

**Concluding  
Keynote Address**

*Charles W. Colson*

## How Now Shall We Live?

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It is a delight for me to be here again on the campus of Calvin College. I first came here more than twenty years ago, not long after my conversion. I was invited by Dr. Carl Henry, and we had a meeting at that time with the undergraduate faculty. I will confess a secret sin that the evangelical world knew nothing about at that time, and one that I hid very carefully—remember, this was just a couple of years after my conversion—I smoked! Honestly, I thought I was alone in this, but, to my great surprise, when I met with the faculty that day I could hardly see across the room because they had all brought out huge pipes and were just puffing away! I told them that if I had known that before I joined the Baptist Church, I might have become a member of the Christian Reformed Church instead!

Well, that was a long time ago, but I remember it clearly. And there are many reasons why I am happy to be with you today. As well, I appreciate what Calvin College is doing as an institution and as a seminary. And, in particular, I am thrilled with this conference. You have honored me by asking me to come to address you tonight. What brings us here is the remarkable and still controversial idea of Calvinists and Catholics coming together—in this bastion of the Reformed faith—meeting here in Grand Rapids, of all places, on this campus, and on the eve of Reformation Sunday! Surely the Millennium must be coming! I can feel the ground shaking!

Father Robert Sirico used some of his most persuasive skills when he invited me, and I admire his courage. Can you imagine? A Roman Catholic priest coming to host a conference in Grand Rapids? Aristotle said that the

golden mean of courage is halfway between rashness and cowardice—I suspect that Father Sirico may lean toward the rashness side. But he is a great friend whom I admire greatly, and I am thrilled with this conference and honored to be here.

Since 1992, I have been involved in an organization called Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT). (And I have the scars to show for what has often been a controversial undertaking.) Working for accord between people of goodwill from both communities is something I believe in very deeply, and I see this conference advancing that cause.

The thoughts that I want to share with you tonight are inspired by that great Dutch theologian and statesman, Abraham Kuyper, and I do so, noting with particular pride that this is the one-hundredth anniversary of his famous Stone Lectures at Princeton University. Dr. Kuyper's influence on my life has been profound. I was introduced to him by people here at Calvin. Another influence in my life is that of John Paul II. I suspect that our Catholic brethren here tonight would agree with me that someday he will be known not just as Pope John Paul II but as John Paul the Great—one of the most significant figures of the twentieth century. He has had a great and positive influence, not only on the Church but on the world.

## **The Church in the New Millennium**

This is a momentous time for the Church, as we approach the end of a millennium and begin to reflect on two thousand years of history since the birth of Christ. The question that all of us are asking—and that the Church should be asking today—is the question that the Jews asked after a time of great trial. That was, “How shall we then live?” One translation has it, “How shall we then survive?” But the issue before us is this: What should be the role of the Church in the new millennium? And what should be our outlook?

As I travel around this country, I sense a great malaise, almost despair, among many Christians, and particularly among evangelicals. We see things happening in our society that we simply cannot rationalize—we cannot explain them. Maybe it is fatigue over the Culture War. We seem to have lost a lot of battles that are very important to us. Or maybe it is the immorality that we have seen in the White House. We see despicable behavior paraded before the public and the media, and people seem to shrug their shoulders, as if to say, “We do not really care!”

More and more, we are observing the courts taking away the rights of self-government. My friend Professor Russell Hittinger is here today, and I am sure that if you have heard him speak on these issues then you know the magnificent scholarship that he has provided and the battle that he has waged to keep the courts from taking the right of self-government from the people. And yet, we see that, on every front, the courts are continuing to do this.

Most of the agenda of Christian conservatives, at least, in the last Congress, was not enacted. People came away from the battle with a great sense of frustration. Maybe you saw the interview by NBC's Katie Couric, interviewing the governor of Wyoming, and asking, "Governor, do you suppose that all that rhetoric about gays being put out by Gary Bauer and Jim Dobson and the other Christian groups caused the brutal killing of Matthew Sheppard?" The suggestion, of course, is preposterous, but we begin to wonder if we are going to be blamed for everything that is wrong with our society. Christians have become the primary targets of the Left, and at a time when Gallup polls are showing that people are yearning for the restoration of moral traditions in American society.

There is a temptation, when people begin to feel this way, to turn away. They say, "Let us just go back and build our churches. Let us not worry about the culture. Let us look the other way and forget about it. If we minister to people's spiritual needs, clothe the poor and keep them fed spiritually, everything will be okay." I see it everywhere. It is the new separatist fundamentalism. Nothing could be more dangerous.

And nothing, *nothing*, could be worse for the Christian Church than to succumb at this time to that temptation. First of all, it is not biblical. The Scripture calls believers to fulfill their cultural commission to subdue the earth, to take every thought captive in obedience to Christ, and to care passionately about the culture around us. Pope John Paul II, quoting Pope Paul VI, said that the separation between the Gospel and the culture is the greatest tragedy of our time, and I think that they are both right. One cannot turn away from it. Separatism that entails the deliberate escape from cultural engagement is simply not biblical, and to give in to despair is a sin. As Christians, we are, above all, a community of eschatological hope. We know how the final chapters of history are to be written. We have no business, whatsoever, turning away in hopelessness and despair.

There is a temptation to withdraw, but it could not possibly come at a worse time. It is like an army fleeing from the field of battle just before the victory. I happen to agree with John Paul II when he says in his *Redemptoris Missio* that this will be a "springtime of the new millennium." In his encyclical, he speaks

of the coming twenty-first century as a bold springtime of Christian faith. People are beginning to realize that all of the things on which we have banked our hopes in the twentieth century, the false idols, are nothing but that. They are idols, and they have fallen. They said, "I want autonomy more than anything else in the world! That is the ultimate virtue!" And many have believed that, over the last forty years. So now they have finally achieved what they have wanted: They have unprecedented personal autonomy, but they cannot live with the chaos that their choices have created. Their own kids are demoralized and debased, holding guns to their heads and shooting up the schoolrooms. It did not turn out as they thought that it would.

As Christians, we cannot allow the evidence of social and spiritual collapse to dishearten us. For the Christian, despair is a sin. Here again, Kuyper put it best. He said that the overriding principle of the Reformation was not soteriology but cosmology. It is not simply justification by faith but how faith informs culture. It means that God is sovereign over all, and that God's people are to care about every aspect of life. In his dedicatory address at the Free University, Kuyper said, "There's not one square inch of the universe as to which, our Christ, who is sovereign, does not cry out, '*Mine*.'" That is exactly right, and this must be the battle cry of the Church as we enter a new millennium.

And the signs are good! Dr. Hittinger will tell you—I know that he agrees with me on this—that it was a good thing that just recently the Supreme Court let stand an ordinance in Cincinnati that denied special privileges for homosexuals in that city, similar to the ordinance that was struck down in Colorado earlier this year. It is a good thing that teenage pregnancies are fewer, and especially that abortions are fewer. They are fewer, I believe, because the debate has shifted to the issue of life. People of all stripes are now facing up to the fact that the child in the birth canal, whose skull is being crushed in a partial-birth abortion, *is*, in fact, *a child*. Those images were held up to the cameras during Congressional hearings, and the world saw what is really at stake. As a result, all of a sudden, abortions are declining. It is a good thing that crime is down, and not for the reasons that you think. I will come back to this. It is perfectly clear that something is happening to the nature of our moral discourse.

A year ago, for example, I went on television and tried to make a point on one of those Washington talk shows about the fact that private immorality has public consequences. I was laughed at. That was then, just one year ago. But can you imagine *anybody* in America today, witnessing the fallout of the Monica Lewinsky saga and the scandals of this White House, saying that pri-

vate immorality does not have public consequences? Again, I believe that the tenor of the moral debate is changing.

Pope John Paul II said it in *Redemptoris Missio*: “As the third millennium nears, God is preparing a great springtime for Christianity.” He was right, and already we can see the first fruits. In fact, dramatically, in both the non-Christian and the traditionally Christian worlds, people are drawing closer to the ideas and the values of the Gospel. I believe that is true, and I believe that Christians can approach this new millennium with a great sense of hope. I have traveled all around the world, going from place to place, to more than six hundred prisons, and I have seen the power of Christians living their faith to transform the culture. It is a miracle of overwhelming proportions.

My friend Erik Prince, who is here tonight, traveled with me recently to a prison in Texas that has been under Prison Fellowship administration for the past eighteen months. This is an extraordinary program because it is not just that men are coming to Christ and being redeemed, as wonderful as that is. They are creating an entire culture! I have seen much the same thing in a prison that we administer in Ecuador at Garcia Moreno Prison. I walked into that institution one day, and it was one of the most awful prisons I had ever seen, anywhere in the world. There was raw sewage coming out on the floor. When we walked into the entrance area, there were piles of garbage on either side of the door, and dogs were prowling around outside. There was blood on the doorstep where prisoners had been dragged inside.

We went through the doors into the detainee’s wing, where people can be held for up to five years without ever being told the charges against them. Each cell held twelve people, with only four bunks and no running water. When we got to the prison, all the inmates were out in the yard—four hundred of them. We came through the gate with ten corrections officials from the United States and some of our Prison Fellowship supporters, and I wanted to take them out to the yard and let them see what this prison was really like.

We had already been through the old torture cells, still housing inmates, but the guard stopped us and said to us in Spanish, “You can’t go into that compound. It’s too dangerous.” Well, I am a former Marine captain, and I had brought all these people with me from the United States, so I told our interpreter, “Tell him that this will not do. Tell him we want to go in.” (Secretly, I was kind of hoping that maybe he would say “no” again!) But then we heard all this debating back and forth, and finally the guard said, “Si.” And I knew that we were going to into the compound. A minute later, the doors were flung open. As I stepped through the door, one of my associates said, “Preach the

Gospel!” and then he stepped back. He was not going inside. Well, that did not make me feel too secure!

Nevertheless, we went into the yard. I have never seen anything like it. It was something right out of a Charles Dickens novel—the Middle Ages revisited. There were men with eyes gouged out, and stumps for arms, with tattered shawls or serapes pulled around them. There were women on both sides sitting on benches—at least, I thought they were women, when I walked inside. In fact, they were transvestites. Such depravity I could not begin to imagine! But the men gathered around us, and I was able to preach to them, and as I started talking about Jesus, I could see the tears forming in their eyes. Deep down inside them, they intuitively knew that this was the truth, that Jesus is their hope.

After I spoke and prayed with them, we left that dreadful pit of depravity. Our next destination was no more than a hundred yards away, where one of our ministry leaders in Ecuador, a great layman, Jorge Crespo, had gotten permission to take over a wing of the prison. We went inside, and it was like walking out of hell and into heaven. As we walked in, we came to a large room where three hundred inmates had gathered. They were sitting in chairs, were washed and well-dressed, and the back of the cell block was set up like an altar. They had guitars. They were singing and rejoicing, but when they saw us coming, they came over and wrapped their arms around us. It was thrilling! The spirit of Christian joy just filled that place. We have been running that wing of the prison in Ecuador very much like the one in Texas, and right there we could see the entire culture being transformed.

But there is a wonderful metaphor here. It is this: *If Christians truly live out their faith and build their communities as the Bible prescribes, and if we spread out from our communities and begin to touch every area of life, we cannot help but transform the culture. We cannot do it from our sanctuaries. We cannot do it from our living rooms. We do it, with God's help, by getting out there and living our faith day by day, and by advocating what we know to be true.*

So, let me ask again: What must we do? *How now shall we live?* Well, Kuyper gives us some guidance. He says that it is not just a matter of being saved. The transformation that God sent His Son to accomplish does not stop with John 3:16. Rather, our most compelling task is to see the world and all of life through God's eyes. It is to see our Christian faith as a life system, a worldview. That is it, precisely! And we cannot live rationally any other way.

A few years ago, I was asked to give a lecture on ethics to members of the Second Marine Division at Camp La Jeune, North Carolina, and, toward the end of that talk, one man asked me the best question I have ever heard. I have never been asked this question on any university campus and, certainly, never on any media broadcast. He asked, "Is there truth?" Simple, powerful, surprising, but I loved that question! I do not hear that question on campuses, I suspect, because the faculties discourage it. They are convinced that there is no such thing as truth. If there is truth, then it is going to be reflected in the order of the universe. It is going to be reflected in the moral order, because God created us that way. Is there truth? Yes, there is, and we are to seek for it in all areas of life, from creation on. God created the world, and our challenge as believers is to order our lives accordingly.

To ignore the world as it is created is like walking into a dark room full of furniture but not turning on the light. Ever tried it? If you do not know where things are in the room, you can take some painful knocks. This is true in life as well. One must know the moral rules that God has created for us in order to live a rational, responsible, sensible life. Neil Plantinga wrote a wonderful little book called *Not the Way It's Supposed To Be*. Well, that is exactly what happens with sin—it turns things outside down! Because, if one does not conform to the way that God has created the world, one is going to be constantly cutting against the grain of the universe. Or, as Neil puts it graphically, "spitting into the wind," "coloring outside the lines." And that is just foolishness. So, Christians today need a full understanding of God's physical and moral order so that we can order our own lives intelligently.

We need to understand worldview also for evangelism. Today, if you walk into a roomful of Christians and say, "Jesus is the answer," they will nod. (If there were any Baptists, they would say "Amen!") If you say, "Jesus is the answer," Christians respond immediately; but if you walk up to a secular group and say, "Jesus is the answer," they will look at you as though you are just organizing an interplanetary trip. "What do you mean, 'Jesus is the answer?'" they ask. What is the "question?" The secular world does not ask such questions. The great questions that people have asked since the beginning of time: "Where do I come from? Why am I here? And where am I going?" have been the basis of philosophical reflection throughout the centuries, but our culture does not want to ask them anymore. Nobody is asking the great questions, because no one is prepared for the answers. So, in order to reach the world, we must have an informed view about what the world thinks and about how the world is structured. This is exactly what the apostle Paul did when he went

to preach to the Greeks on Mars Hill. It was one thing to preach it to the Jews; they understood all the biblical presuppositions, but when he went to preach to the Greeks, he had to be able to put it in their own terms: “Aha!” he said, “I passed an altar to an unknown god.” And he recognized their literature, saying, “As your own poets have said ...” Then, once he had engaged their culture and thoughts and understood their traditions, he was able to bring the conversation to the point where they could follow him. And then he told them about Creation and the Resurrection. This is what Francis Schaeffer called “cultural evangelism,” and it is absolutely essential in our time.

However, if we are going to do this, if we are going to have a worldview, it is essential for us to understand the contours of it so that we can defend truth to the world. How are we going to defend our position if we do not understand it ourselves? And, make no mistake, the battle today is not just Left against Right or Christian against non-Christian. It is worldview against worldview. Kuyper put it so well: “If the battle is to be fought with honor and any hope of victory, principle must be engaged against principle.” We cannot simply come and preach the Gospel without understanding—and we cannot defend what we believe without understanding—that there are two, wholly alien visions of reality competing for the hearts and minds of civilized society today.

One is absolutely relativistic. There is no truth, they say; all values are equal. You can believe anything you want. The other view believes in absolute truth and a fixed moral and physical order.

One is naturalistic, the other is *supernatural*. Naturalism says that there is a natural or mechanical explanation for everything. I can explain how this podium was created; I can explain how the sound is being transmitted; I can explain everything about the universe by empirical evidence alone, and I do not need any other explanations. The *supernaturalist*, however, says, “Oh, no! That’s not all there is. There is a spiritual realm beyond what you can see with your eyes.” Colossians 1:16 says, “For, by Him, all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.” The Christian worldview believes this, but the other worldview will not and cannot believe it.

One worldview is utterly pragmatic: “If it works, do it.” The other is idealistic. The naturalist says that history is merely the biased reflection of the people who wrote it; it is merely the subjective reaction of the moment. So, they deconstruct history and tradition. The supernaturalist believes in history. As Christians, we are “people of the Book,” people of history, people who serve a God who is and who still speaks—“He is there and He is not silent,” as Schaeffer says. He has intervened in history and has given us His Son. These

are all historical events. The Resurrection is a historical event, and we have staked our lives on this truth.

You know, I have loved philosophy all my life, and I have read the great masters, going back to the Greeks, especially to Aristotle and Plato, and their assessments are profound, usually published in multi-volume sets. The arguments are complex and demand serious thought, but Americans today have reduced everything to a slogan. They are the *USA Today* generation, the soundbite set. And they have got it down to one word that one sees even on bumper stickers. The *Zeitgeist* of American culture, and the spirit of the age in America today, is very simple: “Whatever.” That is it!

I saw a cartoon of a bride and groom in the *Wall Street Journal* recently. The groom is standing with his hands in his pockets, kind of slouched down, and the minister is saying, “No! No! You are supposed to say, ‘I do,’ not ‘Whatever.’” Another one that captures this view is the old Hippie slogan, “If it feels good, do it!” This brings to mind a friend of mine, a Reformed pastor who sometimes has an impish way about him, who came up behind a car with one of those bumper stickers. He read it: “If it feels good, do it!” Well, he smiled and, for whatever reason, he just rolled up and, BANG! gave the guy’s bumper a smack. Well, the driver jumped out and came around, shaking his fist at my friend and yelled, “What do you think you are doing?” And my friend rolled down the window and just smiled a mischievous smile: “I saw your sign, ‘If it feels good, do it!’ So I just did it!” Well, that may not be the best way to make a philosophical point, but if the other driver had a sense of humor, he would, hopefully, see the point that my friend was trying to make.

Truth is on our side. Our argument is rational, and it is based on history and facts and centuries of point-counterpoint debate; but we cannot defend the truth we believe if we do not understand the two worldviews that are in conflict today. Christians have to make an apologetic defense, and this is my second point in response to the question, “How now shall we live?” Peter admonished us, to “always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). With love and gentleness, he says that we are to show the world why their purely secular presuppositions do not work.

C. S. Lewis is a master at this, and I love what he wrote about naturalism. The naturalist, if he really is logical about it, believes that we came from a chance collision of atoms that have mutated over eight billion years to make us what we are today. We came from two light rays coming down, refracting at a certain angle; the amino acid molecules split off, joined together, became one protein cell, and here we are, eight billion years later, grown-up germs!

But if that is true, then the process by which we know it must also be a random process. How do you know that the molecules in your mind that formed together by chance are able to produce a logical and rational basis by which you can know that what you believe is true? The presuppositions of the modern world would have us believe that we cannot really know anything. But Lewis said that, in order to think, we must claim for our reasoning a validity that is not credible if our own thought is merely a function of our brains and our brains are a by-product of irrational physical processes. In other words, what allows us to reason and find truth involves an order of reasoning that is beyond the merely mechanical—it must be, in short, *supernatural*.

I love to argue with people who say that there is no supernatural realm. Because, with just a little thought, in about ten minutes you can have them doubting whether they can believe anything at all. But that is what the secular world has done to itself. Following its own logic, it *cannot* believe anything! Its worldview has made it impossible to believe because its own presuppositions, carried to their logical extreme, make it impossible for people to acknowledge truth of any kind.

Second, Christians have a wonderful opportunity to respond to the political dilemma that concerns so many of us today. I get really upset when I hear people say, “I wish that you Christians would stop trying to impose your values on us.” When I hear this, I usually give them a little history lesson. For example: Where did “limited government” come from? Limited government came from the belief that government was not all-powerful. The “divine rule of kings” was broken by Calvin’s argument in the Reformation that we live in the face of God, “*coram Deo*,” and, therefore, government is not absolute. The Scottish cleric Samuel Rutherford wrote his classic book, *Lex Rex*, in which he argued that law is king. The king is not law, as generations of aristocrats had argued; rather, the law *is* king. This shattered the idea of the divine right of kings.

Thus, from the Reformation, we get the basic principles of limited government and the rule of law. Abraham Kuyper explained it in terms of “spheres of sovereignty.” That is, government has a sphere, family has a sphere, and intermediate structures have a sphere. Government is not absolute. Government’s job is to make all these spheres work together under God. Thus, our modern notion of limited government would not even be possible were it not for Christian influence. So, when I hear people saying, “Why don’t you keep your Christianity out of politics?” I try to share with them: You would not have democracy today if we kept our Christianity out of politics!

It does not stop there, of course, and we often hear that the moral conservatives are fighting with the economic conservatives. What nonsense! I suggest that you read some of Father Sirico's writings on this subject. Read Michael Novak, who was also here this week. Mr. Novak writes that Western democracy is like a three-legged stool. It has economic freedom, political freedom, and moral truth. If you take away any of those legs, the stool will fall. So, along with prosperity and freedom, we must have a forum for moral authority or the whole structure will fall. Father Sirico also writes brilliantly about this.

The point can further be made that *there can be no ethics without a transcendent basis of law*. If there is no absolute right and wrong, one cannot say, "This is what you *ought* to do." We all want ethical behavior, we want others to respect our rights, but the only basis for a system of ethics is an objective system of moral and ethical absolutes. Without a common standard for moral values, there is no basis for law, and law becomes—as it has become, more and more, in this country—whatever nine black-robed justices, who never got elected to anything, say that it is. If justice derives from an unwritten constitution, a law above the law, then there is nothing to prevent outright judicial tyranny.

Dr. Robert George, who holds the Cyrus McCormick chair of jurisprudence at Princeton University, was asked to debate Stanley Fish, who is probably the best-known proponent of deconstructionist thinking in America today. As a professor at Duke University, Fish wrote the book, *There's No Such Thing As Free Speech, and It's a Good Thing, Too*. He believes that there are no principles. All principles are preferences, he says, and the object of intellectual discourse is to force your preferences on somebody else before they can force theirs on you: in other words, the law of the jungle.

So, my friend Robby George was given the task of debating the pro-life cause against Stanley Fish before the American Society of Political Scientists, meeting Labor Day weekend in Boston. Robby George is a Christian who holds a degree in political philosophy from Oxford and a law degree from Harvard. He is a brilliant legal scholar who wrote a brief in which he argued that the child in the womb is a human being. Not once did he say, "the Bible says." He simply argued it on the basis of scientific evidence. When he got to Boston, he was expecting a great debate, but when Stanley Fish took the platform, he said, "Professor George at Princeton was kind enough to send me his brief, arguing that the fetus in the womb is a child, a human being." And he said, "I read it, and before I give my response, I want to say that Professor

George is correct; and I owe him an apology because he has made the case, and science is on the side of the pro-life cause, not on the side of the pro-choice.”

Well, as one can imagine, two hundred political scientists’ chins hit the floor at the same moment! What an incredible admission! Of course, Fish is being brutalized in the academic community as a result, and he is backing away from some of the things he said that day. But the record is clear.

But here is my point: We have such a wonderful case as Christians. But you cannot sit there, thinking, *Yes, but I will leave it to Robby George or Chuck Colson or Russ Hittinger, or to the people who are doing it all day.* That will not work. You see, apologetics happen over the backyard fence. It is over the barbecue grill. It is every single Christian informing and renewing his or her mind, as Paul says in Romans 12, thinking Christianly and being able to argue with neighbors and making the case for why Christianity is the only rational way to live responsibly. It offers the only reliable way to look at the world because all other constructions of reality prove ultimately to be irrational. And that is the case that we have to make in our own spheres of influence.

## Agents of Common Grace

Our challenge is to live as agents of common grace. Calvin and Kuyper make a distinction on this issue. So often we tend to think of grace in terms of salvation—I know what that is like. Twenty-five years ago, in my friend’s driveway, in a flood of tears, I surrendered my life to Christ. Nothing has ever been the same again—and never can be. I know about salvation and God’s saving grace, but Kuyper and Calvin make a wonderful distinction. They speak of the differences between “saving grace” by which God comes down in His power and declares us righteous, and “common grace” by which God exercises power through humans in order to hold back the consequences of sin that would otherwise destroy the world. As Christians, we ought to be instruments of “common grace,” wherever God has called us.

I see among us here tonight, some wonderful friends who have worked in the prisons for many years. *They* are instruments of common grace. Every time you go into the prison, Al [Gelderloos], and share the love of God with the men inside, you are an instrument of common grace. Bernie [Veltzen], every time you do that, you are an instrument of God’s common grace. And whatever walk of life you are in, you have got to be that to those around you. We can do this and make a difference.

Several years ago, I was in Las Vegas, attending the National Religious Broadcasters Convention, and we had a prayer breakfast there. The only time that I will go to Las Vegas is to speak; I will fly in and out the same day if humanly possible. But I was there for breakfast, and sitting next to me was a young woman who was a Hollywood script writer. At one point I asked her, "What are you working on?" And she said, "Well, I've got a great script idea and a great story line, and I'm going from studio to studio trying to sell it." And she started to tell me what it was, and I said, "That's neat! What got you to Hollywood?" She said, "I'm a Christian, and I believe that I should be in Hollywood, writing scripts. I'm going to get this on TV." But I must tell you, I looked at her and thought, *I am so glad there is somebody willing to do that, but someone is going to have to wake this poor woman up out of her dream, because she is never going to succeed.* So I said, "I'm sure glad you've got the perseverance to stick with it." She said, "I'm going to stick with it until I get this script sold." That woman is Martha Williamson, producer of *Touched By An Angel*, which, as you all know, is one of the leading programs on TV today. A Christian who just set out to do that! That is what it means to be an instrument of common grace.

At Prison Fellowship, we believe in something called "Restorative Justice." We were talking about that at dinner tonight with Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo from the Vatican, telling him about restorative justice. We explained that the purpose of justice ought to be to bring society back into balance, into the harmony of shalom. What the Jews called *shalom*, we generally call *peace*. But it is more than that. The Jewish term meant something much more important—it referred to the sort of balance in society that allows people to live together in genuine concord.

So, at Prison Fellowship, we are not only taking the Gospel into the prisons and not only working with the kids through Project Angel Tree (which, I suspect, that many of you in this room are involved with), but we also go into the community to work with the victims of crime and to have a voice in the criminal justice system. Pat Nolan, who heads Justice Fellowship, is here this evening. Through this program, we work within the justice system to try to restore the harmony of communities that have been shattered by crime.

I have been to a place called Allison Hill, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. I went there when we were first getting started, and I saw what happened there. When I walked through the Hispanic ghetto, I saw syringes and drug paraphernalia on the ground. I saw spent cartridges, run-down buildings, and drug dealers in the streets, making deals. But then we moved in and put up a

storefront office and began to work in that community. Today you can walk through that same area, and you will not find hypodermic needles; you will not find shell casings, because the Christians came out of their churches and marched through the streets, just as the Salvation Army did in East London a hundred years ago. They began marching, holding parades, and calling the people out. The drug dealers were angry, and they started blowing their car horns, trying to disrupt the marchers, but it made no difference. They kept right on going. Soon the prostitutes came out, and the Christians prayed with them. Many of these women were led to Christ, and they began following along behind. The citizens of Harrisburg cleaned up that area because they cared, they got involved, and they restored the peace, the “shalom,” of their community.

The answer to crime is not simply putting people in prison—it is restoring the lost order in our communities. Today we read papers by sociologists about the “broken windows solution,” like the one being used in New York City. You see, the police finally figured out that when people who care came in and cleaned up an area, all of a sudden the crime rate dropped dramatically. The [former] mayor Giuliani appeared to be the best politician in America because he had cut the crime rate in New York precipitously. But this is not something that he discovered all by himself. What the mayor discovered is an ancient Christian truth. In fact, Saint Augustine called it the *tranquillitas ordinis*, the tranquility that comes from right moral order. And that is what restorative justice is all about: To get the tranquil order restored in the community. When that happens, crime begins to decline.

How do you do it? People have to get involved in their own communities. They have to become instruments of common grace, and that brings about the change.

Finally, I ask, “What must we do?” We must have a biblically informed worldview and understand it so that we can defend it, and then we must be able to live it out. But, most important, we must also bring the Church together as Jesus commanded: We are to be “the people of God.” And this is why conferences such as this one are so valuable. We simply have to learn how to stand together as mere Christians. C. S. Lewis titled his book, which was so influential in my own conversion, *Mere Christianity*. The point is that something so pure and simple as basic Christian belief—mere Christianity—can, in fact, transform the world.

About seven years ago, Father Richard Neuhaus and I were in a meeting of Evangelical and Catholic leaders in New York, and I felt the clear prompting of the Holy Spirit as I never had felt it before. I felt that I was to reach across

the table and tell my Catholic brothers that I loved them, and that is what I did. Well, soon afterward, we began to meet together, and we asked this question: "Can we work together in places where we agree, instead of fighting it out on the mission field? Can we say some things together in defense of our biblical worldview?" Well, we decided that while we have substantial differences of doctrine in some areas, there are many other areas where we wholeheartedly agree. We agree, most of all, on the essential centrality of Jesus Christ being man's only hope of salvation, and on that basis we can work together.

This is why an informed Christian worldview is so important, because it gives us that common basis on which we can come together and agree that we stand *united in service of the truth* and not in compromise of the truth. Eventually we came up with a document called "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." As you may recall, it made front-page headlines. We released it Easter week and everybody said that it was finally the end of the Reformation and the split between the Churches! But it was no such thing. It was twenty-five people in New York agreeing to sign an accord, as individuals speaking from and to their faith communities, but it nonetheless created a stir throughout the Christian world.

Worldview was the key. And, again, Kuyper understood this better than anyone. Speaking of the association of Evangelicals and Catholics in his own day, Kuyper said, "By this unity of conception alone given in Calvinism, that is a worldview, we may once again be able to stand side by side of Romanism in opposition to modern pantheism." What Kuyper said a hundred years ago is that Christians have to come together to define and defend our worldview, and that is precisely what the document "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" is all about.

But listen to this from Kuyper, the great Calvinist spokesman:

A so-called orthodox Protestant need only mark in his confession and catechism such doctrines of religion and morals as are not subject to controversy between Rome and ourselves, to perceive immediately that what we have in common with Rome, such concerns that are precisely those fundamentals of our Christian creed, now most fiercely assaulted by the modern spirit. In this conflict [that is of worldviews in conflict a century ago, just as they are today], Rome is not an antagonist but stands on our side, inasmuch as she also recognizes and then maintains the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the Cross as an atoning sacrifice, the Scriptures as the Word of God, and the Ten Commandments as a divinely imposed rule of life. Therefore, let me ask, If Roman Catholic theologians take up the sword to do valiant and

skillful battle against the same tendency that we ourselves mean to fight to the death, is it not the part of wisdom to accept their valuable help?

Evangelicals and Catholics Together, which created such controversy, was launched actually by Kuyper a century ago. It is not new.

In the second document that we produced, called “ECT II: The Gift of Salvation,” we affirmed that we are justified *by faith alone*. This is an extraordinary document, signed by both Catholic and Protestant theologians, as well as by activists working across the table. We thought that we had done something very new, but, in fact, we had not.

In 1541, a Catholic cardinal by the name of Contarini called together a group in Regensburg, a university city in South Germany. Luther could not attend because he would have been killed if he had tried to travel across Germany at that time. So he sent two aides, Phillip Melanchthon and Martin Bucer, to negotiate with the Catholics over the principles that had divided them since the Reformation began—that is, when Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door at Wittenberg. Bucer took with him on that journey a bright young Reformer named John Calvin. And at the conferences at Regensburg, they came to an agreement on *justification by faith*. So much so, that Calvin then wrote a letter to the French Reformer, Guillaume Farel, saying: “You won’t believe this, but we drew up a formula on which corrections were accepted by both sides. You will be astonished, I am sure, that our opponents have yielded so much when you read the extracted copy as it stood when the last correction was made upon it, which you’ll find enclosed in our letter.” So, that group of clerics and scholars came to an agreement not much different from the one that we had agreed to, but which created such controversy in Christian ranks over the last two years. Four hundred and fifty years later, we have come back to where they were at Regensburg!

But the time has come that we must take seriously what our Lord prayed in His “high priestly prayer” the night before He was crucified. He prayed “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21). The most well-formulated worldviews, the best evangelistic campaigns, the best things we can do as Christians will be for naught if the world cannot see that the people of God are standing together. The scandal ought to be, not the scandal of division, but the scandal of the Cross—that the Son of God died and shed His blood for each one of us. It is in that spirit that I thank God for the courage of those who planned and put on this conference. I deeply appreciate it and am honored to be here for this closing message.

Where does this leave us? Again: *How now shall we live?* My friend, Father Neuhaus, says that he is not an optimist because optimism is a matter of optics, but he has hope. I agree, and I have hope too. When I first read *Redemptoris Missio*, I thought to myself, *This is not the work of an old man because, as you get older, you tend to become more negative, more skeptical about what younger generations believe.* But when I read John Paul's words about the "springtime of hope" for Christians in the new millennium, I realized that he is absolutely right. The view of the new millennium that this pope has presented to the world is correct. This next century will be, as Michael Novak recently wrote in the *New York Times*, the Christian Century. And the reason is very simple.

Observe what has happened in the twentieth century, starting out with the triumphalism of the early years, captured brilliantly in the film *Titanic*. I will not ask you to raise your hand if you have seen it. My pastor says, "With a nude scene in it, no Christian should go to see it." But I saw it on an airplane, so it was the edited version, and therefore I am okay! But there is a great moment in that film that caught my attention. In the very beginning, one of the passengers is boarding the ship and as he looks up at this mammoth vessel—at this tower of Babel in the early twentieth century—he says, "There is a ship that even God Himself couldn't sink!" But, in fact, the Titanic never made it even halfway across the Atlantic! And, if you watch that movie, you will see and understand that spirit of post-Edwardian triumphalism that fell of its own overpompous weight.

Then consider the influence of John Dewey on education and of Sigmund Freud on psychotherapy. Consider the disaster that these men created! Utter failure, the utter moral bankruptcy! Then look at humanism, the notion that man is the center of the universe. What has it produced? Moral anarchy. Look at the Hegelian and Darwinian notions that we are constantly getting better, and as we become better educated, we will live more rational and civil lives. Well, tell it to the survivors of Auschwitz. Tell it to the people who fled from the killing fields of Cambodia running red with blood. No, knowledge did not change anything. The twentieth century will go on record as the bloodiest century in all of human history.

National Socialism, as practiced by Adolf Hitler, was supposed to deliver the people from oppression but resulted in one of the great catastrophes of modern times. Marxism vowed to liberate the workers: "Throw off your chains!" was the cry. But then it enslaved two-thirds of the world, and Marxist dictators killed as many as seventy million of their own people. And the naturalists promised, "We will answer all the questions with science."

Just inspect all the pretensions, the utopian arrogance of the twentieth century! Every one of them proclaims: Existentialism will set you free! The sexual revolution will liberate you!—"Liberate" you? The sexual revolution has put millions of people in coffins and destroyed entire families. Every single proposal, every single utopian idea of the century has been utterly discredited, and postmodern man is standing naked, looking for some means of finding the truth. We simply cannot live with the chaos that we have created.

Well, the pope has correctly understood that we have entered a springtime of Christian harvest, because if Christians will present to the world the image of the living Christ and His love within the context of loving communities of faith, and if we will stand together and lock arms, on common ground, then this is an hour in which Christianity can once again be seen as the only rational way to experience life. God's revelation is the only hope for a reasonable existence. Everything else has failed. *This is the Christian moment.*

The new millennium *is* a springtime of harvest. It is no time to turn away. It is no time to say, "It's not our Christian duty to live out the Gospel." It is a time to do exactly as Kuyper told us to do one hundred years ago, and that is, to have a fully formed worldview, with principle arrayed against principle. In the springtime of hope that the new millennium brings, this will be a time when people will turn away from the broken, false, and fallen idols of the past one hundred years, looking for the Source of their one true hope—the revelation of God in Christ, and the Good News of the Gospel, which brings salvation and hope to every human being.

Thank you, and God bless you.