



## Seeing a World of Difference

Lesson 4

by

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## The Church in Danger

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## The Church in Danger

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It is encouraging and inspiring that so many young Christians are eager to do something new and effective for Christ. Yet in the US, at least, because these young Christians have been born into a post-Christian setting, they are sometimes unaware of the revolutionary changes that have occurred in recent Western history. They sometimes fail to recognize the real enemy of the Church, namely the Devil and his Lie. Instead, they are tempted to blame the problems they see in the Church on the failings of the previous generation of Christians. They are hopeful and optimistic that they can correct those mistakes! But if their optimism blinds them to the real opposition to the gospel, they will lack wisdom to combat today’s version of the Lie. In the twenty-first century Western society, Neopaganism has infected the Church by dressing up as the Christian faith. The Devil has not changed tactics since the Garden of Eden. He always wants his Lie to look close to the Truth. If Christians fall for the deception, the Church’s witness will suffer for years to come.

### Blaming Fundamentalists

The Emergent Church movement in the U.S. often blames the previous generation of Fundamentalists for whatever problems plague the Church. The culture is not at fault; the Church itself is the culprit. Books like *UnChristian*, *Quitting Church*, *Ten Things I Hate about Christianity*, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church* or *Death by Church*, and the Hollywood movie, *Lord Save Us from Your Followers*, lay the blame on fearful old fundamentalists. It is true that Fundamentalism got a lot of things wrong. Here are a few of them:

1. Hard-nosed rationalists tried to argue opponents into the Church.
2. Gnostic-leaning holiness groups rejected the flesh and the “world,” creating “holy huddles,” in which they awaited the rapture and the destruction of the evil creation.
3. Self-serving materialists ignored the poor and fostered forms of racism.
4. Odd-ball independents performed peculiar rites in the name of the Christian faith. (One church celebrated Halloween by burning non-King James Bibles, as well as “satanic” books by Billy Graham, John MacArthur, James Dobson, Charles Swindoll, John Piper, Chuck Colson and Mark Driscoll, to name a few.)
5. Money-obsessed televangelists and “God-hates-fags” fundamentalists encouraged legalism, pride and hypocrisy.

From these errors, preserve us, O Lord! But our most dangerous enemy is not bad televangelists, mega churches, religious commercialism or closed-minded, fearful, rationalistic, unloving Christians. Nor is it the elderly fundamentalist, who is often a well-meaning Christian caught in a cultural and spiritual revolution he never understood. In fact, such a critique of previous

generations is grossly unfair. The gospel, even in its fundamentalist version, has always sought to help the poor. The immense missionary movement that began in the nineteenth century, shedding its blood all over the globe, brought to the poor of the third world not only the gospel of Jesus Christ, but schools, hospitals, business ethics, fairness and political democracy. My good friend, Vishal Mangalwadi, an Indian Christian theologian, argues that evangelical missions was a major factor in the creation of modern India. We also need to remember with gratitude that the fundamentalists of a generation or two ago bravely defended God's transcendence, the pillar doctrine of the Bible, against liberal attack.

The great "fundamentalist" and brilliant theologian, **J. Gresham Machen**, in his 1923 book, *Christianity or Liberalism*, distinguished so-called "Christian" liberalism from genuine Christianity, and, in a well-known paragraph, explained why he allowed himself to make such a shocking claim:

The truth is that liberalism has lost sight of the very centre and core of the Christian teaching... one attribute of God is absolutely fundamental in the Bible... in order to render intelligible all the rest. *That attribute is the awful transcendence of God.* It is true, indeed, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him. But He is immanent in the world not because He is identified with the world, but because He is the free Creator and upholder of it. Between the creature and the Creator, a great gulf is fixed.

Christianity in any age must affirm the "fundamentals" of biblical revelation and respect the "otherness" of God's Word. The Christian faith begins with a presupposition that God has revealed himself to us in a way we can understand truly, though not exhaustively. Christianity begins with revelation, not with reason. God is not subservient to our reason, but is the transcendent Creator who must be approached in humility and faith.

## The Real Enemy

When the older version of Christianity is seen as something held by "oddballs," then some Christians who are actually moving away from confidence in the Scriptures feel they have an excuse to remake the gospel into a movement of human flourishing that replaces *solus scriptura* with a culturally safe spiritual enlightenment. Such is the makeover package proposed by the Emergent Left, which blames Fundamentalism for its "modernist," polarizing opposition to "Christian" liberalism. Either/Or thinking, proposed by the likes of Machen, creates unnecessary antagonism rather than mutually affirming dialogue. Under the influence of such argumentation, our young people are coaxed into believing that cultural opposition will disappear if only the Church will tweak its witness techniques, update its vocabulary and participate more heartily in compassionate care for the earth and its inhabitants. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship sponsored a large student conference called "Human Flourishing" for a "big dreams" social agenda. Absent is an awareness of the rising cultural power of the pagan Lie that long ago claimed this social agenda for its own "big dreams" utopia.

Tweaking the system is not the answer, because pragmatic issues are not the question. The menace that has pushed Christianity to the margins of society is not our fundamentalist fathers, but the

father of all lies. We stand in a frenzy of spiritual apostasy, facing powers perhaps stronger than any since the first century. Against the Church stand the unseen forces of the evil one, the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) who, as always, “desires to have us” (Genesis 4:6–7).

At a seminar, **Brian McLaren**, perhaps the most famous of the Emergent Church leaders, rejected the somber vision of the book of Revelation, stating that the world is getting better. Considered a leader in spiritual formation, inter-religious dialogue, ecology and social justice, McLaren is associated with futuristic groups that worship the earth and reject its Creator. He was a featured speaker at the Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion and Public Life. This group is devoted to the “challenges of pluralism and the transnational movement of peoples, cultures and belief systems.” Other featured speakers have been radical liberals such as Hans Kung (a Catholic apostate), Michael Lerner (a **Kabbalist**), Thich Nhat Hahn (a Buddhist poet), Elaine Pagels (a pro-Gnostic New Testament scholar), Mary Evelyn Tucker (a Buddhist/Christian professor of the environment), Starhawk (a witch), Peter Russell (a New Age guru), Diana L. Eck (lesbian professor of Religion at Harvard) and Karen Armstrong (an apostate nun). When McLaren speaks to such groups, he does not challenge them with the unique Word of God, but seems, rather, to be in his element.

Consider some of the suggestions for solving the Church’s problems:

- The Church’s difficulties are self-imposed; we have the gospel all wrong and need to modify it.
- We should avoid mentioning sin, the cross or personal salvation, since these terms don’t sit well today.
- Christians should drop their concern with personal survival in the afterlife, to focus on helping the poor and saving the environment.

Such solutions are subtle expressions of the Lie. The gospel has always been unpopular (1 Cor 1:18). As for the life to come, even the apostate bishop, John Shelby Spong, now that he’s seventy-eight, says: “I believe deeply that this life that I love so passionately is not all there is.”<sup>i</sup> He is right: “It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Opposition arises not when we get the gospel all wrong, but when we get it right! The Lie cannot stand the Truth of Christ’s cross, as the apostle Paul said not long before Nero severed his head from his body:

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” (Colossians 2:13–15)

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<sup>i</sup> “Interview,” ReadTheSpirit.com (18 Oct 2009).

## Open Hearts, Closed Mouths

Failure to see the revolutionary character of the pagan opposition to the gospel produces theological confusion, which is **exacerbated** by the need to conform. East and West have come together, the world has become a village and our leaders call for the unity of the planet and even the end of the nation-state. The call of “One planet, One humanity” wraps itself in the spirituality of pagan Oneism, beckoning us to religious unity and peace. Americans will never forget Rodney King’s plaintive call, “Can’t we all get along?”<sup>ii</sup> Racial bias is complex, however. The good and right pressure to end racial hatred and discrimination can sometimes lead to acceptance of any and all cultural habits, rites, traditions or religious expressions. Ultimately, anyone claiming to know truth as distinct from error is considered a cultural and religious terrorist. This leads to confusion for Christians who do not understand what is going on in the culture. They can tend to take on a survival mindset, for fear of intimidation. Some evangelical Christian student groups in the US are feeling this sort of threat. Christian beliefs about God, morals and sexuality are classified by campus militants as malice, bigotry and even “hate.”

One Christian campus worker said that his students are “scared to death” to speak of their faith, and are faced with threats, insisting that they should stop speaking about their faith and just try to “get along.” The key to university survival for Christians is to appear cool and to avoid disturbing or offending the radical Left. These believers still have hearts of love for their fellow students, but their mouths are clamped shut for fear of offending. At one state university, a staff member of one of the fourteen Christian campus ministries said that most of their work was done “under the radar” (i.e., secretly). Even the “spirituality building” had little place for *Christianity*, though it welcomed all versions of Oneism, as was indicated by the plush offices of the major non-Christian religions. This Interfaith structure had trouble welcoming Twoist spirituality, even though it was represented by fourteen Christian student groups! Open, clear speech about the Christian gospel is no longer possible. Under politically correct intimidation, we have lost our boldness. Groups once known for unapologetic gospel preaching and evangelism are changing their approach. When Christianity was popular, student groups sponsored campus-wide meetings with well-known speakers who pronounced the uniqueness of the Christian faith. No longer. Says one campus minister: “We now have created a hybrid kind of meeting based on community, healing and friendship. We love, serve, befriend. We create trust; we want to be a kind of hospital for hurting people.” The reasoning is that if believers cannot *speak for* Christ, they can at least *act like* Christ. Love for the poor and hurting is *essential* to the gospel, but shorn of biblical cosmology and wiped clean of the distinctives of biblical, ethical living, this approach is false advertising, at best. In the name of the “common good,” it may suck the life-blood from the next generation of Christians, escorting them into the waiting arms of gospel-denying “progressive” liberals and evangelicals.

The apostle Paul, chained to a pagan Roman prison guard, with his life hanging in the balance, didn’t ask his fellow Christians to pray for his safety, but for boldness of speech: “Pray also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for

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<sup>ii</sup> Rodney King was a black man whose beating by policemen in Los Angeles led to a trial in which the officers were acquitted, a ruling that probably helped spark ensuing race riots.

which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:19–20).

The Lie has clothed itself in tolerance and closed the mouths of Christians who would rather dig wells in Africa than turn Africans to the wells of salvation found in the atoning work of Christ. (Digging wells is a great thing to do, though!) Only a clear understanding of the two worldviews based on the Truth (Twoism) or the Lie (Oneism) will open our mouths to speak the truth with love and with a courage that honors the person of the triune God. Our examination of Romans 1 will help us to see why Paul was so bold.

## Hot-Button Issues

Some Christians are hesitant to speak out because they lack confidence in their understanding of the truth they confess. If you are among those intimidated into silence, but you are graciously committed to social justice because no one finds that objectionable, this course may help you to see how your Christian worldview can answer the culture’s “hot-button” issues. It is intended to give you a worldview check-up and, if necessary, a worldview overhaul.

Perhaps the two most difficult issues are *Christian uniqueness* and *homosexuality*. According to the “progressives,” these two are tiresome, secondary issues raised by obnoxious, right-wing fanatics who obstruct a kinder, more loving Christianity. These two issues, however, are fundamental, not secondary. They evoke two profound moral and spiritual themes:

1. The nature of God-basic theology, because interfaith allows so many different kinds of gods that the true God is eliminated.
2. The nature of humanity—basic anthropology, because when the Bible describes the image of God in human beings it includes the male/female distinction.

If these two issues are secondary, why do Oneists speak of them loudly, publicly and as often as possible? Christians are silent, while the religious Left identifies these issues as being at the very heart of its message. The importance of these two issues is symbolized by the public honor given to the homosexual, interfaith Bishop Gene Robinson. Notice that *homosexual* and *interfaith* both define this Bishop. If we remain silent when the progressives put forward their agenda, that silence may be read as consent. These issues are neither questions of mere social change (as the progressives argue), nor of traditional morality (as conservatives sometimes argue).

This course will renew your confidence in the gospel and encourage you in your relationships with those who disagree with you. Now let’s turn to the two burning issues.

## Christian Uniqueness

In our postmodern, “all-is-one,” multicultural world, all truths are merely personal. The rising generation of Christians is often embarrassed by the biblical claim that Jesus is the only way. In the 1960s in the US, it was “in” to be an individualist. Thousands of young people became Christians during the same time that others were taking drugs and celebrating “free sex.” Many converts were a part of what was called the “Jesus People,” who would often raise their index fingers in the air and say “Jesus is the only way!” Today’s young believers were born into a world steeped in coexistence, radical tolerance and all-inclusive oneness. On campus, they are accused of prejudice, intolerance, stupidity and closed-mindedness. **Chuck Colson**, a famous Christian leader who was converted while in prison, was dismayed to learn that in a training session for eight middle-school<sup>iii</sup> evangelical Christian student leaders, all but one refused the notion that Christianity was uniquely true. They claimed: “We shouldn’t hurt other people’s feelings by claiming our way is right.”<sup>iv</sup> This is *before they went to college!*

Young Christians feel the impact of Interfaith in subtle ways. Many “cutting edge” Christians now define Christian witness as either the pursuit of mystical experience or as deeds of social justice. These categories are subtle because all genuine believers seek to love both God and neighbor. There are biblical ways to bring these two aspects of the Christian life together, but “progressive” Christians declare: “Doctrine divides, the Spirit unites.” Both mystical experiences of “spirit” and deeds of social justice become a common denominator for *all* religions. Acts of mercy are the same whoever does them, so there is no offense, only cultural approbation. The call is potent. These two agendas (“Spirit not doctrine” and “deeds not creeds”) function as a powerful invitation to Interfaith syncretism for many naïve believers. One event, organized by the Houston Interfaith Power and Light, was called “Faith Voices for the Earth: A Contemplative Candlelight Service.” This Interfaith event, which brought together Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, Christians and Unitarian Universalists, intentionally joins *mystical spirituality* (contemplative service) to *social action*. Say the organizers: “In our dialogue and our action, we are finding common ground as we seek to care for the Earth and each other.”

Eager to be engaged in acts of mercy and justice, evangelicals are joining another social justice movement, appropriately called *One*, promoted by Bono and Bill Gates. The *One* website encourages pastors, priests and gurus of all religions to send in their sermons on social justice, with the intention of showing that all religions are finally *one* where it matters most—helping the poor. Such notions will destroy the Christian gospel. The gospel of Twoism tells us we are *all* poor, and that only the bread of God’s atoning death gives life to our hungry souls. If Christians remain unaware of the wiles of the Devil, they will inevitably (though sometimes unwittingly) adopt elements of his Lie and thus weaken their gospel witness. The danger is real. How many naïve Christians will be seduced by the “mystical Christianity” propagated by famous Oneists? Here are a few influential

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<sup>iii</sup> In the US, middle school represents students approximately eleven- to fourteen-years old.

<sup>iv</sup> Chuck Colson, “The Offensive Truth, Relativism and Our Kids,” *Break-Point* (20 June 2007).

ones you should know about so you will not be taken in by their work and so that you can gently help other Christians to be careful as well.

### Huston Smith

Professor Emeritus of Religion and Philosophy at Syracuse University, and convinced proponent of the *Perennial Philosophy*, Smith proposes his book, *The Soul of Christianity: Restoring the Great Tradition*. (Remember Prince Charles and his “Tradition”? The “traditions” Smith is talking about are not the grand and great traditions of the Christian gospel and the Holy Scriptures, but the “traditions” that were present in pagan thinking before Jesus Christ was born.)

### James S. Cutsinger

An authority on the *Philosophia Perennis*, Cutsinger edited an anthology of Christian mystical writings, published by World Wisdom Books, a company dedicated to the exposition of the timeless Truth of the Perennial Philosophy.

### The Theosophical Society

This group invites people to “come join us at our National Conference, ‘Mystical Heart of Christianity: Moving Beyond Literalism,’ for a stimulating exploration of esoteric Christianity.”<sup>v</sup> This society, founded in the nineteenth century by occultist, **Helena Blavatsky**, has spread throughout the world. It teaches that God *is* the universe, the “impersonal It” and that man is becoming, through states of ecstasy, the incarnation of “God.” Theosophists believe that the Aquarian Age and the brotherhood of all faiths will help the world evolve. Their mission is to prepare us for the World Teacher, **Maitreya**, whose message is: “Share, and Save the World,” in order to create “a new civilization.” Maitreya is already here *incognito*, through his spokesman, **Benjamin Crème**, who announces: “The peoples of the world are ripe and ready for change. Maitreya will remind them of the essentials, justice and peace, without which there is no future for man.”

### The Lucis Trust

Founded by **Alice Bailey** as the **Lucifer Trust**, this organization and publishing house is an offshoot of the **Theosophical Society** and has supervised the UN Meditation Room since 1952. (It obviously amended its name so people would not associate it with Lucifer, a name for the Devil.) Its goal—to bring all religions and nations together—is indeed devilish, however, and, in one sense seems easy, since shared spiritual experience and collective service achieve global synthesis better than doctrine. Our religious future belongs to mysticism and social action.

Having claimed the terrain of social justice, the occult spiritualists attempt to redefine “the heart of Christianity” as one more expression of the mystical truth in all the religions. Some evangelicals

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<sup>v</sup> “Mystical Heart of Christianity: Moving Beyond Literalism,” a conference held in Holyoke, MA (Oct 31–Nov 2 2008). See the Theosophical Society in America’s website: [theosophical.org/events/conferences/national08/index.html](http://theosophical.org/events/conferences/national08/index.html).

naïvely drop the gospel to adopt the same deeds-only agenda of the pagan Lucis Trust, whose “gospel” includes occult planetary control.

### Mysticism in Christian Groups

The “common ground” of mysticism is making headway in once-Christian groups. Begun as a Baptist school, Bethel University in St. Paul, MN, sponsored an Interreligious Symposium in 2009, promoting “common ground” between Buddhism and Christianity. One would think that Christians with an ounce of discernment would deduce that *Christianity has nothing to do with Buddhism*, but a panel found “common ground” in meditation! One is reminded of Brian McLaren’s statement that the goal of Christian witness to Buddhists is to make them Buddhist followers of Christ.

### Homosexuality

Three-quarters of eighteen to thirty-year-olds think homosexuality is a valid lifestyle. It is little wonder that Christians remain silent. Some in the Emergent Left actively affirm the normality of “evangelical Christian” homosexuality. Andy Marin, an evangelical author, recently published a book, *Love Is an Orientation*. Marin lives in the Chicago neighborhood known as Boystown and seeks to build strong bridges to the homosexual community. He is a sincere and sensitive soul. However, in seeking to develop an approach based on non-judgmental, loving acceptance, he refuses to call homosexuality a sin or to make any value judgments about “gay marriage.” For him, showing total love and acceptance is how one shows God’s love.

Is total acceptance a valid approach for Christians? Will it change a sinner’s heart? Does love not include truth-telling? (See James 5:19–20 and Galatians 6:1–2). For the sake of our own subjective notion of love, are we creating a morally empty universe, without offering a solution to the real problem of sin and evil? Biblical worldview cannot follow an approach that refuses to speak truth to sinners (including ourselves).

The apostle Paul, living in gay Rome, hits homosexuality head-on to show its **iconic** value for religious paganism. If we fail to explain the pagan/homosexuality connection, we deprive homosexuals of truth and leave them in a Oneist worldview. Christians who follow the Scripture on homosexuality receive the same accusations of prejudice, intolerance and closed-mindedness that they get about the uniqueness of the Christian gospel.

When Carrie Prejean, a top candidate for Miss World 2009, was asked her opinion of gay marriage, she affirmed her belief in exclusive heterosexual marriage. The *Los Angeles Times* (April 30, 2009) dismissed her opinion as “the vapidness of a blond **bimbo** [revealing] the intellectual failings of her dogmatic adherence to an outdated moral paradigm.” Some young Christians may well imitate the not-so-deeply thought-through wisdom of Hanna Montana, who says of the Prejean controversy: “I am a Christian and I love you—gay or not—because you are no different than anyone else! We are all God’s children...Everyone deserves to love and be loved.” Hosanna, Hannah!

“Interfaith” Christianity makes the same point. Not homosexuality but *heterosexism* (belief that heterosexuality is normal) is the real problem, because it supposedly stems from a narrow-minded,

monotheistic view of God. The “broad-minded” interfaith movement sets the tone for the discourse and closes the mouths of Christian students living on multicultural, pansexual campuses.

## Worldview Clarity

Paul deals with both interfaith and homosexuality in Romans 1. They have nothing to do with “traditional versus progressive” thinking. They were both present in Paul’s day and are as old as the Fall. Deeply interrelated and extremely significant, they require not silence but reflection and wisdom. There is a logical and historical connection between interfaith and intersex, between **polytheism** and **polysexuality**, between all religions and an **omnigendered** society. Modern interfaith thinkers favor the moral rights of sexual minorities and propose that we break free from a “monocultural” approach to ethics. But these progressive proponents of interfaith and intersex are not advancing into a glorious future where all sexual preferences are culturally accepted. They are regressing into the past perversions of ancient pagan cultures, from which the pagan West once sought deliverance by turning to Christianity.

Christians are branded as “outdated,” but their accusers fail to do any serious worldview thinking, relying instead on their forward-looking *intuitions*. The campus Left accuses the campus Right of “hate speech,” which now can mean simply declaring something to be wrong. But, who defines hate speech? According to this logic, the final judge of speech codes (the new Left) becomes the real hate speaker by declaring as “wrong” and “hateful” the convictions of someone who disagrees.

Even non-religious public lectures that challenge the reigning multicultural orthodoxy are met not by polite debate but by violently angry students. In 2008, at a well-respected US women’s college, the Republican students invited a researcher to speak on the absence of evidence that homosexuality is genetically pre-determined. Lesbian activists began to chant and smash on pots and pans, while others came in through the windows to add to the din. After twenty minutes of mayhem, the campus police entered the scene and (for safety reasons) ushered out—the speaker! This gave the lesbians control of the stage. Demanding silence, they then gave a thirty-minute “free speech” rant to the befuddled audience.

## The Source of Conflict

How do we explain this raw confrontation in an ivory-towered university dedicated to the reasoned exchange of opposing views? The answer is that our culture is locked in a struggle between two antithetical views on ultimate meaning and value—what Paul calls the great struggle between the Truth and the Lie. Each side seeks control of the sacred canopy, under which the society lives. A sacred canopy is the general consensus about truth—the attitudes a culture has without even being aware of them. Replacing the sacred canopy usually involves conflict. In the Bible, Gideon discovered that conflict, when, under cover of darkness, he tore down the sacred canopy of Baalism that had been erected by his own father. When day dawned and his neighbors realized what he had done, they wanted to kill him! Radical progressives have been working in the night of our present

spiritual and moral crisis to replace our canopy, stretching out over our culture a new pagan canopy that asks us to accept the idealistic notion of a this-worldly utopian future.

The need for antithetical worldview thinking has never been more needed. If Christians, in the name of love, harmony and human flourishing, fail to recognize the clamor of the religious war, they will not be armed to defend the Truth of the Christian gospel.

### Only Two Worldviews

You may be thinking that if you adopt such a black-and-white attitude to truth, you will be accused of lacking tact, or of calling people who disagree with you “liars.” People will tell you that you can’t claim the Truth for yourself. Well, whatever they say, we Christians must be biblical. The uniqueness of God and his Word is the essence of our faith, of the faith of the Christian Church for two thousand years and of the faith of God’s people, Israel, for thousands of years before that. We can trust the sound, sane definition the Scriptures give us of the Lie and the Truth, which are two *mutually exclusive* faiths. If one is true, the other must be false.

You will never understand cultural conflict, debates in the Church, or your own questions about life if you do not understand that the world is divided over Truth. A timeless antithesis exists: Is everything God (Oneism), or is reality divided into the Creator and everything else (Twoism)?

In Romans 1:25, the apostle Paul compares “the Lie” to “the Truth,” presenting only two possible religious ways of seeing reality. The delusional Lie, which shimmers in thousands of fantasy points of light, denies the existence of God the Creator, who rules over his vast creation. In the absence of the Truth, the Lie attempts to redefine cosmic existence as “divine” rule by *creatures*.

A good lie takes time to think through. As a child, my brother-in-law told his dad that a nail had “fallen” into the wall socket, thus shorting the circuits. His lie was not a very good one! (To my father-in-law’s credit, he painstakingly attempted to reproduce this miraculous event before dealing with his son.)

The devil’s Lie has been fooling people ever since its first edition in the Garden of Eden. Since then, its seductive invitation to utopian fantasy for a new humanity has been reshaped to seduce each generation. As the opposition ostracizes and threatens them, believers sometimes re-invent their faith to meet the demands of a “spiritual,” but godless, culture. If the Church keeps silent on worldview and accepts the redefinition of the gospel as this-worldly social justice, she may survive, but only as another version of paganism. Lutheran theologian Frederic Baue answers his own question, “What comes after the Postmodern?” with these words: “A phase of Western or world civilization that is *innately religious* but hostile to Christianity...or worse, a dominant but false church that brings all of its forces to bear against the truth of God’s Word.”<sup>vi</sup>

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<sup>vi</sup> Frederic Baue, *The Spiritual Society: What Lurks beyond the Postmodern* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 16.

## What Response Will Believers Offer?

### Retreat

Some Christians wait in a ghetto for the Second Coming, the **Rapture** or the Millennium. This solution fails to take seriously our Lord's command to be salt and light in the world.

### Reclamation

Another option is to "reclaim" the culture, trying to bring it back to its Christian roots (in cultures where that was the case) or to establish Christian control over the culture. A U.S. Christian conference, "The Great Reversal: How Christians Will Change the Future,"<sup>vii</sup> advertises with the soothing words: "Never fear! We can take back the culture from the secularists." Responsible political action is valid, but there are errors in the conference statement: 1. The main enemy of the gospel is no longer secularism but religious paganism; and 2. Politics cannot change hearts.

### Revival

A third option remains: to preach and live the gospel fearlessly, reflecting by the power of the Holy Spirit the divinely transformed world to come. I pray that optimistic, enthusiastic young Christians will seize the challenge to speak the truth as well as to live it. Today's seductive version of the Lie needs a compelling Christian response, steeped in biblical worldview and in the Truth. We speak the Truth not in order to take back the culture, but in order to win hearts to Jesus, whatever the cost, be it social rejection or physical persecution. For such a revival of truth-speaking, we need to understand what Jesus understood—the origin of the Lie and its relation to the Truth. Paul wrote a satisfying and necessary analysis of the Truth to the church in Rome in the first century, but his message is relevant for us, since we are in a twenty-first century Global Empire of pagan Oneism.

By God's grace, this course will lead you, gracious reader, in a careful analysis of Paul's teaching, in particular of Romans 1:18–32. In faithfulness to Paul's text, the ideas will not be man-made, but will flow from those penned by a Christ-appointed apostle, who was called as a spokesman of Christ to reveal his mystery to the Church.

Paul's words to the twenty-first century are Christ's words to the twenty-first century. May they lead us to a revival of courageous faith by firing our hearts with God's love and opening our mouths to speak God's truth.

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<sup>vii</sup> [conference.americanvision.org](http://conference.americanvision.org).

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1. Hard-nosed rationalists tried to argue opponents into the Church.
2. Gnostic-leaning holiness groups rejected the flesh and the “world,” creating “holy huddles,” in which they awaited the rapture and the destruction of the evil creation.
3. Self-serving materialists ignored the poor and fostered forms of racism.
4. Odd-ball independents performed peculiar rites in the name of the Christian faith. (One church celebrated Halloween by burning non-King James Bibles, as well as “satanic” books by Billy Graham, John MacArthur, James Dobson, Charles Swindoll, John Piper, Chuck Colson and Mark Driscoll, to name a few.)
5. Money-obsessed televangelists and “God-hates-fags” fundamentalists encouraged legalism, pride and hypocrisy.

From these errors, preserve us, O Lord! But our most dangerous enemy is not bad televangelists, mega churches, religious commercialism or closed-minded, fearful, rationalistic, unloving Christians. Nor is it the elderly fundamentalist, who is often a well-meaning Christian caught in a cultural and spiritual revolution he never understood. In fact, such a critique of previous

generations is grossly unfair. The gospel, even in its fundamentalist version, has always sought to help the poor. The immense missionary movement that began in the nineteenth century, shedding its blood all over the globe, brought to the poor of the third world not only the gospel of Jesus Christ, but schools, hospitals, business ethics, fairness and political democracy. My good friend, Vishal Mangalwadi, an Indian Christian theologian, argues that evangelical missions was a major factor in the creation of modern India. We also need to remember with gratitude that the fundamentalists of a generation or two ago bravely defended God's transcendence, the pillar doctrine of the Bible, against liberal attack.

The great "fundamentalist" and brilliant theologian, **J. Gresham Machen**, in his 1923 book, *Christianity or Liberalism*, distinguished so-called "Christian" liberalism from genuine Christianity, and, in a well-known paragraph, explained why he allowed himself to make such a shocking claim:

The truth is that liberalism has lost sight of the very centre and core of the Christian teaching... one attribute of God is absolutely fundamental in the Bible... in order to render intelligible all the rest. *That attribute is the awful transcendence of God.* It is true, indeed, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him. But He is immanent in the world not because He is identified with the world, but because He is the free Creator and upholder of it. Between the creature and the Creator, a great gulf is fixed.

Christianity in any age must affirm the "fundamentals" of biblical revelation and respect the "otherness" of God's Word. The Christian faith begins with a presupposition that God has revealed himself to us in a way we can understand truly, though not exhaustively. Christianity begins with revelation, not with reason. God is not subservient to our reason, but is the transcendent Creator who must be approached in humility and faith.

## The Real Enemy

When the older version of Christianity is seen as something held by "oddballs," then some Christians who are actually moving away from confidence in the Scriptures feel they have an excuse to remake the gospel into a movement of human flourishing that replaces *solus scriptura* with a culturally safe spiritual enlightenment. Such is the makeover package proposed by the Emergent Left, which blames Fundamentalism for its "modernist," polarizing opposition to "Christian" liberalism. Either/Or thinking, proposed by the likes of Machen, creates unnecessary antagonism rather than mutually affirming dialogue. Under the influence of such argumentation, our young people are coaxed into believing that cultural opposition will disappear if only the Church will tweak its witness techniques, update its vocabulary and participate more heartily in compassionate care for the earth and its inhabitants. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship sponsored a large student conference called "Human Flourishing" for a "big dreams" social agenda. Absent is an awareness of the rising cultural power of the pagan Lie that long ago claimed this social agenda for its own "big dreams" utopia.

Tweaking the system is not the answer, because pragmatic issues are not the question. The menace that has pushed Christianity to the margins of society is not our fundamentalist fathers, but the

father of all lies. We stand in a frenzy of spiritual apostasy, facing powers perhaps stronger than any since the first century. Against the Church stand the unseen forces of the evil one, the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) who, as always, “desires to have us” (Genesis 4:6–7).

At a seminar, **Brian McLaren**, perhaps the most famous of the Emergent Church leaders, rejected the somber vision of the book of Revelation, stating that the world is getting better. Considered a leader in spiritual formation, inter-religious dialogue, ecology and social justice, McLaren is associated with futuristic groups that worship the earth and reject its Creator. He was a featured speaker at the Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion and Public Life. This group is devoted to the “challenges of pluralism and the transnational movement of peoples, cultures and belief systems.” Other featured speakers have been radical liberals such as Hans Kung (a Catholic apostate), Michael Lerner (a **Kabbalist**), Thich Nhat Hahn (a Buddhist poet), Elaine Pagels (a pro-Gnostic New Testament scholar), Mary Evelyn Tucker (a Buddhist/Christian professor of the environment), Starhawk (a witch), Peter Russell (a New Age guru), Diana L. Eck (lesbian professor of Religion at Harvard) and Karen Armstrong (an apostate nun). When McLaren speaks to such groups, he does not challenge them with the unique Word of God, but seems, rather, to be in his element.

Consider some of the suggestions for solving the Church’s problems:

- The Church’s difficulties are self-imposed; we have the gospel all wrong and need to modify it.
- We should avoid mentioning sin, the cross or personal salvation, since these terms don’t sit well today.
- Christians should drop their concern with personal survival in the afterlife, to focus on helping the poor and saving the environment.

Such solutions are subtle expressions of the Lie. The gospel has always been unpopular (1 Cor 1:18). As for the life to come, even the apostate bishop, John Shelby Spong, now that he’s seventy-eight, says: “I believe deeply that this life that I love so passionately is not all there is.”<sup>i</sup> He is right: “It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Opposition arises not when we get the gospel all wrong, but when we get it right! The Lie cannot stand the Truth of Christ’s cross, as the apostle Paul said not long before Nero severed his head from his body:

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” (Colossians 2:13–15)

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<sup>i</sup> “Interview,” ReadTheSpirit.com (18 Oct 2009).

## Open Hearts, Closed Mouths

Failure to see the revolutionary character of the pagan opposition to the gospel produces theological confusion, which is **exacerbated** by the need to conform. East and West have come together, the world has become a village and our leaders call for the unity of the planet and even the end of the nation-state. The call of “One planet, One humanity” wraps itself in the spirituality of pagan Oneism, beckoning us to religious unity and peace. Americans will never forget Rodney King’s plaintive call, “Can’t we all get along?”<sup>ii</sup> Racial bias is complex, however. The good and right pressure to end racial hatred and discrimination can sometimes lead to acceptance of any and all cultural habits, rites, traditions or religious expressions. Ultimately, anyone claiming to know truth as distinct from error is considered a cultural and religious terrorist. This leads to confusion for Christians who do not understand what is going on in the culture. They can tend to take on a survival mindset, for fear of intimidation. Some evangelical Christian student groups in the US are feeling this sort of threat. Christian beliefs about God, morals and sexuality are classified by campus militants as malice, bigotry and even “hate.”

One Christian campus worker said that his students are “scared to death” to speak of their faith, and are faced with threats, insisting that they should stop speaking about their faith and just try to “get along.” The key to university survival for Christians is to appear cool and to avoid disturbing or offending the radical Left. These believers still have hearts of love for their fellow students, but their mouths are clamped shut for fear of offending. At one state university, a staff member of one of the fourteen Christian campus ministries said that most of their work was done “under the radar” (i.e., secretly). Even the “spirituality building” had little place for *Christianity*, though it welcomed all versions of Oneism, as was indicated by the plush offices of the major non-Christian religions. This Interfaith structure had trouble welcoming Twoist spirituality, even though it was represented by fourteen Christian student groups! Open, clear speech about the Christian gospel is no longer possible. Under politically correct intimidation, we have lost our boldness. Groups once known for unapologetic gospel preaching and evangelism are changing their approach. When Christianity was popular, student groups sponsored campus-wide meetings with well-known speakers who pronounced the uniqueness of the Christian faith. No longer. Says one campus minister: “We now have created a hybrid kind of meeting based on community, healing and friendship. We love, serve, befriend. We create trust; we want to be a kind of hospital for hurting people.” The reasoning is that if believers cannot *speak for* Christ, they can at least *act like* Christ. Love for the poor and hurting is *essential* to the gospel, but shorn of biblical cosmology and wiped clean of the distinctives of biblical, ethical living, this approach is false advertising, at best. In the name of the “common good,” it may suck the life-blood from the next generation of Christians, escorting them into the waiting arms of gospel-denying “progressive” liberals and evangelicals.

The apostle Paul, chained to a pagan Roman prison guard, with his life hanging in the balance, didn’t ask his fellow Christians to pray for his safety, but for boldness of speech: “Pray also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for

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<sup>ii</sup> Rodney King was a black man whose beating by policemen in Los Angeles led to a trial in which the officers were acquitted, a ruling that probably helped spark ensuing race riots.

which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:19–20).

The Lie has clothed itself in tolerance and closed the mouths of Christians who would rather dig wells in Africa than turn Africans to the wells of salvation found in the atoning work of Christ. (Digging wells is a great thing to do, though!) Only a clear understanding of the two worldviews based on the Truth (Twoism) or the Lie (Oneism) will open our mouths to speak the truth with love and with a courage that honors the person of the triune God. Our examination of Romans 1 will help us to see why Paul was so bold.

## Hot-Button Issues

Some Christians are hesitant to speak out because they lack confidence in their understanding of the truth they confess. If you are among those intimidated into silence, but you are graciously committed to social justice because no one finds that objectionable, this course may help you to see how your Christian worldview can answer the culture’s “hot-button” issues. It is intended to give you a worldview check-up and, if necessary, a worldview overhaul.

Perhaps the two most difficult issues are *Christian uniqueness* and *homosexuality*. According to the “progressives,” these two are tiresome, secondary issues raised by obnoxious, right-wing fanatics who obstruct a kinder, more loving Christianity. These two issues, however, are fundamental, not secondary. They evoke two profound moral and spiritual themes:

1. The nature of God-basic theology, because interfaith allows so many different kinds of gods that the true God is eliminated.
2. The nature of humanity—basic anthropology, because when the Bible describes the image of God in human beings it includes the male/female distinction.

If these two issues are secondary, why do Oneists speak of them loudly, publicly and as often as possible? Christians are silent, while the religious Left identifies these issues as being at the very heart of its message. The importance of these two issues is symbolized by the public honor given to the homosexual, interfaith Bishop Gene Robinson. Notice that *homosexual* and *interfaith* both define this Bishop. If we remain silent when the progressives put forward their agenda, that silence may be read as consent. These issues are neither questions of mere social change (as the progressives argue), nor of traditional morality (as conservatives sometimes argue).

This course will renew your confidence in the gospel and encourage you in your relationships with those who disagree with you. Now let’s turn to the two burning issues.

## Christian Uniqueness

In our postmodern, “all-is-one,” multicultural world, all truths are merely personal. The rising generation of Christians is often embarrassed by the biblical claim that Jesus is the only way. In the 1960s in the US, it was “in” to be an individualist. Thousands of young people became Christians during the same time that others were taking drugs and celebrating “free sex.” Many converts were a part of what was called the “Jesus People,” who would often raise their index fingers in the air and say “Jesus is the only way!” Today’s young believers were born into a world steeped in coexistence, radical tolerance and all-inclusive oneness. On campus, they are accused of prejudice, intolerance, stupidity and closed-mindedness. **Chuck Colson**, a famous Christian leader who was converted while in prison, was dismayed to learn that in a training session for eight middle-school<sup>iii</sup> evangelical Christian student leaders, all but one refused the notion that Christianity was uniquely true. They claimed: “We shouldn’t hurt other people’s feelings by claiming our way is right.”<sup>iv</sup> This is *before they went to college!*

Young Christians feel the impact of Interfaith in subtle ways. Many “cutting edge” Christians now define Christian witness as either the pursuit of mystical experience or as deeds of social justice. These categories are subtle because all genuine believers seek to love both God and neighbor. There are biblical ways to bring these two aspects of the Christian life together, but “progressive” Christians declare: “Doctrine divides, the Spirit unites.” Both mystical experiences of “spirit” and deeds of social justice become a common denominator for *all* religions. Acts of mercy are the same whoever does them, so there is no offense, only cultural approbation. The call is potent. These two agendas (“Spirit not doctrine” and “deeds not creeds”) function as a powerful invitation to Interfaith syncretism for many naïve believers. One event, organized by the Houston Interfaith Power and Light, was called “Faith Voices for the Earth: A Contemplative Candlelight Service.” This Interfaith event, which brought together Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, Christians and Unitarian Universalists, intentionally joins *mystical spirituality* (contemplative service) to *social action*. Say the organizers: “In our dialogue and our action, we are finding common ground as we seek to care for the Earth and each other.”

Eager to be engaged in acts of mercy and justice, evangelicals are joining another social justice movement, appropriately called *One*, promoted by Bono and Bill Gates. The *One* website encourages pastors, priests and gurus of all religions to send in their sermons on social justice, with the intention of showing that all religions are finally *one* where it matters most—helping the poor. Such notions will destroy the Christian gospel. The gospel of Twoism tells us we are *all* poor, and that only the bread of God’s atoning death gives life to our hungry souls. If Christians remain unaware of the wiles of the Devil, they will inevitably (though sometimes unwittingly) adopt elements of his Lie and thus weaken their gospel witness. The danger is real. How many naïve Christians will be seduced by the “mystical Christianity” propagated by famous Oneists? Here are a few influential

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<sup>iii</sup> In the US, middle school represents students approximately eleven- to fourteen-years old.

<sup>iv</sup> Chuck Colson, “The Offensive Truth, Relativism and Our Kids,” *Break-Point* (20 June 2007).

ones you should know about so you will not be taken in by their work and so that you can gently help other Christians to be careful as well.

### Huston Smith

Professor Emeritus of Religion and Philosophy at Syracuse University, and convinced proponent of the *Perennial Philosophy*, Smith proposes his book, *The Soul of Christianity: Restoring the Great Tradition*. (Remember Prince Charles and his “Tradition”? The “traditions” Smith is talking about are not the grand and great traditions of the Christian gospel and the Holy Scriptures, but the “traditions” that were present in pagan thinking before Jesus Christ was born.)

### James S. Cutsinger

An authority on the *Philosophia Perennis*, Cutsinger edited an anthology of Christian mystical writings, published by World Wisdom Books, a company dedicated to the exposition of the timeless Truth of the Perennial Philosophy.

### The Theosophical Society

This group invites people to “come join us at our National Conference, ‘Mystical Heart of Christianity: Moving Beyond Literalism,’ for a stimulating exploration of esoteric Christianity.”<sup>v</sup> This society, founded in the nineteenth century by occultist, **Helena Blavatsky**, has spread throughout the world. It teaches that God *is* the universe, the “impersonal It” and that man is becoming, through states of ecstasy, the incarnation of “God.” Theosophists believe that the Aquarian Age and the brotherhood of all faiths will help the world evolve. Their mission is to prepare us for the World Teacher, **Maitreya**, whose message is: “Share, and Save the World,” in order to create “a new civilization.” Maitreya is already here *incognito*, through his spokesman, **Benjamin Crème**, who announces: “The peoples of the world are ripe and ready for change. Maitreya will remind them of the essentials, justice and peace, without which there is no future for man.”

### The Lucis Trust

Founded by **Alice Bailey** as the **Lucifer Trust**, this organization and publishing house is an offshoot of the **Theosophical Society** and has supervised the UN Meditation Room since 1952. (It obviously amended its name so people would not associate it with Lucifer, a name for the Devil.) Its goal—to bring all religions and nations together—is indeed devilish, however, and, in one sense seems easy, since shared spiritual experience and collective service achieve global synthesis better than doctrine. Our religious future belongs to mysticism and social action.

Having claimed the terrain of social justice, the occult spiritualists attempt to redefine “the heart of Christianity” as one more expression of the mystical truth in all the religions. Some evangelicals

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<sup>v</sup> “Mystical Heart of Christianity: Moving Beyond Literalism,” a conference held in Holyoke, MA (Oct 31–Nov 2 2008). See the Theosophical Society in America’s website: [theosophical.org/events/conferences/national08/index.html](http://theosophical.org/events/conferences/national08/index.html).

naïvely drop the gospel to adopt the same deeds-only agenda of the pagan Lucis Trust, whose “gospel” includes occult planetary control.

### Mysticism in Christian Groups

The “common ground” of mysticism is making headway in once-Christian groups. Begun as a Baptist school, Bethel University in St. Paul, MN, sponsored an Interreligious Symposium in 2009, promoting “common ground” between Buddhism and Christianity. One would think that Christians with an ounce of discernment would deduce that *Christianity has nothing to do with Buddhism*, but a panel found “common ground” in meditation! One is reminded of Brian McLaren’s statement that the goal of Christian witness to Buddhists is to make them Buddhist followers of Christ.

### Homosexuality

Three-quarters of eighteen to thirty-year-olds think homosexuality is a valid lifestyle. It is little wonder that Christians remain silent. Some in the Emergent Left actively affirm the normality of “evangelical Christian” homosexuality. Andy Marin, an evangelical author, recently published a book, *Love Is an Orientation*. Marin lives in the Chicago neighborhood known as Boystown and seeks to build strong bridges to the homosexual community. He is a sincere and sensitive soul. However, in seeking to develop an approach based on non-judgmental, loving acceptance, he refuses to call homosexuality a sin or to make any value judgments about “gay marriage.” For him, showing total love and acceptance is how one shows God’s love.

Is total acceptance a valid approach for Christians? Will it change a sinner’s heart? Does love not include truth-telling? (See James 5:19–20 and Galatians 6:1–2). For the sake of our own subjective notion of love, are we creating a morally empty universe, without offering a solution to the real problem of sin and evil? Biblical worldview cannot follow an approach that refuses to speak truth to sinners (including ourselves).

The apostle Paul, living in gay Rome, hits homosexuality head-on to show its **iconic** value for religious paganism. If we fail to explain the pagan/homosexuality connection, we deprive homosexuals of truth and leave them in a Oneist worldview. Christians who follow the Scripture on homosexuality receive the same accusations of prejudice, intolerance and closed-mindedness that they get about the uniqueness of the Christian gospel.

When Carrie Prejean, a top candidate for Miss World 2009, was asked her opinion of gay marriage, she affirmed her belief in exclusive heterosexual marriage. The *Los Angeles Times* (April 30, 2009) dismissed her opinion as “the vapidness of a blond **bimbo** [revealing] the intellectual failings of her dogmatic adherence to an outdated moral paradigm.” Some young Christians may well imitate the not-so-deeply thought-through wisdom of Hanna Montana, who says of the Prejean controversy: “I am a Christian and I love you—gay or not—because you are no different than anyone else! We are all God’s children...Everyone deserves to love and be loved.” Hosanna, Hannah!

“Interfaith” Christianity makes the same point. Not homosexuality but *heterosexism* (belief that heterosexuality is normal) is the real problem, because it supposedly stems from a narrow-minded,

monotheistic view of God. The “broad-minded” interfaith movement sets the tone for the discourse and closes the mouths of Christian students living on multicultural, pansexual campuses.

## Worldview Clarity

Paul deals with both interfaith and homosexuality in Romans 1. They have nothing to do with “traditional versus progressive” thinking. They were both present in Paul’s day and are as old as the Fall. Deeply interrelated and extremely significant, they require not silence but reflection and wisdom. There is a logical and historical connection between interfaith and intersex, between **polytheism** and **polysexuality**, between all religions and an **omnigendered** society. Modern interfaith thinkers favor the moral rights of sexual minorities and propose that we break free from a “monocultural” approach to ethics. But these progressive proponents of interfaith and intersex are not advancing into a glorious future where all sexual preferences are culturally accepted. They are regressing into the past perversions of ancient pagan cultures, from which the pagan West once sought deliverance by turning to Christianity.

Christians are branded as “outdated,” but their accusers fail to do any serious worldview thinking, relying instead on their forward-looking *intuitions*. The campus Left accuses the campus Right of “hate speech,” which now can mean simply declaring something to be wrong. But, who defines hate speech? According to this logic, the final judge of speech codes (the new Left) becomes the real hate speaker by declaring as “wrong” and “hateful” the convictions of someone who disagrees.

Even non-religious public lectures that challenge the reigning multicultural orthodoxy are met not by polite debate but by violently angry students. In 2008, at a well-respected US women’s college, the Republican students invited a researcher to speak on the absence of evidence that homosexuality is genetically pre-determined. Lesbian activists began to chant and smash on pots and pans, while others came in through the windows to add to the din. After twenty minutes of mayhem, the campus police entered the scene and (for safety reasons) ushered out—the speaker! This gave the lesbians control of the stage. Demanding silence, they then gave a thirty-minute “free speech” rant to the befuddled audience.

## The Source of Conflict

How do we explain this raw confrontation in an ivory-towered university dedicated to the reasoned exchange of opposing views? The answer is that our culture is locked in a struggle between two antithetical views on ultimate meaning and value—what Paul calls the great struggle between the Truth and the Lie. Each side seeks control of the sacred canopy, under which the society lives. A sacred canopy is the general consensus about truth—the attitudes a culture has without even being aware of them. Replacing the sacred canopy usually involves conflict. In the Bible, Gideon discovered that conflict, when, under cover of darkness, he tore down the sacred canopy of Baalism that had been erected by his own father. When day dawned and his neighbors realized what he had done, they wanted to kill him! Radical progressives have been working in the night of our present

spiritual and moral crisis to replace our canopy, stretching out over our culture a new pagan canopy that asks us to accept the idealistic notion of a this-worldly utopian future.

The need for antithetical worldview thinking has never been more needed. If Christians, in the name of love, harmony and human flourishing, fail to recognize the clamor of the religious war, they will not be armed to defend the Truth of the Christian gospel.

### Only Two Worldviews

You may be thinking that if you adopt such a black-and-white attitude to truth, you will be accused of lacking tact, or of calling people who disagree with you “liars.” People will tell you that you can’t claim the Truth for yourself. Well, whatever they say, we Christians must be biblical. The uniqueness of God and his Word is the essence of our faith, of the faith of the Christian Church for two thousand years and of the faith of God’s people, Israel, for thousands of years before that. We can trust the sound, sane definition the Scriptures give us of the Lie and the Truth, which are two *mutually exclusive* faiths. If one is true, the other must be false.

You will never understand cultural conflict, debates in the Church, or your own questions about life if you do not understand that the world is divided over Truth. A timeless antithesis exists: Is everything God (Oneism), or is reality divided into the Creator and everything else (Twoism)?

In Romans 1:25, the apostle Paul compares “the Lie” to “the Truth,” presenting only two possible religious ways of seeing reality. The delusional Lie, which shimmers in thousands of fantasy points of light, denies the existence of God the Creator, who rules over his vast creation. In the absence of the Truth, the Lie attempts to redefine cosmic existence as “divine” rule by *creatures*.

A good lie takes time to think through. As a child, my brother-in-law told his dad that a nail had “fallen” into the wall socket, thus shorting the circuits. His lie was not a very good one! (To my father-in-law’s credit, he painstakingly attempted to reproduce this miraculous event before dealing with his son.)

The devil’s Lie has been fooling people ever since its first edition in the Garden of Eden. Since then, its seductive invitation to utopian fantasy for a new humanity has been reshaped to seduce each generation. As the opposition ostracizes and threatens them, believers sometimes re-invent their faith to meet the demands of a “spiritual,” but godless, culture. If the Church keeps silent on worldview and accepts the redefinition of the gospel as this-worldly social justice, she may survive, but only as another version of paganism. Lutheran theologian Frederic Baue answers his own question, “What comes after the Postmodern?” with these words: “A phase of Western or world civilization that is *innately religious* but hostile to Christianity...or worse, a dominant but false church that brings all of its forces to bear against the truth of God’s Word.”<sup>vi</sup>

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<sup>vi</sup> Frederic Baue, *The Spiritual Society: What Lurks beyond the Postmodern* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 16.

## What Response Will Believers Offer?

### Retreat

Some Christians wait in a ghetto for the Second Coming, the **Rapture** or the Millennium. This solution fails to take seriously our Lord's command to be salt and light in the world.

### Reclamation

Another option is to “reclaim” the culture, trying to bring it back to its Christian roots (in cultures where that was the case) or to establish Christian control over the culture. A U.S. Christian conference, “The Great Reversal: How Christians Will Change the Future,”<sup>vii</sup> advertises with the soothing words: “Never fear! We can take back the culture from the secularists.” Responsible political action is valid, but there are errors in the conference statement: 1. The main enemy of the gospel is no longer secularism but religious paganism; and 2. Politics cannot change hearts.

### Revival

A third option remains: to preach and live the gospel fearlessly, reflecting by the power of the Holy Spirit the divinely transformed world to come. I pray that optimistic, enthusiastic young Christians will seize the challenge to speak the truth as well as to live it. Today's seductive version of the Lie needs a compelling Christian response, steeped in biblical worldview and in the Truth. We speak the Truth not in order to take back the culture, but in order to win hearts to Jesus, whatever the cost, be it social rejection or physical persecution. For such a revival of truth-speaking, we need to understand what Jesus understood—the origin of the Lie and its relation to the Truth. Paul wrote a satisfying and necessary analysis of the Truth to the church in Rome in the first century, but his message is relevant for us, since we are in a twenty-first century Global Empire of pagan Oneism.

By God's grace, this course will lead you, gracious reader, in a careful analysis of Paul's teaching, in particular of Romans 1:18–32. In faithfulness to Paul's text, the ideas will not be man-made, but will flow from those penned by a Christ-appointed apostle, who was called as a spokesman of Christ to reveal his mystery to the Church.

Paul's words to the twenty-first century are Christ's words to the twenty-first century. May they lead us to a revival of courageous faith by firing our hearts with God's love and opening our mouths to speak God's truth.

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<sup>vii</sup> conference.americanvision.org.