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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE AGE

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

PART II

RECONSTRUCTING GOD, THE GOSPEL,
AND HUMANITY

CHAPTER 7

Another Jesus, Another Spirit, and Salvation Without Repentance

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Abstract

This chapter examines the doctrinal offspring of a God reconstructed according to the spirit of the age: another Jesus, another spirit, and a salvation that promises relief without repentance. Building upon the preceding chapters' analysis of autonomous authority, contested truth, naturalistic exclusion of the Creator, the sovereign self, therapeutic salvation, and modern idolatry, it argues that counterfeit Christianity often preserves biblical names while changing their referents. Jesus is reduced to moral teacher, therapist, political activist, prosperity provider, national mascot, universal religious symbol, or digitally simulated companion. The Holy Spirit is confused with atmosphere, emotional intensity, intuition, impersonal energy, spectacle, political passion, or contradictory private revelation. Sin becomes dysfunction, ignorance, exclusion, trauma, or unrealised potential, while salvation becomes self-acceptance, wellness, liberation, education, inclusion, success, or technological progress. Through sustained exegesis of [John 1:1-18](#), [Acts 4:8-12](#), [2 Corinthians 11:1-15](#), [Galatians 1:6-10](#), [1 John 4:1-6](#), and related passages, the chapter presents Jesus Christ as the eternal Word, incarnate Son, Creator, Lamb, High Priest, risen Lord, reigning King, Judge, and only Mediator. It presents the Holy Spirit as the divine Person who glorifies Christ, inspires and illumines Scripture, convicts, regenerates, indwells, sanctifies, empowers witness, distributes gifts, and produces holy fruit. Historical Christological errors, modern objections to substitutionary atonement and exclusive salvation, contemporary spiritual manifestations, political and therapeutic gospels, and emerging artificial-intelligence representations of Jesus are examined fairly and critically. The chapter concludes with an eleven-part framework for testing teachers, spirits, gospels, prophecies, miracles, and ministries, followed by differentiated pastoral appeals and an urgent summons to repentance, holiness, perseverance, and readiness for Christ's return.

Keywords: Christology; Holy Spirit; counterfeit gospel; repentance; substitutionary atonement; spiritual discernment; rapture readiness

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When the Portrait Keeps the Name but Loses the Face

A portrait can retain its label after the face has been repainted. The frame may still read *Jesus Christ*. The artist may preserve the familiar robe, compassionate eyes, open hands, and soft light. Yet stroke by stroke, the Lord revealed in Scripture is replaced. His deity is softened into spiritual insight. His holiness is reduced to kindness. His cross becomes an example rather than an atonement. His resurrection becomes a symbol of hope rather than God's victory in history. His warnings are edited out. His commands are reclassified as cultural limitations. His return as Judge disappears behind a permanent smile.

The name remains, but the face is gone.

This is one of the most dangerous forms of religious deception because recognition is delayed. Open rejection announces itself. A reconstructed Christ enters through the vocabulary of faith. He is sung about, preached, placed on screens, quoted in political speeches, invoked at national ceremonies, marketed in devotional products, and increasingly simulated by digital systems. Yet the question Scripture forces upon the church is not merely whether the name *Jesus* is spoken. It is which Jesus is being proclaimed, which spirit is being received, which gospel is being believed, what response is required, and what fruit follows.

The preceding chapter showed that humanity does not only reject God. It remakes Him according to desire, injury, ideology, ambition, culture, and fear. Once that reconstruction occurs, every doctrine downstream must change. A therapeutic Father requires a therapeutic Son. A political god requires a political messiah. An impersonal divine energy requires a spirit that can be accessed rather than a holy Person who commands. A permissive god requires a cross without wrath, forgiveness without confession, discipleship without self-denial, and heaven without repentance.

Counterfeit Christianity therefore works by substitution. It does not always remove the furniture of the sanctuary. It changes what the furniture means. The Bible remains on the pulpit but is treated as material for inspiration rather than the Word that judges the congregation. The cross remains on the wall but no longer signifies that sin deserved judgment and that the Son bore it willingly for His people. The word *grace* remains in sermons but becomes permission to remain unchanged. The word *Spirit* remains in worship but means emotional intensity, bodily sensation, intuition, or atmosphere. The word *salvation* remains, but the danger from which humanity must be saved is relocated from guilt, corruption, wrath, death, and judgment to low self-esteem, social exclusion, unfulfilled potential, political marginalisation, material lack, or technological limitation.

These concerns do not require Christians to despise therapy, political responsibility, education, economic development, cultural recognition, or technological skill. Each can serve neighbour-love. Mental health care may relieve terrible suffering. Just laws may restrain oppression. Education may enlarge opportunity. Economic development may reduce deprivation. Technology may connect families, distribute Scripture, and improve medicine. The deception begins when a genuine good is made to carry the weight of redemption. A hospital can treat illness, but it cannot justify the guilty. A school can teach literacy, but it cannot raise the spiritually dead. A movement can oppose injustice, but it cannot reconcile sinners to God. A platform can imitate a pastoral voice, but it cannot breathe the Holy Spirit.

The controlling claim of this chapter is therefore severe but necessary: once humanity remakes God according to the spirit of the age, it must also remake Jesus, redefine the Holy

Spirit, minimise sin, silence divine wrath, empty the cross of substitution and judgment, and offer salvation without repentance. The result is not a harmless variation of Christianity. It is another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel that cannot forgive sin, regenerate the heart, conquer death, prepare the church for judgment, or make the Bride ready for the Bridegroom.

The apostolic warning is not addressed only to obvious cults. Paul feared that a church might tolerate someone who preached “another Jesus,” receive “a different spirit,” or accept “a different gospel” ([2 Corinthians 11:1-15](#)). The danger came clothed in religious confidence, impressive credentials, and apparent light. Satan himself disguises himself as an angel of light, and his servants may appear righteous. Deception does not always smell like death. It may carry a Bible, speak gently, promise healing, and look compassionate while leading the soul away from the only Saviour.

The Grammar of Counterfeit Christianity

Another Jesus, Another Spirit, Another Gospel

Paul's language in [2 Corinthians 11:1-15](#) reveals that Christian vocabulary alone cannot establish Christian truth. The Corinthians were not being invited to abandon Jesus for a pagan deity under an unrelated name. They were being courted by teachers who claimed superior spiritual authority while presenting a distorted Christ and ministry. Paul compares the danger to the serpent's deception of Eve. The church may possess sincere devotion and yet have its mind corrupted from “sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”

The phrase *another Jesus* refers to a representation that uses the name while altering the identity or work of the One named. A Jesus who is not the eternal Son, not truly incarnate, not the sin-bearing Lamb, not bodily raised, not Lord, not the only Mediator, or not the coming Judge is not a minor revision of apostolic Christology. He is another Jesus.

A *different spirit* is any alleged spiritual power, presence, revelation, or experience that contradicts the Holy Spirit's identity and work. The Holy Spirit is not recognised merely by intensity. He is the Spirit of truth who glorifies the Son, applies the gospel, produces holiness, and remains faithful to the Word He inspired. An experience may be emotionally overwhelming and spiritually false. A manifestation may be difficult to explain and still fail the biblical tests of doctrine, fruit, order, truth, and Christ-centredness.

A *different gospel* changes either the problem, the Saviour, the saving work, the means of reception, or the promised end. It may say that humanity's deepest problem is ignorance rather than rebellion, oppression rather than guilt, woundedness rather than corruption, material lack rather than alienation from God, or mortality rather than judgment. It may offer salvation through knowledge, activism, therapy, ritual, wealth, institutional belonging, religious sincerity, cultural recognition, or technological progress. It may retain words such as grace and love while removing repentance, faith, substitution, regeneration, justification, holiness, perseverance, and final judgment.

Paul's alarm in [Galatians 1:6-10](#) is equally uncompromising. The Galatians were “turning away” from the One who called them by grace to a different gospel, which was no gospel at all. The teachers did not deny every Christian claim. They added requirements that altered the basis and sufficiency of justification. Paul therefore pronounced an anathema upon any messenger, even an angel from heaven, who announced a gospel contrary to the apostolic message.

This passage exposes two opposite counterfeits. Legalism adds human merit, ritual performance, identity markers, or institutional mediation to Christ's sufficient work. Antinomianism subtracts repentance, holiness, and obedient discipleship from the saving reign of Christ. One says Christ is not enough unless the sinner completes the payment. The other says Christ may be received without surrendering rebellion. Both misrepresent grace.

Counterfeit Christianity

Counterfeit Christianity is not every theological mistake. Faithful believers may misunderstand secondary matters, use imperfect language, or require patient correction. A counterfeit becomes fundamental when it replaces the biblical identity of God, Christ, the Spirit, sin, salvation, Scripture, or the church while continuing to claim Christian legitimacy. The difference between immaturity and apostasy, or between a correctable error and another gospel, must be judged carefully. Not every confused believer is a false teacher, and not every disagreement concerns the foundation of the faith.

Yet caution must not become paralysis. The New Testament names destructive teaching, commands elders to refute it, and warns churches not to receive every spiritual claim. Love does not protect error from examination. It protects people from error by bringing every claim into the light.

[1 John 4:1-6](#) gives the command directly: “do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits.” The immediate test is Christological. The Spirit of God confesses Jesus Christ come in the flesh. In John's context, teachers were separating spiritual claims from the real incarnation and apostolic witness. The test also includes reception of the apostles' teaching. “The one who knows God listens to us.” Spiritual experience is not permitted to bypass the doctrine delivered through Christ's authorised witnesses.

Discernment therefore begins with confession, not sensation. The question is not first, “What did I feel?” but “What is being said about Jesus Christ?” It continues with Scripture, gospel, fruit, moral character, evidence, and accountability. An alleged manifestation that produces awe while obscuring Christ is already suspect. A prophecy that elevates the speaker above examination has departed from apostolic order. A gospel that promises heaven while refusing repentance may sound merciful, but it is mercy detached from truth.

The Word Became Flesh: The Jesus Who Cannot Be Redesigned

The Eternal Word and Creator

The opening of John's Gospel does not allow Jesus to be reduced to a late religious teacher who gradually acquired divine status in the imagination of His followers. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” ([John 1:1-18](#)). The Word already was when the beginning began. He is personally distinct, “with God,” and fully divine, “was God.” All things came into being through Him. He therefore belongs on the Creator side of the Creator-creature distinction.

John's language resists several ancient and modern reductions at once. Jesus is not a created intermediary, an exalted angel, the first product of divine power, or a human prophet later adopted into deity. The One through whom all created things came to exist cannot belong to the class of things made. [Colossians 1:15-20](#) likewise presents the Son as the image of the

invisible God, the One through whom and for whom all things were created, the One in whom all things hold together, and the Head of the church. [Hebrews 1:1-14](#) identifies Him as the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of His nature, sustaining all things by His powerful word and receiving worship from angels.

The claim is not that Jesus is divine in the loose sense that every human being carries sacred potential. John does not teach a universal “Christ consciousness” waiting to awaken within the self. The Word is not the highest layer of human psychology. He is the eternal Son who made humanity and entered His creation in a unique, unrepeatable incarnation. This confession extends the author's earlier doctrinal treatment of Christ as the eternal Son, true God and true man, crucified Saviour, risen Lord, and coming King (Sangwa, 2026c).

The Word Became Flesh

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” ([John 1:14](#)). Christianity stands or falls on this concrete claim. The eternal Son did not merely appear human, temporarily inhabit a body, or communicate through an enlightened teacher. He assumed a complete human nature without ceasing to be God. He entered history, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, grew, hungered, suffered, obeyed, died, and rose bodily.

The phrase “became flesh” does not mean the divine nature changed into humanity or that God ceased to be God. It means the Person of the Son took to Himself a true human nature. The church later used careful language to guard this biblical confession. Nicaea defended the Son's full deity against those who treated Him as a supreme creature. Constantinople defended the deity of the Holy Spirit and the Trinitarian confession. Ephesus protected the unity of Christ's Person. Chalcedon confessed one and the same Son, complete in deity and complete in humanity, known in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation (Kelly, 1978; Pelikan, 1971; Tanner, 1990).

These councils did not vote Jesus into deity or import a foreign Christ into the New Testament. They responded to teachers who used biblical terms while changing biblical meanings. A created Son could be called divine in an honorific sense. A heavenly spirit could be said to “appear” in flesh. A divided Christ could be described with orthodox fragments. The councils built conceptual fences around apostolic claims already present in Scripture. Their authority remains subordinate to Scripture, but their precision helps the church recognise old errors wearing new clothing.

The incarnation is essential to salvation. Only one who is truly human can obey in humanity's place, bear human sin, die, rise as the firstfruits, and serve as merciful High Priest. Only one who is truly God can reveal the Father perfectly, give infinite worth to His saving work, conquer death, receive worship, and bring sinners into communion with God. A Christ diminished on either side cannot save the whole person.

The Sinless and Obedient Son

Jesus does not save merely by possessing the right identity. He lives the life of faithful obedience humanity failed to live. He fulfils righteousness, resists temptation, loves the Father without division, speaks truth without deceit, receives the rejected without participating in sin, confronts hypocrisy without pride, and obeys to the point of death ([Philippians 2:5-11](#)).

His compassion cannot be detached from His holiness. The Gospels do not present two Jesuses, one gentle and one severe. The same Lord who receives children denounces religious exploitation. The same Lord who eats with sinners tells them to repent. The same Lord who

touches the unclean warns of hell. The same Lord who forgives the guilty commands them to leave sin. He does not love sinners by agreeing with the disease that kills them. He loves them by entering their misery, bearing judgment, speaking truth, granting forgiveness, and calling them into new life.

This distinction matters pastorally. Some churches have used holiness as a weapon, humiliating wounded people, concealing abuse, or treating every psychological struggle as deliberate rebellion. Such conduct misrepresents Christ. He does not break a bruised reed. Yet other churches use compassion as an excuse never to diagnose sin. This also misrepresents Christ. A physician who refuses to name the disease because the patient fears the diagnosis does not practise compassion. Jesus' mercy is truthful enough to expose and powerful enough to heal.

The Lamb Who Bears Sin

John the Baptist identifies Jesus as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” ([John 1:29](#)). The title gathers the sacrificial history of Scripture into one Person. The Passover lamb dies under judgment while God's people shelter beneath blood. The sacrificial system teaches that sin brings death and that God provides atonement. [Isaiah 52:13-53:12](#) presents the Servant as pierced for transgressions, crushed for iniquities, bearing the sin of many, and bringing peace through His suffering.

Jesus interprets His own death accordingly. The Son of Man came “to give his life as a ransom for many” ([Mark 10:45](#)). At the Supper, He identifies the cup with His covenant blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins ([Matthew 26:26-29](#)). The apostles do not replace Jesus' message with a later sacrificial theory. They unfold the meaning Jesus gave His mission.

[Romans 3:21-26](#) joins grace, redemption, blood, righteousness, and justification. God presents Christ as the atoning sacrifice so that He may be just and justify the one who has faith in Jesus. [2 Corinthians 5:14-21](#) declares that the sinless One was made sin for us so that in Him we might become God's righteousness. [1 Peter 2:21-25](#) says He bore our sins in His body on the tree.

The cross is therefore revelation, example, victory, liberation, reconciliation, sacrifice, and substitution. These dimensions must not be set against one another. Christ exposes the violence of fallen powers, identifies with sufferers, defeats hostile authorities, models self-giving love, liberates captives, reconciles enemies, and renews covenant. Yet He does these things as the One who bears sin and satisfies the demands of holy justice. Remove substitution and the other dimensions lose their saving centre. The cross may inspire, but guilt remains. It may protest oppression, but wrath remains. It may reveal love, but the moral question of forgiveness remains unanswered.

The Risen Lord and Reigning King

The apostolic gospel announces an event, not merely an enduring idea. Christ died for sins, was buried, was raised on the third day, and appeared to witnesses ([1 Corinthians 15:1-8](#)). If Christ has not been raised, preaching is empty, faith is futile, witnesses are false, believers remain in sins, and the dead are lost ([1 Corinthians 15:12-28](#)).

The resurrection is bodily, historical, and eschatological. The disciples encounter the same Jesus who was crucified, now transformed beyond death. He is not a memory preserved by community, a vision generated by grief, or a symbol of human resilience. God vindicates the

Son, defeats death, inaugurates new creation, and guarantees the resurrection of those united to Christ (Wright, 2003).

The risen Jesus ascends, reigns, intercedes, and will return. He is seated at the Father's right hand, not retired from history. [Daniel 7:13-14](#) anticipates the Son of Man receiving dominion over peoples and nations. [Revelation 5:1-14](#) presents the slaughtered Lamb standing, worthy to open God's purposes and receive universal worship. [Revelation 19:11-21](#) reveals Him returning as faithful and true Judge and Warrior.

The suffering Servant and returning King are not rival images. The Lamb who was slain is the Lord who judges. The compassion that moved Him toward sinners does not abolish His authority over them. The church cannot receive His comfort while refusing His command, seek His blood while rejecting His throne, or celebrate His first coming while ignoring His second.

The Only Mediator and Name of Salvation

When Peter stands before the authorities in [Acts 4:8-12](#), he does not present Jesus as one healing tradition among many. The rejected stone has become the cornerstone, and “there is salvation in no one else.” No other name under heaven has been given among humanity by which we must be saved.

This exclusivity is not produced by Christian tribal pride. It arises from the uniqueness of the problem and the uniqueness of the Saviour. If humanity were merely uninformed, many teachers might suffice. If salvation were moral encouragement, many examples might help. If God accepted sincere religion without atonement, Christ's cross would be unnecessary. But if sinners are guilty before the holy Creator, spiritually dead, enslaved, and subject to judgment, then salvation requires the incarnate Son who bears sin, rises, grants the Spirit, and brings people to the Father.

[1 Timothy 2:1-7](#) joins God's saving desire with the one Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all. The gospel is universally offered because the Saviour is uniquely sufficient. Christian exclusivity should therefore produce mission and humility, not contempt. No believer invented the way. No culture owns Christ. No race supplied the ransom. The saved stand by grace and invite others to the same mercy.

A Christ who is merely one path among many may be socially convenient, but he cannot be the Christ who says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” ([John 14:6](#)). The church may speak this truth with tears, patience, hospitality, and respect. It may not conceal it in the name of peace.

The Spirit of Truth, Not a Religious Atmosphere

A Divine Person, Not an Impersonal Power

The language of *another spirit* cannot be understood until the church remembers who the Holy Spirit is. He is not a spiritual substance flowing through the universe, a heightened state of consciousness, an atmosphere generated by music, or a force available to those who master the correct technique. He is the third Person of the Holy Trinity, fully divine, personally distinct from the Father and the Son, and inseparably united with them in the one divine being.

Scripture speaks of the Spirit acting personally. He teaches, reminds, speaks, commands, leads, intercedes, distributes gifts, may be grieved, and may be lied to. In [Acts 5:1-11](#), lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God. In [1 Corinthians 12:4-11](#), the Spirit apportions gifts “to each one

individually as he wills.” A force does not will. An atmosphere does not speak. Energy is not grieved by sin. The author’s earlier treatments likewise emphasise that the Holy Spirit is the divine Person who speaks, wills, regenerates, indwells, sanctifies, distributes gifts, and glorifies Christ (Sangwa, 2024b, 2026b).

The Spirit’s relation to the Father and Son guards the church from spiritual independence. Jesus promises “another Counselor” who will be with His disciples and in them ([John 14:15-17](#)). The Father sends the Spirit in the Son’s name, and the Son sends Him from the Father ([John 14:26](#); [John 15:26](#)). At Jesus’ baptism, the Son stands in the water, the Spirit descends, and the Father speaks ([Matthew 3:13-17](#)). The distinctions are real. The divine life is one.

This truth rejects both modalistic confusion and practical tritheism. The Spirit is not Jesus wearing another mask, nor is He an independent deity with a separate message. He proceeds in the unity of the triune saving purpose. The Father plans, the Son accomplishes, and the Spirit applies salvation without division of will or glory.

The Spirit Glorifies Christ

Jesus gives a decisive criterion in [John 16:7-15](#). The Spirit convicts the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment. He guides the apostles into truth and glorifies Christ by taking what belongs to Christ and declaring it. The Spirit’s ministry is therefore profoundly Christological. He does not create a spirituality that moves beyond Jesus into supposedly higher consciousness. He does not offer secret access that renders the cross elementary. He does not establish prophets as alternative mediators.

Where the Spirit is truly at work, Christ becomes more clearly confessed, trusted, worshipped, and obeyed. This does not mean every genuine work of the Spirit will look emotionally identical. One congregation may respond with tears, another with quiet conviction, another with joyful singing, another with courageous testimony. The test is not cultural style. It is whether the Spirit’s work honours the biblical Christ and produces the life that belongs to Him.

The Spirit also glorifies Christ by making the gospel effective. He opens blind eyes, grants new birth, unites believers to Christ, assures them of adoption, sanctifies their desires, and empowers witness. A ministry obsessed with the personality, clothing, gestures, titles, secrets, and access of a spiritual leader may speak constantly of anointing while functionally displacing the One whom the Spirit glorifies.

The Spirit and the Written Word

The Spirit who illumines Scripture is the Spirit who inspired it. He does not contradict Himself. [2 Peter 1:19-21](#) explains that prophetic Scripture did not originate in human will; people spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. [2 Timothy 3:14-17](#) identifies Scripture as God-breathed and sufficient to equip the servant of God.

Illumination does not mean that the Spirit whispers meanings unrelated to grammar, context, genre, and apostolic intention. Nor does illumination make one interpreter infallible. The same Spirit who gives understanding also produces humility, patience, teachability, and willingness to be corrected. “The Spirit told me” cannot be used as a padlock on examination.

Private guidance, dreams, impressions, prophecies, and claimed revelations must therefore be tested. Scripture neither permits practical naturalism, which assumes God never acts beyond ordinary processes, nor uncritical supernaturalism, which treats every unusual experience as divine. The church must neither quench what is genuinely from God nor baptise

suggestion, error, manipulation, or deception. “Do not despise prophecies, but test all things. Hold on to what is good” ([1 Thessalonians 5:19-22](#)). Testing is not unbelief. It is obedience.

Conviction, Regeneration, and Indwelling

The Holy Spirit does not merely improve the religious mood. He performs the work without which no one becomes a Christian. Jesus tells Nicodemus that one must be born of water and Spirit to enter God's kingdom ([John 3:1-21](#)). New birth is not a decision to become more positive or a cultural adoption of Christian identity. It is divine life granted to the spiritually dead.

[Titus 3:3-7](#) describes salvation as the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit, poured out through Jesus Christ. [Romans 8:1-17](#) presents the Spirit as the One who frees from the law of sin and death, dwells in believers, leads God's children, and assures them of adoption. [Ephesians 1:13-14](#) calls Him the seal and down payment of the inheritance.

This work cannot be reduced to institutional membership, sacramental participation without faith, an emotional altar call, inherited Christianity, or a moment of public excitement. A person may know the language of the Spirit and remain unregenerate. Jesus warns that some will appeal to prophecy, exorcism, and miracles while hearing, “I never knew you” ([Matthew 7:15-23](#)). Extraordinary claims do not replace the new birth.

Sanctification and Holy Fruit

The Spirit is holy not merely in title but in effect. He conforms believers to Christ. [Galatians 5:13-26](#) contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are not decorative virtues added after spiritual power. They are evidence of the kind of life the Spirit produces.

A ministry may display gifted speech, intense worship, healing claims, prophetic accuracy, crowds, wealth, or global reach while its leaders practise greed, sexual impurity, deception, cruelty, and domination. Such contradictions must not be explained away by saying that gifting and character are separate. It is true that gifts are given by grace and that immature believers may possess real gifts. Yet persistent unrepentant corruption, protected by claims of anointing, is not a minor character flaw. It is a warning that the ministry's spiritual claims require severe examination.

Holiness must also be distinguished from external respectability. A conservative church may reject visible charismatic excess while tolerating pride, racism, domestic abuse, financial dishonesty, pornography, envy, and political hatred. Emotional restraint is not automatically the fruit of the Spirit. Neither loudness nor quietness proves His presence. The Spirit produces Christlike holiness in every cultural style.

Gifts for the Common Good

[1 Corinthians 12:1-31](#) presents spiritual gifts as diverse manifestations of the one Spirit for the common good. Gifts are not badges of spiritual class. No member may despise another, and no gift makes its bearer independent of the body. [1 Corinthians 13:1-13](#) places love at the centre. [1 Corinthians 14:1-40](#) requires intelligibility, testing, edification, and order.

Evangelical Christians disagree over whether revelatory and sign gifts continue in the same manner throughout the church age. Continuationists argue that the New Testament does not explicitly terminate the gifts before Christ's return and that credible reports of prophecy, healing, and miracles should not be excluded in advance (Grudem, 2000; Keener, 2011). Cessationists argue that apostles and foundational revelatory signs served a unique

redemptive-historical role and that the completion of the apostolic foundation changes the church's expectation (Gaffin, 1979). Both positions contain serious exegetical arguments and should be represented without caricature.

The shared biblical obligations are more important for the present chapter. No position permits false prophecy, commercialised anointing, doctrinal contradiction, sexual exploitation, fabricated testimonies, or immunity from testing. Continuationism does not require gullibility. Cessationism does not justify prayerless rationalism or denial of God's providential power. The church must avoid both the desert of practical naturalism and the swamp of untested supernaturalism (Carson, 1987; Fee, 1994; Packer, 1996).

When Power Is Mistaken for the Spirit

Human beings can generate intense experiences. Music shapes attention and emotion. Repetition can narrow awareness. Crowds amplify expectation. Authority influences interpretation. Suggestion may produce real bodily responses. Trauma, fatigue, fasting, fear, joy, grief, and social pressure can alter perception. None of this proves that all religious experience is manufactured. It proves that unusual sensation is not self-authenticating.

The modern worship environment may employ professional sound, lighting, visual pacing, repeated musical phrases, stories, countdowns, and charismatic stagecraft. These tools are not inherently sinful. Excellence can serve clarity and beauty. Yet when emotional engineering is presented as the arrival of the Spirit, the congregation is trained to confuse production with presence. A fire can be manufactured on the stage while the altar remains without sacrifice.

The opposite error also occurs. Some believers distrust tears, raised hands, spontaneous prayer, bodily emotion, or fervent worship merely because such responses are vulnerable to manipulation. Scripture contains lament, trembling, joy, silence, shouting, prostration, dancing, and reverent awe. Emotion belongs to embodied worship. The issue is not whether people feel deeply, but whether emotion responds to truth, remains accountable to love and order, and bears holy fruit.

A similar distinction applies to guidance. Intuition may arise from wisdom, memory, fear, desire, pattern recognition, or spiritual prompting. It should not automatically be labelled revelation. A mature believer may say, "I sense this may be wise," while remaining open to correction. Spiritual authoritarianism begins when impression becomes command and command becomes unchallengeable because God has allegedly spoken.

The Spirit is not a technology. He cannot be transferred by a fee, activated by a formula, controlled through an object, monopolised by a title, or sold through access to a platform. Simon Magus desired spiritual power as possession and was rebuked because he thought God's gift could be obtained with money ([Acts 8:9-24](#)). Any system that converts prayer, prophecy, impartation, healing, deliverance, or blessing into a market should hear Peter's warning. This concern develops the author's prior examination of impartation claims and the attempt to transfer spiritual gifts through human technique or commercial access (Sangwa, 2025).

The Gospel's Diagnosis: Why Salvation Is Necessary

Sin Is More Than Woundedness

A salvation without repentance usually begins with a diagnosis without sin. Human beings are described as wounded but not guilty, uninformed but not rebellious, socially conditioned but

not morally accountable, excluded but not alienated from God, or spiritually undeveloped but not dead in trespasses. Each description may contain part of the truth. People are wounded. Ignorance matters. Social structures form behaviour. Exclusion can be cruel. Poverty, trauma, and oppression are real evils. Yet none of these exhausts the biblical account.

[Ephesians 2:1-10](#) describes sinners as dead in trespasses, following the course of this world, under hostile spiritual influence, living according to disordered desires, and by nature children under wrath. The diagnosis is severe because the mercy is great. God makes the dead alive with Christ, saves by grace through faith, and creates a people for good works. The author's doctrinal account of salvation similarly distinguishes regeneration and justification from therapy, moral improvement, political liberation, ritual confidence, and technological enhancement (Sangwa, 2026d).

Sin is lawlessness, unbelief, idolatry, ingratitude, disordered desire, false worship, and rebellion against the Creator. It includes personal acts and corrupted structures, private lust and public injustice, respectable pride and visible immorality. It wounds neighbours, deforms institutions, enslaves the sinner, and incurs divine judgment. The gospel does not force every suffering person into the category of perpetrator. Scripture distinguishes Job's affliction from his friends' accusations, hears the cry of the oppressed, and condemns rulers who exploit the vulnerable. Yet even victims remain human beings in need of grace, and perpetrators require more than social rehabilitation.

The doctrine of sin protects the wounded because it names the evil done to them as genuinely evil. A therapeutic framework may describe an abuser's behaviour through trauma, compulsion, insecurity, or learned patterns. These factors may illuminate causes and guide treatment. They do not erase accountability. A gospel that abolishes guilt in order to protect self-esteem may unintentionally protect oppressors from repentance and victims from final justice.

Wrath and Judgment

Divine wrath is often treated as an embarrassing remnant of primitive religion. Yet wrath is God's holy opposition to evil. A God who never judges genocide, abuse, corruption, exploitation, betrayal, and cruelty is not more loving. He is morally indifferent. The biblical God is patient and rich in mercy, but patience has a purpose: it leads toward repentance ([Romans 2:1-11](#)).

Jesus speaks of judgment with solemn clarity. The Father has entrusted judgment to the Son so that all may honour the Son ([John 5:19-29](#)). The risen Christ is the appointed Judge before whom God commands all people to repent ([Acts 17:22-31](#)). [Revelation 20:11-15](#) presents final judgment before the great white throne.

Hell must not be preached with delight, manipulation, or speculative cruelty. It should produce tears, urgency, humility, and evangelism. But deleting judgment does not protect people from it. A lighthouse that turns off its lamp because the warning disturbs travellers does not become compassionate. It becomes complicit with the rocks.

The Cross Is Not a Decorative Symbol

What the Cross Accomplishes

The cross has accumulated many cultural meanings. It may signify identity, consolation, resistance, sacrifice, beauty, suffering, or belonging. It appears in architecture, jewellery, art,

political symbolism, and branding. Yet the cross of the New Testament is not an empty container for whatever meaning a culture needs. It is the place where the incarnate Son, in accordance with the Father's saving purpose and through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself for sinners ([Hebrews 9:11-28](#)).

The biblical witness uses multiple, complementary terms. Christ redeems by paying the price of liberation. He propitiates by dealing with holy wrath. He expiates by removing guilt. He reconciles enemies to God. He justifies the ungodly through His righteousness. He inaugurates covenant, defeats hostile powers, condemns sin in the flesh, and creates a people who die and rise with Him. No single metaphor exhausts the mystery, but substitution gives the others their moral coherence (Morris, 1983; Stott, 1986; Rutledge, 2015).

Substitution does not mean that the Father punished an unwilling third party. The Father loves and gives the Son. The Son loves and gives Himself. The Spirit sustains and applies the one saving work of the triune God. Jesus says no one takes His life from Him; He lays it down voluntarily and takes it up again ([John 10:11-18](#)). The cross is neither divine child abuse nor cosmic coercion. It is holy love in voluntary self-giving.

Substitution also does not legitimise human violence. Christ's sacrifice is unique. No pastor, parent, spouse, state, or movement may demand that a victim remain under abuse by appealing to Jesus' suffering. The cross exposes violent power, identifies with victims, and condemns those who use religion to protect oppression. At the same time, it reveals that the deepest human violence is rebellion against God and that reconciliation requires more than moral protest.

Serious Objections to Penal Substitution

Critics argue that penal substitution makes forgiveness dependent upon violence, portrays God as vindictive, divides the Father from the Son, glorifies punishment, and produces unhealthy guilt. These concerns should not be dismissed carelessly. Penal language has sometimes been preached crudely. Some have portrayed the Father as reluctant to love, the Son as absorbing irrational rage, and sinners as required to remain psychologically crushed. Such distortions must be corrected.

Nonviolent and moral-influence approaches rightly emphasise that the cross exposes oppressive powers, demonstrates love, calls disciples to enemy-love, and resists the normal logic of retaliation (Green & Baker, 2000; Weaver, 2001). Liberationist readings rightly insist that salvation cannot be preached while churches ignore bodies broken by injustice. The cross is indeed God's solidarity with sufferers and victory over powers.

Yet the objection fails when it denies what Scripture repeatedly affirms. Sin is not only violence humans commit against Jesus. It is guilt before God. Isaiah's Servant bears iniquity. Christ becomes a curse for us ([Galatians 3:10-14](#)). God condemns sin in the flesh of His Son ([Romans 8:1-4](#)). The Lamb purchases people by His blood ([Revelation 5:9-10](#)).

Forgiveness is free to the sinner but not morally trivial. A judge who simply overlooks grave evil does not display justice. The cross shows that God neither denies evil nor abandons sinners. He bears the cost within His own triune life. The guilty are not told to punish themselves, earn mercy, or remain in shame. They are told to come to Christ, whose completed work is sufficient.

Healthy preaching of the cross therefore produces conviction without despair, assurance without presumption, gratitude without boasting, and holiness without self-atonement. It tells

the sinner, “Your guilt is worse than self-justification admits, and grace is greater than shame imagines.”

Repentance and Faith: Conversion Without Legalism or Cheap Grace

The Apostolic Call

Jesus begins His public proclamation with a command: “Repent and believe the good news” ([Mark 1:14-15](#)). After His resurrection, He teaches that repentance for forgiveness of sins must be proclaimed in His name to all nations ([Luke 24:44-49](#)). Peter calls his hearers to repent, receive forgiveness, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ([Acts 2:22-42](#)). Paul testifies to repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus ([Acts 20:17-21](#)).

Repentance and faith are distinguishable but inseparable dimensions of conversion. Faith receives Christ. Repentance turns from sin, idols, and self-rule to God. Neither earns salvation. Both are enabled by grace. Scripture can speak of God granting repentance that leads to life ([Acts 11:18](#)) and granting repentance leading to knowledge of truth ([2 Timothy 2:24-26](#)).

Repentance is not penance. It does not pay for sin. Christ pays for sin. It is not the attempt to feel miserable enough to persuade God. It is not public humiliation imposed by a controlling leader. It is not perfection achieved before coming to Christ. It is a Spirit-enabled change of mind, allegiance, and direction that confesses God's verdict and turns toward His mercy.

Faith is not optimism, confidence in belief, or expectation that positive words will shape reality. It is trust in the Person and work of Christ. The Bible does not say, “Believe in yourself and you will be saved.” It says, “Believe in the Lord Jesus” ([Acts 16:25-34](#)).

Justification and Sanctification

Justification is God's judicial declaration that the believer is righteous in Christ. It rests on Christ's obedience and blood, not the believer's moral progress. [Romans 4:1-8](#) presents justification of the ungodly through faith apart from works. [Galatians 2:15-21](#) excludes law-keeping as the basis of acceptance.

Sanctification is the Spirit's continuing work of conforming the justified person to Christ. The two must not be confused or separated. If sanctification becomes the basis of justification, assurance collapses into legalism. If justification is preached without sanctification, grace is reduced to exemption from Christ's lordship. [Romans 6:1-23](#) answers the antinomian question decisively: those united to Christ died to sin and walk in newness of life.

Good works are fruit, not purchase. [Ephesians 2:8-10](#) joins salvation by grace through faith with the new creation prepared for good works. Obedience does not make Christ sufficient. It demonstrates that the living Christ has taken possession of the believer.

Cheap Grace and False Assurance

A salvation without repentance often trades on the fear of legalism. Because some churches have manipulated consciences, required cultural conformity, or preached holiness without grace, any demand for repentance is described as harmful. The abuse is real. Tender consciences should not be crushed under endless suspicion. Weak believers may belong truly to Christ. Growth is often uneven, and sanctification does not produce sinless perfection in this life.

Yet the answer to legalism is not cheap grace. A profession of faith that protects deliberate rebellion is not assurance. A prayer repeated in childhood, baptism certificate, family heritage, church membership, ministry office, emotional experience, or knowledge of doctrine cannot substitute for the new birth. [2 Corinthians 13:5](#) commands self-examination. [1 John 1:5-10](#) joins walking in the light, confession, cleansing, and Christ's faithful advocacy.

The issue is not perfection but direction, not sinlessness but a life that can no longer make peace with sin. The believer falls and returns. The hypocrite arranges doctrine so that return is unnecessary.

A Brief Genealogy of Another Jesus

Ancient Reductions and Distortions

The church's present struggle is new in technology but old in doctrine. From the beginning, teachers attempted to preserve part of the Christian confession while revising the identity of Christ.

Some early Jewish-Christian groups treated Jesus as a remarkable human Messiah while denying His eternal deity. Adoptionist patterns similarly described Him as a righteous man specially chosen or empowered by God. These approaches could honour Jesus while refusing the apostolic claim that the Word was God before becoming flesh.

Docetic tendencies moved in the opposite direction. They protected a supposedly pure spirituality by denying that the Son truly shared vulnerable human flesh. He only seemed to suffer. Gnostic systems often placed a redeemer within elaborate hierarchies of spiritual beings and interpreted salvation as escape through secret knowledge. The result was a Christ detached from creation, incarnation, public apostolic witness, and bodily resurrection.

Arius and related fourth-century teachers gave the Son an exalted status but placed Him within creation. The controversy was not semantic vanity. If the Son is a creature, He cannot reveal God fully, receive the worship due to God, create all things, or unite humanity with the divine life. Nicaea's confession that the Son is of the same divine essence as the Father guarded the biblical distinction between Creator and creature.

Other errors confused or divided Christ's natures and Person. Apollinarianism compromised His full humanity. Nestorian tendencies divided the acting subject. Eutychian confusion blurred the distinction of natures. Chalcedon's disciplined language did not explain away mystery. It protected the confession that the one Son is truly God and truly human.

These controversies matter because counterfeits rarely begin by deleting every Christian word. They change what words are permitted to mean. "Son of God" may mean created agent. "Incarnation" may mean awakened consciousness. "Resurrection" may mean continuing influence. "Spirit" may mean divine energy. The old vocabulary becomes a vehicle for a different faith.

Medieval Captivities and Reformation Recovery

The medieval Western church confessed orthodox Christology, yet institutional practices could obscure the sufficiency and accessibility of Christ's mediation. Sacramental systems, penitential burdens, relics, indulgence commerce, political power, and clerical control sometimes placed layers of dependence between the believer and the finished work of Christ. This history must be handled without pretending that every medieval Christian held the same theology or that

grace disappeared entirely. Rich traditions of devotion, charity, theological reflection, and Christ-centred worship remained.

The Reformation's recovery of justification by faith and the final authority of Scripture did not invent the gospel. It called the church back to apostolic sources. Christ alone is Mediator. Grace is received rather than purchased. Yet Protestant churches later developed their own temptations: state captivity, ethnic nationalism, dead formalism, intellectual pride, sectarian cruelty, and confessional orthodoxy without spiritual life. Every tradition requires reform under Scripture.

Enlightenment and Liberal Reconstructions

The Enlightenment's suspicion of miracle and revelation encouraged a separation between the “Jesus of history” and the “Christ of faith.” Deistic and rationalistic readings retained Jesus as moral teacher while treating incarnation, miracles, atonement, resurrection, and judgment as unbelievable or unnecessary. Later liberal theology often located the enduring value of Christianity in Jesus' ethical consciousness, fatherhood of God, brotherhood of humanity, or moral influence.

This reconstruction responded partly to genuine failures. Dogmatic churches had sometimes defended coercion, ignored historical study, or confused inherited formulations with unquestionable interpretations. Critical historical inquiry can correct false harmonisation, expose anachronism, and deepen understanding. The error arises when antisupernatural assumptions decide in advance what Jesus could not have been or done.

A merely moral Jesus cannot bear the canonical evidence without radical editing. He forgives sins, claims authority over Sabbath and temple, receives worship, identifies Himself with divine prerogatives, predicts resurrection, and speaks as final Judge. The attempt to preserve His ethics while rejecting His identity also faces a moral problem. Why should the ethical teaching of a mistaken apocalyptic prophet possess unique authority? The modern moral teacher is often created by selecting the sayings that agree with present values and dismissing those that do not.

Social, Political, and Therapeutic Reconstructions

The social gospel rightly protested a Christianity that preached individual forgiveness while ignoring poverty, labour exploitation, racism, and corrupt structures. Liberation theologies likewise insisted that Scripture addresses oppressed communities and that the exodus, prophets, incarnation, cross, and resurrection have public consequences (Gutiérrez, 1988; Cone, 2011). These movements exposed sins conservative churches sometimes protected.

Yet Christ is reduced when liberation from social domination becomes the controlling meaning of salvation and reconciliation with God becomes secondary or symbolic. Political transformation cannot bear the full weight of resurrection hope. Every revolution contains sinners. Every liberated community still faces death. A movement may change rulers without changing worship.

The therapeutic reconstruction emerged within cultures increasingly organised around psychological wellbeing, authenticity, and personal fulfilment (Rieff, 1966; Smith & Denton, 2005; Trueman, 2020). It corrected cruel neglect of trauma and mental illness, but it also tempted churches to present Jesus principally as emotional support. Sin became low self-esteem, guilt became pathology, repentance became shame, and salvation became feeling accepted.

The therapeutic Jesus is attractive because many people encountered a harsh counterfeit first. Some were told that depression proved spiritual failure, that abuse should be endured silently, or that anxiety could be rebuked through stronger faith. They need the compassion of Christ and competent care. Yet therapy cannot become atonement. A Jesus who only reassures the self cannot free the self from sin's dominion.

The Digital Turn

The digital age adds a new possibility: Jesus can be simulated interactively. Artificial-intelligence systems now produce prayers, sermons, images, conversations, and personalised religious counsel. Some applications explicitly present users with a conversational “Jesus,” raising questions about authority, embodiment, data, projection, and spiritual dependence (Reed, 2025).

A language model can assemble biblical phrases, reproduce theological traditions, adapt tone, and respond at any hour. Used responsibly, such technology may assist study, translation, accessibility, and preliminary reflection. It can also create the illusion of personal spiritual presence. The user may begin to treat generated text as divine guidance, confession as a data stream, or algorithmic responsiveness as pastoral care.

The simulated Jesus is the most literal mirror of the modern self. The system learns the user's language, preferences, fears, and expectations, then returns a responsive religious image. It can be adjusted if it offends. It can speak without demanding embodied church membership, accountable relationships, sacrificial service, or submission to correction. It is always available, never tired, and owned by an infrastructure the worshipper cannot see.

The problem is not that every generated sentence is false. The problem is ontological and ecclesial. Software did not become flesh. It did not die, rise, ascend, intercede, or promise to return. It does not possess the Holy Spirit, bear pastoral responsibility, know the heart, absolve guilt, or exercise church discipline. A digital representation may point toward Christ or obscure Him. It can never become Christ.

The Counterfeit Jesuses of the Present Age

Jesus as Moral Teacher Without Lordship

The moral-teacher Jesus is praised for compassion, enemy-love, inclusion, and care for the poor while His claims to deity, exclusive mediation, atoning death, resurrection, and judgment are treated as later additions. This Jesus is useful because he can bless modern ethics without commanding worship.

The reduction fails historically and canonically. The earliest Christian sources do not present a long period in which communities admired a merely human teacher before mythology elevated Him. Paul's letters, written within the first Christian generation, identify Jesus within divine worship, creation, redemption, and final judgment. Early devotion to Jesus is not an optional layer added centuries later (Bauckham, 2008; Hurtado, 2003).

The reduction also fails ethically. Jesus' moral teaching cannot be separated from His authority. He does not merely recommend a way of life. He announces God's kingdom, forgives sins, identifies allegiance to Himself with allegiance to God, and requires disciples to lose life for His sake. Admiring His ethics while refusing His lordship is not neutral respect. It is selective obedience.

Jesus as Therapist

The therapeutic Jesus exists to affirm worth, relieve shame, protect peace, and endorse the individual's journey. He may challenge obviously harmful behaviour, but He does not speak of wrath, hell, self-denial, church discipline, or mortification of sin. His cross proves that the person is lovable, but not that guilt required atonement.

Biblical Christianity affirms human dignity more deeply than therapeutic individualism because dignity rests in creation and redemption, not fluctuating self-esteem. Christ receives the ashamed, binds wounds, restores the excluded, and gives rest to the burdened ([Matthew 11:25-30](#)). Churches should support legitimate counselling, psychiatric care, safeguarding, lament, and trauma-informed ministry. The denial of mental illness is not faithfulness.

Yet Jesus' healing aims at reconciliation and holiness, not merely relief. He may disturb false peace in order to give true peace. He exposes identities constructed around resentment, lust, pride, victimhood, achievement, or fear and gives a new identity in Himself. The therapeutic counterfeit says, "Nothing fundamental must die." The gospel says the old self was crucified with Christ so that the believer may walk in newness of life.

Jesus as Political Activist or National Mascot

Jesus is repeatedly recruited into political movements. Progressive movements may present Him chiefly as revolutionary liberator from oppressive structures. Conservative movements may present Him as guardian of national tradition, borders, civilisation, family order, or market freedom. Both may invoke biblical themes. Scripture does command justice, condemn oppression, honour lawful authority, protect the vulnerable, and call rulers to account. Christian faith has public consequences.

The error is political capture. Christ cannot be reduced to the programme of a party, nation, class, race, or movement. His kingdom judges every coalition. He confronts sexual permissiveness and conservative hypocrisy, revolutionary hatred and authoritarian power, economic exploitation and envy, global technocracy and nationalist idolatry. No manifesto contains Him.

Civil religion is especially deceptive because it surrounds national identity with sacred language (Bellah, 1967). Prayers, flags, ceremonies, and references to providence may create the impression that the nation enjoys covenantal status. In other settings, revolutionary ideology assumes messianic form, promising a redeemed society through seizure or redistribution of power. In both cases, political enemies may be treated as enemies of God.

The church should serve the common good, protect the oppressed, oppose corruption, and speak truth to power. The political shape of Jesus' discipleship cannot be reduced to private sentiment, yet it remains governed by the cruciform kingdom rather than coercive messianism (Yoder, 1972). It should not preach the state, market, revolution, nation, race, or global institution as saviour. Pilate's courtroom and Calvary reveal that religious and political powers can cooperate against Truth. Resurrection reveals that God's kingdom cannot be delivered by their methods.

Jesus as Prosperity Provider and Motivational Coach

The prosperity Jesus is valued as a means to health, wealth, promotion, influence, marriage, travel, business expansion, and visible success. The motivational Jesus activates potential, strengthens confidence, and provides principles for achievement. Some of this preaching arises

among communities facing genuine poverty, unemployment, corruption, and limited opportunity. Hope should not be mocked. The Bible teaches God's provision, invites prayer for daily needs, honours diligent work, and records acts of healing.

The distortion occurs when earthly success becomes the controlling evidence of faith and the cross becomes a technique for acquisition. Suffering is treated as failure, poverty as defective confession, and giving as investment in guaranteed return. Christ becomes the broker of the sovereign self's desired future.

The author's earlier warning about worldly teaching is pertinent here: messages centred on material outcomes may attract attention while displacing the true gospel and the necessity of new birth (Sangwa, 2024c). The New Testament promises something greater and harder. Believers receive every spiritual blessing in Christ, adoption, forgiveness, the Spirit, the church, resurrection, and an imperishable inheritance. They may also receive persecution, loss, sickness, unanswered prayer, and martyrdom. Paul knows abundance and need. The apostles do not die as evidence that faith failed. They suffer as witnesses to a kingdom not measured by present comfort.

The full prosperity analysis belongs later in this book. For the present argument, the doctrinal test is clear: a Jesus whose principal mission is to fulfil earthly ambition is not the Lamb who calls disciples to take up the cross.

Jesus as Universal Religious Symbol

In plural societies, Jesus may be presented as prophet, enlightened teacher, avatar, spiritual master, embodiment of compassion, universal Christ principle, or one expression of a single divine reality. Such language can reduce conflict and create space for respectful conversation. Christians should defend religious freedom, reject coercion, cooperate with neighbours in lawful goods, and listen carefully to what other communities actually believe.

Respect does not erase contradiction. A system that denies the Trinity, incarnation, cross, resurrection, and lordship of Christ does not honour the same Christ under another vocabulary. Sincerity cannot make incompatible claims identical. Jesus cannot simultaneously be the eternal Son and merely a prophet, the only Mediator and one path among many, bodily raised and permanently dead.

Interfaith friendship should therefore be truthful. Christians can love Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, traditional religious practitioners, atheists, and people of every worldview without pretending doctrinal agreement. To hide the only Saviour in order to appear peaceful is not love. It leaves the neighbour with respect for a name but without the gospel.

The author has elsewhere distinguished neighbourly peace and religious freedom from an interfaith substitute gospel that removes repentance, the cross, new birth, and Christ's exclusive lordship (Sangwa, 2024a, 2026e). The fuller analysis of pluralism and interfaith theology belongs to Chapter 17. Here the point is Christological: a universal symbol shaped to fit every religion is not the crucified and risen Lord who calls all people to repentance.

Jesus as Cultural, Racial, or Denominational Possession

Every culture receives the gospel through language, images, questions, music, social structures, and historical memory. Contextualisation is unavoidable and can be faithful. African Christians need not imitate European cultural forms to worship biblically. Indigenous languages can illuminate dimensions obscured by imported terminology. Communities that suffered colonial

domination may rightly examine how Christ was confused with empire (Bevans, 2002; Hiebert, 1987).

Yet contextualisation becomes captivity when a culture's assumptions are protected from Christ's judgment. Ancestral categories, racial identity, patriarchal custom, individualism, consumerism, nationalism, therapeutic psychology, or revolutionary ideology may be used to reconstruct Jesus rather than receive Him. No culture is neutral. Every culture contains created goods, common grace, human wisdom, idolatry, injustice, and sin.

A racialised Jesus may be used to legitimise supremacy or resistance. Historical images of a European Jesus sometimes accompanied colonial power, while counter-images may seek to restore dignity. Representation matters pastorally, but no ethnicity possesses the incarnate Lord. Jesus entered history as a Jewish man, fulfils Israel's Scriptures, and gathers a people from every tribe and language. He cannot be whitened, blackened, nationalised, tribalised, or denominationally enclosed into a mascot.

Jesus as Digitally Simulated Companion

Digital systems can now create a Jesus who speaks in the user's preferred style, answers personal questions, and appears emotionally responsive. Such systems may quote Scripture accurately or badly. They may reflect the theological choices of developers, the statistical patterns of training data, commercial incentives, safety rules, and user prompts. Their apparent personality can conceal institutional power.

A simulated companion may be especially attractive to lonely, wounded, or churchless people. It never interrupts, demands patience with difficult neighbours, or exposes the user to the risks of embodied community. Yet Christianity is not salvation by personalised interface. The Word became flesh, not software. Christ forms a body, not a private feed. He gives pastors and members who are accountable, limited, and present, not infinitely adjustable projections.

Technology should therefore remain a servant. It can help readers locate passages, compare interpretations, translate resources, and prepare questions. It must not become confessor, oracle, prophet, sacrament, or substitute Christ. Chapter 20 will examine these systems fully. At this stage, the warning is enough: an algorithm may simulate the vocabulary of Jesus while returning the user's own assumptions with divine tone.

Another Spirit in Contemporary Religion

Atmosphere as Presence

Some churches have learned to measure the Spirit by atmosphere. A service is declared powerful when music swells, bodies respond, speech accelerates, and emotion becomes contagious. A quiet gathering is assumed to lack anointing. The result is a liturgy of escalation. Each meeting must exceed the last, and leaders become responsible for producing what only God can give.

Atmosphere can assist attention. Beauty, skilled music, silence, and corporate expectation may help worshippers engage. The problem begins when sensory effect is treated as proof of divine approval. Baal's prophets displayed intensity on Carmel. Pagan worship can produce ecstasy. Political rallies can create collective transcendence. Human nervous systems respond to rhythm, authority, expectation, and crowds.

The Spirit may work through music, but He is not music. He may produce tears, but He is not tears. He may bring joy, but He is not excitement. His presence is recognised finally by truth, Christ-exaltation, holiness, love, edification, order, and enduring fruit.

Intuition as Revelation

Modern culture honours inward authenticity, and Christian language may baptise it as spiritual guidance. A desire is reintroduced as “God placed this in my heart.” Attraction becomes divine confirmation. Ambition becomes vision. Anxiety becomes prophetic warning. Resentment becomes discernment.

God can guide His people providentially and impress duties upon conscience. The Spirit may bring Scripture to mind, grant wisdom, or direct mission. Yet inward experience remains fallible. Believers are commanded to seek counsel, examine motives, test claims, and submit to Scripture. Guidance should be spoken with proportionate humility.

A leader who repeatedly says “God told me” may create an atmosphere in which disagreement appears to be rebellion against God. The claim transfers divine authority to a private experience inaccessible to others. This is spiritually dangerous even when the leader is sincere. The more consequential the claim, the more necessary public testing becomes.

Energy, Vibration, and Christianised New Age Language

The Spirit is increasingly described through terms such as energy, vibration, frequency, alignment, universe, manifestation, and higher consciousness. Some speakers use these words metaphorically without embracing a coherent New Age worldview. Precision still matters because language carries assumptions.

Impersonal energy can be manipulated. The Holy Spirit is Lord. Vibration is a measurable physical phenomenon. Holiness is moral and relational conformity to God. Manifestation in popular spirituality often means attracting desired outcomes through thought and speech. Biblical prayer is petition to the sovereign Father through the Son, not mental causation.

The author's recent analysis of self-made spirituality identifies the same pattern in astrology, manifestation, spiritual energy, ancestral practices, and algorithm-curated religion: secularisation may weaken church attachment without ending the hunger for unseen power (Sangwa, 2026a). Christianised New Age language removes repentance because the problem becomes misalignment rather than sin. The cross becomes an example of awakened love. Jesus becomes a master of consciousness. The Spirit becomes the power through which individuals create reality. This is another gospel because the self remains sovereign.

Spectacle, Signs, and Unverified Claims

Scripture records miracles and does not authorise the church to assume that God ceased to answer extraordinary prayer. It also warns that signs can accompany deception. [Deuteronomy 13:1-5](#) requires Israel to reject a sign-worker who leads toward other gods. Jesus warns of false messiahs and false prophets who perform great signs ([Matthew 24:23-27](#)). [2 Thessalonians 2:1-12](#) joins lawlessness, false signs, deception, and refusal to love truth.

Miracle claims should be investigated proportionately. Healings may be genuine, mistaken, exaggerated, psychosomatic, temporary, medically unexplained, or fabricated. Responsible examination does not insult God. It protects sufferers and honours truth. A testimony should distinguish diagnosis, treatment, timing, evidence, and current outcome. Claims of resurrection,

regrown organs, or mass healing require stronger documentation than a report of improved pain.

The church must also resist the opposite pride that assumes every testimony from poor or non-Western believers is superstition. Modern medicine does not know everything, and providence exceeds laboratory control. The proper posture is neither contempt nor credulity. It is reverent testing.

Salvation by Another Name

Self-Acceptance Without Reconciliation

Self-acceptance can be a necessary corrective to shame, perfectionism, body hatred, and the internalised contempt of abuse. A person should not despise God's creation or believe that worth depends upon beauty, productivity, wealth, marriage, health, or public approval. The gospel grants a stronger foundation than self-esteem: the person is made in God's image, the believer is loved in Christ, and no condemnation remains for those united to Him.

Yet self-acceptance cannot carry the full meaning of salvation. The self contains gifts to receive, wounds to heal, limitations to accept, and sins to confess. A doctrine that tells the person to accept every inward desire as authentic cannot distinguish creaturely dignity from fallen appetite. Reconciliation begins not when the self declares itself innocent, but when God justifies the ungodly through Christ.

The gospel does not require self-hatred. It requires the death of self-sovereignty. The believer no longer needs to construct innocence because Christ provides righteousness. This makes honest confession possible. The sinner can tell the truth because the verdict of acceptance rests in another.

Wellness Without New Birth

Wellness culture offers practices for sleep, nutrition, movement, stress management, relationships, and mental health. Many are forms of ordinary stewardship. Churches that dismiss the body or stigmatise professional care fail their people.

The counterfeit appears when wellness becomes a spiritual system of salvation. Inner peace replaces peace with God. Regulation replaces regeneration. Boundaries replace forgiveness and reconciliation in every case. Healing becomes the recovery of a hidden true self untouched by sin. Religious practices are selected according to whether they produce desired feelings.

The Holy Spirit's renewal includes the whole person and may work through ordinary care, but it cannot be reduced to wellbeing. Paul may rejoice in prison, grieve deeply, endure weakness, and possess peace that does not depend upon favourable circumstances. Christian hope is not permanent regulation of the nervous system. It is resurrection in the presence of God.

Liberation Without Atonement

Political and social liberation can be genuine goods. Scripture condemns slavery, partiality, dishonest courts, exploitation, and rulers who devour the poor. The church must not preach a private gospel that leaves systems of injustice unchallenged. Zacchaeus' repentance affects money. The Jerusalem church shares resources. James condemns favouritism. Revelation judges empires.

Yet liberation becomes another gospel when the oppressor's political defeat is treated as the coming of salvation. The oppressed and oppressor both need reconciliation to God, though their social responsibilities differ. The victim may need protection, justice, lament, and restoration. The perpetrator must repent, make restitution where possible, and accept accountability. Both need the Lamb.

Political analysis can identify structures, but it cannot resurrect the dead. A revolution can redistribute property and still produce greed, fear, and violence. A new constitution can restrain sin but cannot write God's law on the heart. The kingdom bears social fruit because Christ saves. Social fruit cannot replace Christ's saving work.

Inclusion Without Transformation

Human communities often exclude unjustly. Churches have humiliated the poor, disabled, ethnically different, sexually wounded, socially awkward, unmarried, or formerly imprisoned. Jesus rebukes partiality and receives those respectable religion despises. The gospel creates a people from every tribe and class.

Biblical inclusion, however, is inclusion into Christ, not recognition without transformation. The invitation is broad: come as you are. The promise is deeper: you will not remain under the old mastery. Christ receives repentant sinners and gives a new name, family, allegiance, and way of life.

A church that requires cultural respectability before grace is legalistic. A church that refuses to call anyone to repentance is faithless. The door of mercy is wide, but it opens into a narrow way under the Lordship of Jesus.

Education and Development Without Regeneration

Education enlarges knowledge, skills, critical reflection, and opportunity. Economic development can reduce disease, hunger, unsafe work, and vulnerability. Public institutions may restrain corruption and protect rights. Christians should serve these goods with competence.

They remain unable to regenerate. Educated people can rationalise evil more effectively. Wealth can expand generosity or appetite. Institutions can protect justice or administer oppression. Technology multiplies capacity without purifying desire. Humanity does not need less education; it needs education under truth. It does not need less development; it needs development ordered to human dignity and accountability. But neither should be announced as redemption.

The promise of technological salvation is especially powerful because it offers measurable progress against disease, disability, ageing, and distance. Yet death postponed is not death defeated. Enhanced cognition is not wisdom. Digital continuity is not resurrection. A stored voice is not a living person. The gospel promises not indefinite maintenance of fallen humanity but new creation through the risen Christ.

The Strongest Case for Reconstructed Christianity

A fair argument must hear why reconstructed Christianity attracts thoughtful people. Many do not begin with hatred of Christ. They begin with moral injury.

They have seen hell preached to frighten children while abuse remained hidden. They have heard substitution described as an angry Father attacking an innocent Son. They have watched

churches defend racial hierarchy, colonial power, domestic domination, political corruption, and financial exploitation. They have encountered leaders who claimed the Spirit while silencing questions. They have seen doctrine used to protect institutions rather than victims.

They also live among religious neighbours whose kindness challenges simplistic caricatures. They know sincere Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, traditional believers, agnostics, and atheists. The claim that only Christ saves can appear arrogant, especially when made by Christians lacking humility or holiness.

Modern historical study raises further questions. Creeds use philosophical terms not found verbatim in Scripture. Gospel narratives contain literary shaping. Theology developed through controversy. Context influences interpretation. Communities experience Christ through culture, suffering, race, sex, class, and history. From this perspective, claims to timeless orthodoxy can appear to conceal the social location of those who defined it.

Therapeutic critique adds that shame-based preaching can damage persons. Some hear repentance as self-erasure, divine fatherhood through memories of violence, and submission through histories of control. A theology that ignores trauma may demand trust where safety has been destroyed (Ward, 2011).

Political and liberationist arguments insist that sin is not only private. If salvation does not address poverty, racism, colonial domination, gendered violence, corrupt economies, and state coercion, it becomes an abstraction serving the comfortable. Jesus announces good news to the poor and liberation to captives. The cross reveals solidarity with victims. Resurrection announces God's defeat of oppressive power.

Pluralist theology argues that God's love and saving action cannot be confined to one historical religious path. Christ may be understood as the decisive Christian symbol of a universal divine reality encountered through many traditions (Hick, 1993). Exclusivism appears to limit grace and condemn billions for historical circumstances beyond their control.

Charismatic critique warns that institutional doctrine can domesticate the Spirit. The wind blows where it wishes. Revival often disrupts established order. Academic gatekeepers may dismiss the testimony of ordinary believers, especially in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, because their worldview excludes supernatural action.

These objections contain truth. Churches have abused authority. Theology has been used politically. Context matters. Social sin matters. Trauma matters. God acts beyond elite institutions. Christians must not defend orthodoxy by denying their own hypocrisy.

The question, however, is whether the proposed reconstruction heals these wounds or builds another altar upon them.

Why Reconstruction Fails

Abuse Does Not Make Revelation False

The misuse of a doctrine does not determine its truth. A leader may use divine authority to control; this does not mean God lacks authority. A church may preach hell cruelly; this does not mean judgment is unreal. A nation may invoke Christ to justify empire; this does not mean Christ has no public claims.

Indeed, biblical doctrine supplies the standard by which abuse is condemned. Shepherds are judged because the flock belongs to God. False prophets are exposed because revelation is

true. Partial courts are evil because God judges without partiality. The cross condemns religious and political power that kills the innocent while also atoning for the guilty.

Removing doctrine may weaken protection. If truth is reduced to community experience, a powerful community can construct a theology that excuses itself. Victims need more than competing narratives. They need a Judge above every institution.

Context Shapes Reception but Does Not Create Christ

Every reading occurs within context. No interpreter sees from nowhere. Historical, linguistic, cultural, and social study can expose assumptions and recover neglected dimensions. Yet perspective does not create its object. Several witnesses may see different aspects of the same mountain; they do not manufacture different mountains.

Faithful contextualisation asks how the one gospel addresses this culture. Syncretism asks how the gospel must be changed so the culture can remain final. The distinction is tested by Scripture. African communal insight may correct Western individualism, while African ancestral mediation must be judged by Christ's sole mediatorship. Western attention to individual conscience may challenge oppressive collectivism, while expressive autonomy must be judged by creaturehood. Every culture receives and is corrected.

The Creeds Clarified Rather Than Created

The fact that councils used extra-biblical terms does not prove they invented extra-biblical doctrine. Heretics also quoted Scripture. Precision became necessary because the same words carried conflicting meanings. *Homoousios*, “of the same essence,” guarded the scriptural confession that the Son is fully God rather than a creature. Chalcedon's two-natures language guarded the scriptural witness to one Person who is truly divine and human.

A fence is not the garden. It protects what grows inside. Creeds serve the church only insofar as they summarise Scripture. They may be examined and corrected under the Word. But abandoning precision does not produce pure biblical faith. It often allows old errors to return unnoticed.

Trauma Requires Care, Not a False Gospel

Religious trauma and spiritual abuse require serious pastoral, clinical, legal, and institutional responses. Victims should be heard, protected, and helped without pressure to reconcile prematurely. Forgiveness does not eliminate boundaries or criminal accountability. Repentance by leaders must include truth, restitution, removal from office where appropriate, and submission to safeguarding.

Yet a therapeutic gospel cannot heal what it refuses to name. The abused person needs to know that God condemns the evil done, that Christ is not identical to the abuser, that shame does not define the victim, and that final justice belongs to God. The perpetrator needs repentance, not merely explanation. Both need a Saviour who can forgive without calling evil good.

Justice Needs Atonement and Resurrection

Biblical salvation is not socially indifferent. The justified are called into a new community of generosity, truth, reconciliation, and justice. Yet atonement and resurrection prevent politics from becoming ultimate. The church can pursue reform without imagining that one

programme will eliminate sin. It can endure apparent defeat because Christ will raise the dead. It can love enemies without surrendering justice because vengeance belongs to God.

The cross and resurrection are therefore more politically radical than political reduction. They judge every empire, movement, and party. They create a transnational people whose highest allegiance is to the Lamb.

Love Does Not Require Pluralism

The emotional force of pluralism arises from concern for God's love and human dignity. Christians should confess the limits of their knowledge about individuals, reject triumphalism, and entrust final judgment to God. They should honour conscience and defend the civil freedom of others.

But love cannot make contradictions true. If the Father sent the Son as the unique atoning Mediator, presenting Him as optional is not generosity. It is concealment. The gospel's exclusivity concerns the Saviour, not the superiority of Christians. Believers are beggars telling other beggars where bread is found.

The Spirit Is Free, Not Lawless

The Spirit is not controlled by academic institutions, denominations, or cultures. He may revive neglected communities, empower the poor, expose respectable unbelief, and act beyond established expectations. African Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity has reminded global churches that prayer, healing, spiritual warfare, and dependence upon God cannot be reduced to Western rationalism (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Kalu, 2008).

Yet freedom is not contradiction. The Spirit who inspired apostolic Scripture does not overturn it. He may surprise the church, but He does not teach another Christ. He may expose lifeless formalism, but He does not sanctify disorder, greed, sexual sin, or false prophecy. Testing the spirits is itself a command of the Spirit.

Eleven Tests for Spirits, Teachers, Gospels, and Manifestations

No diagnostic framework can replace prayer, Scripture, mature elders, evidence, and patient judgment. Yet the following tests provide a disciplined starting point.

1. The Christological Test

What does the teaching confess about Jesus Christ? Is He the eternal Son, fully God and fully human, incarnate, sinless, crucified for sins, bodily raised, ascended, reigning, interceding, returning, and worthy of worship? Does the ministry proclaim Him as Lord or use Him as a means to another end?

Biblical anchors: [John 1:1-18](#); [Colossians 1:15-23](#); [1 John 4:1-6](#).

2. The Scriptural Test

Does the claim agree with Scripture interpreted in context and according to the whole counsel of God? Are difficult texts explained or avoided? Does private revelation override the written Word? Is the teacher willing to be corrected by Scripture?

Biblical anchors: [Isaiah 8:19-20](#); [Acts 17:10-12](#); [2 Timothy 3:14-17](#).

3. The Gospel Test

What problem is being solved? Does the message preserve sin, wrath, atonement, grace, repentance, faith, justification, regeneration, holiness, resurrection, and judgment? Is salvation located in Christ's completed work or in human performance, money, technique, identity, or institutional loyalty?

Biblical anchors: [Romans 3:21-26](#); [1 Corinthians 15:1-8](#); [Galatians 1:6-10](#).

4. The Trinitarian Test

Does the teaching confess one God in three distinct divine Persons? Is the Spirit treated as an impersonal force? Is Jesus reduced to a created being or mode? Does the ministry separate the work of the Spirit from the Father and Son?

Biblical anchors: [Matthew 28:18-20](#); [John 14:15-26](#); [2 Corinthians 13:13](#).

5. The Moral Test

What kind of life does the teaching approve? Does it produce holiness, truthfulness, sexual purity, justice, mercy, humility, self-control, and love? Are serious sins renamed, excused, or hidden because the leader is gifted?

Biblical anchors: [Matthew 7:15-23](#); [Galatians 5:13-26](#); [Titus 2:11-14](#).

6. The Fruit Test

Examine long-term fruit rather than staged moments. What happens in families, finances, leadership succession, treatment of critics, care for the poor, safeguarding, truthfulness, and the maturity of members? Does the ministry produce dependence upon Christ or dependence upon the personality?

Biblical anchors: [Matthew 7:15-20](#); [James 3:13-18](#).

7. The Authority and Accountability Test

Can the leader be questioned? Are finances reviewed? Are allegations investigated independently? Is authority ministerial under Christ or absolute? Claims of special anointing do not exempt anyone from biblical qualifications.

Biblical anchors: [Acts 20:17-35](#); [1 Peter 5:1-5](#); [3 John 9-11](#).

8. The Evidence Test

Are prophecies dated and recorded? Are healing claims medically documented where possible? Are testimonies accurate? Are quotations and statistics verifiable? The more extraordinary the claim, the greater the need for proportionate evidence.

Biblical anchors: [Deuteronomy 18:20-22](#); [Proverbs 18:13-17](#); [2 Corinthians 13:1](#).

9. The Financial Test

Is spiritual access commercialised? Are people pressured through fear, curses, emergencies, promised miracles, or claims that giving activates God? Are vulnerable people encouraged to neglect basic duties in order to fund the ministry?

Biblical anchors: [Matthew 10:5-10](#); [Acts 8:18-24](#); [1 Timothy 6:3-10](#).

10. The Pastoral Test

Are wounded people protected or exploited? Does counsel lead toward truth, responsibility, mature community, and Christ, or toward secrecy and dependence? Does the ministry honour legitimate medicine, law, safeguarding, and professional care where needed?

Biblical anchors: [Ezekiel 34:1-16](#); [Galatians 6:1-2](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:12-15](#).

11. The Eschatological Test

Does the teaching prepare believers for holiness, suffering, perseverance, judgment, resurrection, and Christ's return? Or does it promise uninterrupted comfort, cultural dominance, wealth, or technological transcendence? A true gospel forms pilgrims who can lose everything without losing Christ.

Biblical anchors: [Matthew 24:4-14](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#); [Titus 2:11-14](#).

These tests must be applied to progressive and conservative ministries alike. A church may defend substitutionary atonement while worshipping political power. Another may speak of justice while denying Christ's lordship. A charismatic ministry may manipulate manifestations. A cessationist church may possess correct doctrine but grieve the Spirit through loveless pride. The Word cuts every direction.

What Counterfeit Christianity Produces

Doctrinal counterfeits are never merely intellectual. They form people and institutions.

A reduced Jesus produces reduced worship. If Christ is mainly teacher, worship becomes admiration. If He is therapist, worship becomes reassurance. If He is prosperity provider, worship becomes transaction. If He is political mascot, worship becomes mobilisation. If He is universal symbol, worship becomes spiritual inclusivity without obedience. If He is simulated companion, worship becomes personalised consumption.

A reduced Spirit produces spiritual dependence. When atmosphere is confused with presence, believers chase events. When intuition becomes revelation, leaders become oracles. When anointing is commercialised, the poor have no access to God. When spectacle becomes proof, truth and character appear ordinary.

A reduced gospel produces false assurance. People may believe they are saved because they feel accepted, joined a church, repeated a prayer, support justice, possess spiritual gifts, follow a prophet, give money, or admire Jesus. They remain unprepared to meet the Judge.

Families suffer when doctrine excuses irresponsibility. A father may pursue ministry "destiny" while neglecting children. A spouse may use divine guidance to control decisions. A family may refuse medical care because healing was declared. Young people may inherit spiritual excitement without biblical foundations and collapse when promises fail.

Churches suffer when correction is treated as attack. Institutions protect reputation, leaders protect platforms, and victims become threats. Mission suffers when the world hears a gospel indistinguishable from self-help or politics. The poor are disappointed when prosperity promises fail. The wounded are re-injured when manifestations replace care.

Eternity is the final consequence. Another Jesus cannot save because he does not exist. Another spirit cannot sanctify because it is not the Holy Spirit. Another gospel cannot reconcile because it leaves the sinner outside Christ.

A Pastoral Word to Different Hearers

To the Deliberate Deceiver

If you know that testimonies are exaggerated, prophecies manipulated, healings unverified, finances concealed, or doctrine altered to preserve your platform, repent now. Your audience cannot protect you before Christ. Religious success is not evidence of divine approval. The One whose name you use will judge every secret.

Stop selling access to grace. Correct the record. Return money obtained through deception where possible. Submit to accountable elders and lawful investigation. Step away from office if your conduct has disqualified you. Public sin that misled many may require public confession. Mercy is real, but mercy is not a strategy for retaining power.

To the Compromised Leader

You may still believe the creed while avoiding its offence. You no longer preach repentance because donors dislike it. You omit judgment because growth statistics matter. You describe the Spirit vaguely so every experience can be welcomed. You invoke Jesus in political language because access is valuable.

Remember your charge. You will not answer for whether the age applauded. You will answer for whether you preached the Word. Recover the whole counsel of God. Love people enough to tell them the truth, and fear Christ more than institutional decline.

To the Careless Teacher

Not every false statement is deliberate deception. You may have repeated fashionable language, copied a viral sermon, or spoken beyond your competence. Humility can still protect the flock. Study. Correct your errors. Cite sources accurately. Do not turn impressions into revelation or possibilities into prophecy. "I was wrong" is not the death of ministry. Refusal to repent may be.

To the Believer Drawn to Spiritual Power

Your hunger for God's reality is not shameful. Christianity is not a dry philosophy. The living God hears prayer, gives the Spirit, comforts, guides, sanctifies, and may act beyond ordinary expectation. But hunger makes a person vulnerable to counterfeit food.

Do not surrender judgment to charisma. Test the message. Examine the fruit. Keep records of prophecies. Seek mature counsel. Do not give money under threat. Do not confuse bodily sensation with God's verdict. The Holy Spirit will not be offended because you obey His command to test.

To the Wounded Person

Perhaps the therapeutic Jesus feels safer because people preaching holiness harmed you. What happened should not be minimised. Abuse is not discipleship. Control is not shepherding. Silence is not forgiveness. Seek safety, wise pastoral care, qualified professional help, and legal protection where necessary.

Yet do not let the abuser define Christ for you. Jesus is not the leader who misused His name. He sees, judges, binds wounds, and receives the crushed. He also offers more than validation. He offers forgiveness for your own sins, freedom from identities built around what was done to you, and resurrection beyond every wound.

To the Political Christian

Justice matters. Corruption matters. Laws affect neighbours. Vote, serve, advocate, and govern under conscience. But remove the party from the throne. Your opponents are not automatically enemies of God, and your leaders are not messiahs. Test your side with the same severity you apply to the other.

Christ's kingdom does not need falsehood, cruelty, ethnic pride, or the protection of hypocrites. If your politics require you to excuse what Scripture condemns, politics has become your gospel.

To the Prosperity-Oriented Believer

God knows your needs. Poverty is not romantic, and suffering is not automatically virtuous. Work diligently, pray boldly, receive provision gratefully, and resist shame. But Christ did not die to make consumer ambition sacred.

Do not measure God's love by salary, marriage, travel, healing, or visibility. The Lamb is worthy when the account is full and when it is empty. A gospel unable to survive sickness, persecution, unemployment, and death is not the gospel of the apostles.

To the Person of Another Religion

Your sincerity and dignity should be honoured. Christians have sometimes spoken arrogantly, misrepresented beliefs, or joined the gospel to political domination. Those sins should be confessed.

Yet respect requires truth. Christianity does not present Jesus only as prophet or teacher. It announces the eternal Son who became flesh, bore sin, rose, and is Lord. Examine Him in the apostolic witness. Do not reject a caricature created by hypocritical Christians, but do not replace Him with a safer figure either.

To the Doctrinally Correct but Loveless Christian

You may confess every article accurately and still behave unlike Christ. Orthodoxy is not permission for pride, mockery, racism, cruelty, or indifference to victims. Demons know truths about God and tremble. The Spirit produces love.

Defend the faith with clean hands. Refuse false witness about opponents. Listen before answering. Correct gently where possible and sharply where necessary. Let the sword of the Word cut you before you use it on others.

To the Repentant False Teacher or Compromised Believer

There is mercy for those who return. The gospel you distorted is strong enough to forgive distortion. Repentance may cost platform, income, reputation, and relationships. Accept the cost. Christ is better than the ministry built in His name.

Restoration to fellowship is possible through grace. Restoration to office is a separate question governed by qualification, trust, consequences, and protection of the flock. Do not demand immediate reinstatement as proof that others have forgiven you.

To the Unconverted Churchgoer

You may sing, serve, give, prophesy, study theology, and still remain outside Christ. Do not hide behind religious activity. Ask whether you have repented and believed the gospel. Have you

received Christ as He is, not as you prefer Him to be? Do you rest in His work? Has the Spirit begun a new direction of holiness?

Come now. You do not need to clean yourself before grace. Bring guilt, shame, unbelief, wounds, and rebellion into the light. The Lamb who judges is the Lamb who was slain. Whoever comes to Him will not be cast out ([John 6:35-40](#)).

The Last Second Before the Bridegroom Comes

Jesus' first warning concerning the end of the age is, "Watch out that no one deceives you" ([Matthew 24:4](#)). Deception will not always arrive as explicit atheism. It may wear Christian vocabulary, display spiritual power, appeal to compassion, promise justice, carry institutional respectability, or speak through technology with intimate fluency.

Rapture readiness is therefore doctrinal and moral readiness. The church is not ready merely because it discusses timelines, watches geopolitical developments, or recognises possible signs. The wise virgins know the Bridegroom and keep oil in their lamps ([Matthew 25:1-13](#)). The Bride prepares through truth, holiness, faith, love, and patient endurance.

The promised gathering of believers should produce comfort and vigilance, not date-setting. The Lord will descend, the dead in Christ will rise, and living believers will be gathered to Him ([1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#)). Whether the remaining interval is measured in days or generations, every reader stands one breath from eternity. Urgency is never wasted.

The last second before midnight is not the time to experiment with another Jesus. A counterfeit passport may look convincing under ordinary light, but it cannot cross the border of the kingdom. A simulated Christ cannot call the dead from their graves. A therapeutic saviour cannot answer the books opened at judgment. A political messiah cannot cleanse the conscience. A prosperity provider cannot carry the soul through death. An impersonal spirit cannot seal anyone for resurrection.

The church must return to the eternal Son rather than a cultural projection, the crucified Lamb rather than a motivational coach, the risen Lord rather than a political mascot, the Holy Spirit rather than manufactured atmosphere, repentance rather than therapeutic exemption, grace rather than self-salvation, holiness rather than religious spectacle, and perseverance rather than promises of uninterrupted comfort.

Keep the lamp burning. Test the voices. Hold fast the apostolic gospel. The Bridegroom is not coming to receive a church that perfected its preferred image of Him. He is coming for a people purchased by His blood, indwelt by His Spirit, sanctified by truth, and watching with hope.

Conclusion: The Name Is Not Enough

A church may say *Jesus* and preach another Jesus. It may say *Spirit* and cultivate another spirit. It may say *gospel* and offer no reconciliation. It may say *grace* and abolish repentance. It may display a cross while denying the judgment the cross bore. It may speak of resurrection while locating hope in politics, therapy, wealth, or technology.

The apostolic Christ cannot be edited without consequence. He is the eternal Word, Creator, incarnate Son, sinless servant, Lamb, High Priest, risen Lord, reigning King, only Mediator, and returning Judge. The Holy Spirit is the divine Person who glorifies Christ, inspired Scripture, convicts, regenerates, indwells, sanctifies, empowers, and produces holy fruit. The gospel

announces that guilty and corrupted sinners are reconciled to God by grace through faith in Christ, with repentance, new birth, justification, sanctification, perseverance, resurrection, and eternal life.

Another Jesus may comfort the flesh while leaving the conscience unforgiven. Another spirit may excite the senses while leaving the heart unchanged. Another gospel may promise inclusion, healing, success, liberation, or progress while leaving the sinner under judgment.

The hour is late, but mercy is still proclaimed. The true Christ receives those who have followed counterfeits. The Spirit of truth can expose deception without destroying the repentant. The Father forgives idolaters who return through the Son. Confess the reconstructed Jesus. Renounce spiritual power detached from holiness. Abandon salvation without repentance. Believe the gospel.

The next movement in this book is unavoidable. Counterfeit Christology, counterfeit spirituality, and counterfeit salvation cannot gain durable authority inside the church while Scripture remains the final Judge. The text itself must be subordinated, selectively accepted, demythologised, or placed beneath experience and contemporary moral judgment. Chapter 8 therefore turns to the courtroom in which the church no longer stands beneath the Word, but places Scripture on trial.

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