credibility cannot be demanded. It must be stewarded.

Conspiracy, Coordination, and the Discipline of Proof

The word conspiracy has become unstable. In law and ordinary usage, it can describe an agreement among people to pursue an unlawful or harmful purpose. Such coordination is real. History includes covert political operations, corporate collusion, intelligence programmes, price-fixing, cover-ups, bribery, secret police, propaganda campaigns, and institutional protection of abuse. To say that powerful people sometimes coordinate privately is not irrational. It is historically obvious.

The label conspiracy theory is often applied more broadly to explanations that attribute important events to hidden coordinated actors. Some such explanations later receive documentary support. Others absorb ambiguous events into systems so comprehensive that no evidence can disconfirm them. Rejection becomes proof of concealment; absence of evidence becomes evidence of secrecy; contradiction becomes evidence of infiltration.

Research on conspiracy belief identifies heterogeneous motives and conditions, including the desire for understanding, control, belonging, uniqueness, and defence of threatened identities (Douglas et al., 2019). Such research should not be weaponised to diagnose every dissenter as psychologically

defective. Institutions sometimes use the language of irrationality to avoid answering evidence. It does show that the appetite for total explanation can be emotionally powerful.

A responsible Christian approach begins by defining the claim precisely. Who is alleged to have coordinated? What action is alleged? During which period? What evidence demonstrates agreement, capacity, motive, opportunity, and implementation? Which parts are documented fact, interpretation, inference, or speculation? What evidence would count against the claim?

Primary evidence carries special weight: authenticated records, financial trails, official minutes, court findings, verified communications, contracts, consistent testimony from independent witnesses, and material evidence with a defensible chain of custody. Secondary reporting can be valuable when methods and sources are disclosed. Anonymous testimony may justify investigation, but anonymity reduces the reader's ability to assess competence, motive, proximity, and corroboration.

Motive alone is not proof. An organisation may benefit from an event without having caused it. Actors may share interests without secret coordination. Similar policies may result from common assumptions, professional networks, imitation, law, funding structures, or convergent incentives. A pattern deserves analysis, but pattern recognition can become pattern imposition.

Suppression is also ambiguous. A true claim may be suppressed. A false claim may be removed. A harmful claim may be limited. A platform may act from political pressure, commercial risk, genuine safety concerns, or poor judgment. The mere fact of removal cannot settle the truth of the removed content.

The author's previous work has correctly insisted that the term conspiracy should not function as a magical dismissal of inconvenient truth (Sangwa, 2024b). This chapter extends that argument by making the ninth commandment govern the investigator as firmly as it governs the institution. One must not falsely accuse powerful people merely because they are powerful. Nor may power be treated as proof of innocence.

Christian discernment is neither institutional obedience nor anti-institutional romance. It is fidelity to truth. The believer may investigate documented coordination, expose corruption, follow financial influence, analyse propaganda, and question official narratives. He must also retract errors, reject fabricated quotations, avoid guilt by association, and refuse to make prophecy depend upon unverified documents.

There is a spiritual reason for this discipline. The father of lies benefits when truth is mixed with fiction. A false detail can discredit a documented pattern. An exaggerated accusation can protect a real offender by making every critic appear irrational. Sensational claims can exhaust the church's attention while ordinary greed, abuse, false doctrine, and corruption continue in plain sight.

The watchman must see farther than the crowd, but he must not report an army where he saw a shadow. "If the trumpet makes an unclear sound, who will prepare for battle?" ([1 Corinthians 14:8](#)).

When Falsehood Enters the Sanctuary

The church speaks in the name of the God who cannot lie. Its falsehood is therefore not merely an institutional failure. It is sacrilege.

Falsehood enters the sanctuary when testimonies are embellished to produce excitement. A person may have improved gradually, but the story becomes instant. A medical uncertainty becomes a verified miracle. The failed cases disappear from the platform. The congregation is taught to equate dramatic narrative with divine power.

It enters when prophecies are edited after events, vague predictions are presented as precise fulfilments, and unfulfilled words are forgotten without repentance. Scripture commands prophecy to be tested ([1 Corinthians 14:29](#)). A leader who demands belief but refuses examination is not protecting the Spirit. He is protecting himself.

It enters through deceptive fundraising. Images of suffering may be real while claims about the use of money remain misleading. Urgency may be manufactured. Donors may be told that refusal reveals unbelief or forfeits blessing. Financial opacity is then defended as trust in leadership.

It enters through altered biographies, false academic titles, plagiarised sermons, inflated attendance, purchased followers, manipulated photographs, and invented endorsements. These practices may appear small compared with doctrinal heresy, but they form the same moral habit: appearance is treated as more important than truth.

It enters when abuse is concealed to protect “the work of God.” Victims are pressured to remain silent, complaints are spiritualised, and investigators are accused of attacking the church. Yet God does not ask His people to preserve His reputation through injustice. The exposure of a wolf does not damage the Shepherd. Concealing the wolf does.

It enters when progressive churches retain biblical words while replacing apostolic meanings. Sin becomes exclusion, salvation becomes affirmation, resurrection becomes metaphor, and holiness becomes authenticity. The text is quoted, but cultural morality acts as editor.

It also enters when conservative churches circulate false reports about ideological opponents, baptise partisan rumours as discernment, or interpret every disaster as immediate proof of a preferred prophetic scheme. A church may defend biblical sexuality and still violate the ninth commandment. Orthodoxy in one doctrine does not purchase permission to lie in another.

Some Christians forward alarming messages because they genuinely wish to warn. They should be corrected gently but firmly. Stop. Verify. Read the source. Check the date. Examine whether the image belongs to the event described. Ask whether a quotation exists in the alleged document. Refuse to become an unpaid distributor for deception.

Teachers bear greater responsibility. James warns that teachers will receive stricter judgment ([James 3:1](#)). The preacher who says “God told me” carries a

burden far heavier than the ordinary commentator. If the claim was actually an impression, inference, hope, or interpretation, it must be named honestly.

Repentance from public falsehood requires public correction. Quietly deleting a claim after thousands received it is insufficient. Where possible, the correction should travel through the same channels, reach the same audience, identify the error clearly, and repair reputational or material harm. Zacchaeus demonstrates that repentance produces restitution ([Luke 19:1-10](#)).

The church cannot expose the world's propaganda while protecting its own. Judgment begins with God's household ([1 Peter 4:17](#)).

The Strongest Case for Relativism, Gatekeeping, and Regulation

A serious argument must allow its opponents to present their strongest case. Defenders of perspectivism, constructivism, institutional expertise, and information regulation can make several powerful claims.

First, all human knowledge is interpreted. Facts do not arrive already organised into stories. Observers select concepts, methods, and categories. Language is inherited, not invented privately. Any claim to a view from nowhere may hide the speaker's social location and interests.

Second, appeals to objective truth have sometimes protected domination. Colonial rulers described conquest as civilisation. Racial hierarchies invoked science. Men used selective interpretations of Scripture to silence women and protect abuse. Clergy declared institutions divinely ordered when those institutions served them. Marginalised communities therefore have reason to ask who defines truth, whose evidence counts, and whose suffering remains invisible.

Third, misinformation causes real harm. False accusations destroy reputations. Fraud deprives people of money. Dangerous health claims alter behaviour. Incitement can contribute to violence. Unrestricted communication systems do not produce a neutral marketplace of ideas because wealth, coordination, automation, and emotional manipulation give some actors disproportionate power.

Fourth, institutions require gatekeeping. A journal that publishes everything ceases to be a scholarly journal. A church that gives its pulpit to every teacher abandons the sheep. A platform that refuses to remove sexual exploitation or credible threats becomes complicit. A state that ignores coordinated criminal propaganda may fail to protect citizens.

Fifth, expertise cannot be replaced by popular intuition. Complex evidence often requires years of training. Public debate can reward confidence over competence. The outsider who declares all institutions corrupt may profit from the very mistrust he amplifies.

Sixth, moral vocabulary sometimes requires correction. Traditional language can normalise injustice. Terms once used casually may degrade persons or conceal violence. Changing language can make previously ignored harms visible and enlarge moral concern.

Finally, the unrestricted circulation of falsehood can destroy the conditions of freedom itself. If citizens cannot distinguish authentic evidence from fabrication, elections, public health, courts, and social cooperation become vulnerable. Some regulation and institutional authority may therefore be necessary to preserve rather than abolish liberty.

These arguments contain substantial truth. The Christian should acknowledge them without fear. Every interpreter is situated. Institutions can oppress. Expertise is necessary. Speech can harm. Language can conceal injustice. Communities require boundaries.

The dispute concerns what follows. Human situatedness does not abolish reality. Abused claims of objectivity do not disprove objective truth. Necessary expertise does not create infallibility. Real harms do not grant unlimited authority to define harm. The need for moderation does not justify secretive or ideologically selective control. The revision of unjust vocabulary does not authorise calling good evil or evil good.

Most importantly, power cannot supply the moral standard by which power is corrected. If every truth claim is only a strategy, the defence of the marginalised is another strategy. If justice is wholly constructed, the oppressor may construct differently. The protest requires a truth about human dignity and wrongdoing that stands above both ruler and victim.

Christianity offers that ground in the Creator, whose image gives every person dignity, whose law judges every institution, and whose Son identifies with the oppressed without granting sinlessness to any social group. Biblical truth can hear silenced witnesses without making every witness infallible. It can authorise institutions while limiting them. It can defend speech while condemning slander. It can value expertise while requiring humility.

The strongest opposing case therefore corrects Christian carelessness but does not overturn revelation. It reminds the church that truth must be practised justly. It cannot establish that humanity may live without the God of truth.

What the War Against Truth Produces

The destruction of truth is never confined to philosophy departments. It enters homes, courts, congregations, schools, workplaces, and consciences. A society may survive disagreement about many facts. It cannot flourish when it loses the conviction that facts should constrain power.

Repentance Becomes Impossible

Repentance begins with agreement with God. The sinner stops renaming rebellion and confesses it. If moral truth is reduced to personal authenticity, sin

becomes whatever prevents self-fulfilment. The adulterer may describe betrayal as following the heart. The greedy leader may call accumulation blessing. The abusive pastor may call domination authority. The proud scholar may call contempt intellectual courage.

Where words cannot name sin, grace becomes sentimental. Forgiveness is offered without confession, and transformation is replaced by affirmation. The gospel's offence is not merely that it announces judgment. It refuses our preferred vocabulary for the condition from which we must be saved.

Justice Loses Its Foundation

Courts depend upon distinctions between evidence and assertion, guilt and allegation, motive and act, witness and rumour. When identity or political usefulness determines credibility in advance, the innocent can be condemned and the guilty protected. A just society must hear the vulnerable without abolishing due process, and protect due process without using it to exhaust or intimidate the vulnerable.

False accusation is not a minor price of social progress. It is injustice. Institutional concealment is not a minor price of stability. It is injustice. Truth gives justice its object. Without truth, justice becomes the name each coalition gives to its desired exercise of power.

Dialogue Becomes Performance

Meaningful dialogue requires the possibility that the speaker may be wrong. Post-truth politics and platform culture often turn discussion into performance before one's group. The purpose is not understanding but display: loyalty is signalled, enemies are shamed, and uncertainty is punished.

This produces a strange combination of constant speech and little communication. Everyone is broadcasting; few are listening. Words become uniforms. The question is no longer "Is this true?" but "Whose side does this sentence place you on?"

Institutions Lose Corrective Capacity

Institutions need criticism to learn. When leaders punish truthful dissent, error accumulates. Reports are adjusted to satisfy superiors. Failures are hidden until they become disasters. Staff learn that loyalty means silence. Eventually, the institution believes its own communications.

Churches are especially vulnerable because leaders can attach divine authority to organisational preference. A congregation may be taught that questioning a budget, prophecy, doctrine, or allegation is questioning God. The institution then loses the very correction by which God might preserve it.

The Innocent Become Consumable

In an attention economy, accusation attracts more interest than exoneration. A person may be publicly condemned within hours and quietly

cleared months later. Search results preserve the allegation. The correction never travels as far as the scandal. The individual becomes material for collective emotion.

Christians must remember that every online target is an image-bearer. Even a guilty person must not be lied about. Even an ideological enemy must not be falsely quoted. The command to love one's enemies includes the duty to describe them truthfully.

Knowledge Fragments into Tribes

When each group maintains its own facts, experts, media, histories, and moral language, public reason becomes increasingly difficult. This fragmentation can be exploited by governments, corporations, political movements, and religious leaders. A divided population may be easier to mobilise because every event can be translated instantly into tribal confirmation.

The church should not become another epistemic tribe defined by believing the opposite of secular institutions. It is a people gathered by revelation. Sometimes Scripture will confirm what an institution reports. Sometimes it will expose the institution's assumptions. Faithfulness is not contrarian reflex but obedience.

Eternal Consequences Are Concealed

The gravest consequence is spiritual. Paul describes people who perish "because they did not accept the love of the truth and so be saved" ([2 Thessalonians 2:10](#)). The passage joins deception with unrighteousness. Truth is rejected not only because the evidence is difficult but because evil is loved.

A culture trained to treat every claim as perspective will regard Christ's exclusive lordship as intolerable. A church trained to prefer comforting narratives will gather teachers according to desire ([2 Timothy 4:1-5](#)). A person who has spent years editing reality around the self may finally reject the One before whom no editing is possible.

God's judgment will not be a contest of narratives. Books will be opened. Hidden things will be revealed. Every careless word will be accounted for ([Matthew 12:36-37](#)). The powerful will not manage the record, and the falsely accused will not be forgotten.

A Pastoral Word to Different Hearers

Truth addresses people differently because their relation to falsehood differs.

To Deliberate Deceivers

If you manufacture evidence, alter quotations, coordinate false testimony, manipulate statistics, conceal abuse, or exploit fear for money and power, repent. Your sophistication does not hide you from God. A lie may purchase

time, but it cannot purchase acquittal. The Lord who saw Ananias and Sapphira sees the contract, private message, edited video, hidden account, and pressured witness ([Acts 5:1-11](#)).

Stop calling strategy what Scripture calls deceit. Confess specifically. Correct the record. Release those you intimidated. Restore what can be restored. Submit to lawful and ecclesial accountability. Grace is available to the repentant, but grace does not protect the architecture of the lie.

To Leaders Who Manage Meaning

You may possess legal authority, professional status, academic prestige, pastoral office, technological reach, or political power. None gives you ownership of reality. Do not redefine criticism as disloyalty, transparency as danger, or conscience as disorder. Authority is stewardship beneath judgment.

If your institution is truthful, questions need not destroy it. If questions reveal error, correction may save it. Reputation preserved through falsehood is already ruined before God.

To Scholars and Experts

Do not confuse methodological humility with metaphysical relativism. Acknowledge uncertainty, but do not pretend that every conclusion is equally plausible. Disclose limitations, conflicts, and interpretive judgments. Do not use technical language to conceal moral assumptions or intimidate ordinary readers.

Your expertise is a gift for service, not a sacrament of superiority. Welcome replication. Correct your work. Teach the public how evidence is weighed rather than demanding trust through credentials alone. Intellectual repentance is part of Christian discipleship.

To Journalists, Educators, and Communicators

You are custodians of attention. Selection is unavoidable, but distortion is not. Verify before publication. Distinguish reporting from commentary. Give corrections prominence proportionate to errors. Resist the commercial temptation to make every event an emergency and every opponent a monster.

Teachers, do not merely tell students what to think. Teach them how claims are formed, tested, contextualised, and revised. A classroom that speaks constantly about critical thinking while forbidding examination of approved assumptions is catechesis disguised as inquiry.

To Pastors and Christian Teachers

Preach the Word, not the mood of the congregation. Do not use the pulpit to circulate rumours. Do not announce speculation as prophecy. Do not cite sources you have not read. Do not misrepresent opposing views to make your sermon victorious.

Speak sharply where Scripture speaks sharply, but do not add your anger to God's Word and call the mixture zeal. Correct, rebuke, and exhort "with great patience and teaching" ([2 Timothy 4:2](#)). The sword is the Word, not the preacher's personality.

To Wounded and Silenced People

The failure of an institution to hear you does not make your suffering invisible to God. Seek safe, competent, and truthful help. Preserve evidence where possible. Speak to appropriate church and civil authorities. Refuse the shame that an offender may have placed upon you.

At the same time, do not allow the injustice done to you to become permission to abandon truth. Exaggeration may appear to strengthen a case, but it gives defenders of wrongdoing an opportunity to dismiss what is true. Your dignity does not depend upon making every inference certain. The God who sees can sustain truthful testimony.

To the Falsely Accused

The destruction of reputation can feel like social death. Christ knows false testimony. Do not answer a lie with another lie. Use lawful means, preserve evidence, seek wise counsel, and refuse vengeance. Where correction is possible, pursue it. Where public vindication does not come, entrust yourself to the One who judges justly ([1 Peter 2:21-23](#)).

This does not require passivity. Paul appealed to his legal rights. Truth may require firm defence. Yet your soul must not become shaped by the accusation. Human verdicts are temporary.

To Christians Captured by Suspicion

Perhaps institutions have lied to you. Perhaps you witnessed corruption. Your distrust may have a history. But permanent suspicion is not spiritual maturity. It can become pride, isolation, and addiction to hidden explanations.

Return to proportion. Verify claims. Stop following teachers whose authority depends upon keeping you afraid. A ministry that must produce a new emergency every week is not preparing you for Christ. It may be training you to depend upon the interpreter.

Read Scripture more than rumours. Pray more than you scroll. Love neighbours whose politics differ from yours. Admit when an official account is correct. Admit when an alternative account is false. Discernment that never corrects itself is merely another captivity.

To the Careless Sharer

You may not intend harm. You saw a message, felt alarm, and forwarded it. But good intention does not erase responsibility. Delete false material. Send a correction. Apologise where necessary. Develop habits that slow the hand before the conscience must repair what it distributed.

To the Repentant

There is mercy. Peter denied the Lord publicly and was restored. Paul once acted in violent ignorance and became a witness to grace. Yet restoration is not pretending nothing happened. Truth must enter the place falsehood occupied.

Confess without euphemism. Accept consequences. Repair harm where possible. Submit to patient testing. Credibility may return slowly. The goal is not recovery of platform but recovery of faithfulness.

A Biblical Rule of Truth-Seeking

The church needs more than warnings. It needs practices capable of forming truthful people.

Receive God's Word as Final Authority

Begin with the confession that God is true and Scripture is His truthful Word. This does not answer every empirical or historical question directly, but it establishes the moral and metaphysical order within which every question is asked. Scripture defines God, humanity, sin, salvation, holiness, and the ends of knowledge.

Distinguish Revelation from Interpretation

The text is infallible; the interpreter is not. Study grammar, context, genre, history, and canonical unity. Learn from faithful teachers across time. Test traditions. Refuse both clerical infallibility and isolated self-authority.

Name the Kind of Claim

Ask whether a statement is theological, moral, historical, empirical, statistical, predictive, legal, or interpretive. Different claims require different evidence. A theological assertion must be tested by Scripture. A historical allegation requires records and testimony. A statistical claim requires data, definitions, and method. A prophetic claim requires biblical testing and accountability.

Seek Primary Sources

Whenever possible, read the original law, speech, study, policy, sermon, dataset, court decision, or institutional document. Screenshots, summaries, clips, and quotations can remove context. Primary sources are not automatically truthful, but they reduce dependence upon another person's selection.

Corroborate Material Claims

Important allegations should not rest upon one anonymous message or one edited clip. Seek independent witnesses, documentary evidence, chronology, and

material consistency. The more serious the accusation, the more careful the verification should be.

Examine Incentives Without Pretending to Read Hearts

Ask who benefits, who funds, who bears risk, and which incentives shape communication. These questions are legitimate. Do not convert them into certainty about motive. A conflict of interest raises concern; it does not prove fraud.

Read the Strongest Contrary Case

Do not refute the weakest version of an opposing view. Find its serious advocates, primary texts, best evidence, and legitimate concerns. A conclusion that survives fair examination is stronger than one protected by caricature.

Calibrate Confidence

Use language proportionate to evidence: established, strongly supported, probable, plausible, contested, possible, unverified, unlikely, or false. Do not use certainty as a rhetorical substitute for proof.

Correct Publicly and Promptly

Truthfulness includes revision. A correction is not humiliation but obedience. Record what changed and why. Do not leave followers with an old falsehood merely to protect authority.

Protect People While Investigating

Confidentiality may be necessary to protect victims, witnesses, children, medical information, and legitimate security. Concealment protects wrongdoing; confidentiality protects persons and due process. Wisdom distinguishes them.

Refuse Partiality

Apply the same evidence standards to allies and opponents. Condemn slander against people you dislike. Acknowledge truth spoken by people whose worldview you reject. Common grace permits unbelievers to discover real things, and total depravity does not mean total ignorance.

Practise Truth in Community

Isolation magnifies error. Mature believers, qualified experts, accountable elders, and honest friends can expose blind spots. The body of Christ should become a school of truthful correction where questions are welcomed and deception is not rewarded.

Pray for Illumination and Purity

Truth-seeking is spiritual work because the heart can manipulate evidence. Pray not only, “Lord, show me what they are hiding,” but “Lord, show me what I do not want to see.” The second prayer may be more dangerous to pride and more useful to holiness.

These practices do not guarantee omniscience. They form humility. The goal is not to become a person who is never mistaken, but a person who loves truth enough to be corrected.

The Last Second Before Midnight

The prophetic urgency of this chapter must not be confused with date-setting. Jesus said that no one knows the day or hour ([Matthew 24:36](#)). The church has repeatedly damaged its witness through reckless calendars, sensational identifications, and predictions that Scripture did not authorise.

Yet ignorance of the hour is not permission to sleep. Jesus’ first warning concerning the end of the age is, “Watch out that no one deceives you” ([Matthew 24:4](#)). He warns of false messiahs, false prophets, lawlessness, impressive signs, persecution, betrayal, and widespread deception ([Matthew 24:4-25](#)). Paul joins lawlessness with counterfeit signs and refusal to love the truth ([2 Thessalonians 2:7-12](#)).

To say that we live in the last second before midnight is therefore a watchman’s metaphor, not a prophetic timestamp. It names moral urgency. Every generation since the ascension has lived under the command to watch, and every person is one breath from eternity. Our generation also inhabits conditions in which deception can be manufactured, personalised, translated, amplified, and distributed with unprecedented speed. The trumpet should not be muffled merely because previous generations also heard it.

Rapture readiness is not achieved by accumulating secret information. It is not the ability to identify every symbol in the news, distrust every institution, or decode every technological development. Readiness is union with Christ, repentance, faith, holiness, love, obedience, and watchfulness. The dead in Christ will rise, and living believers will be caught up to meet the Lord ([1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#)). This blessed hope teaches the church to comfort one another and live as people who belong to the coming King.

A person can be correct about a conspiracy and unready for Christ. A scholar can master postmodernism and remain unregenerate. A preacher can expose propaganda while secretly loving money. A conservative can defend objective truth while lying about an opponent. A progressive can speak of justice while suppressing apostolic teaching. The final question is not whether one detected the age’s deception in others. It is whether one received the truth in Christ.

The bride does not prepare for the Bridegroom by feeding on rumours. She makes herself ready through the righteousness granted and produced by grace

([Revelation 19:7-8](#)). “Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure” ([1 John 3:3](#)).

Therefore, wake up. Put away lying. Confess hidden sin. Correct the false story. Leave the ministry built upon manipulation. Stop forwarding what you have not verified. Refuse the fear that makes cultural approval more precious than Christ. Refuse also the pride that makes suspicion feel like election.

The clock’s final movement is not a call to panic but to fidelity. The world is not moving beyond God’s control. The Lamb reigns. The Word cannot be chained. The truth may be censored, mocked, buried, or crucified in public appearance, but God raises what the world declares finished.

Truth That Sets Free

Chapter 1 established that the modern age increasingly preaches a counterfeit gospel grounded in autonomy. Chapter 2 traced the ancient rebellion and the intellectual streams through which autonomy entered institutions, moral imagination, and the modern self. This chapter has shown the next movement: displaced authority becomes a war over who may define reality, regulate language, certify evidence, and manage the channels through which people know.

The answer is not naïve confidence in institutions. Governments, media, universities, corporations, churches, experts, and platforms remain fallible and may become corrupt. The answer is not reflexive counter-belief. Outsiders, dissidents, watchmen, influencers, and alternative communities remain equally capable of pride, error, profit-seeking, and deception.

The answer is the God of truth, the Christ who is Truth, the Scripture that is truth, and a people sanctified to speak truth in love.

This truth is not sterile information. It exposes the oppressor and the accuser. It listens to the wounded and tests the witness. It disciplines the expert and educates the ordinary believer. It grants courage to dissent and humility to retract. It breaks the spell of propaganda because it refuses to make power the measure of reality. It breaks the spell of conspiracy obsession because it refuses to make suspicion the measure of wisdom.

The truth sets free because Christ sets free. He frees from the lie that the self is sovereign, the lie that institutions are infallible, the lie that sin has no judgment, the lie that salvation can be engineered, and the lie that death will have the final word.

The church must now decide whether it loves truth more than comfort, platform, party, reputation, or inward certainty. The hour is late. The public square is noisy. The dictionary is contested. Synthetic images multiply. Trusted authorities weaken. Confident deceivers speak from every side. Yet the Shepherd’s voice remains clear in His Word.

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” ([John 17:17](#)).

The next chapter turns to one of the most influential consequences of excluding revelation from public knowledge. When only natural causes and measurable processes are permitted to explain reality, a legitimate method of investigating creation can be enlarged into a total philosophy. Science then ceases to be a disciplined servant and becomes scientism, claiming authority over origins, humanity, morality, miracle, and God.

The war against truth therefore prepares the way for **Chapter 4: Scientism, Naturalism, and the Exclusion of the Creator.**

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