

“An impossible choice for Christian Business Owners” by Steve West, *World*, July 7, 2020; “Why Lying Has Become Normal and Acceptable” by Roger E. Olson, *Evangelical Patheos*, May 23, 2020

World magazine alleges: “A Christian wedding photographer in Virginia faces three bad options: compromising his religious beliefs, violating the law and risking bankruptcy, or shutting down.” Chris Herring serves LGBT clients, but he “draws the line at content that violates his faith, like photographing a same-sex wedding.” He explains: “I can’t and won’t let the state force me to express messages that contradict my beliefs”. Evangelicals pushed him to file a lawsuit. *World* warns: “Without clear guidance from the U.S. Supreme Court, Christian business owners face similar obstacles across the country”. Wait! Didn’t Jesus give us his own “clear guidance”?

When *compelled by a pagan state’s authority* to do what we don’t want to do, we’re to go even a “second mile”, i.e., “two more miles”, *three*. (Mt 5:43ff) We get to *live* our discipleship, kindly serving even pagans where *they are*, not where we think *they should be*. They’ll not be able to grasp the struggle a Christian might have in serving them, but serving them is better than spitting on what they mean to be their day of loving commitment. About even religious teachings, Jesus so often said, “You’ve heard it said”, then he’d say, “but *I tell you!*” Pagan soldiers so brutalized Jesus that he was unable to carry his crossbeam up to Calvary. So, they ordered a passer-by to carry it. His sons would later come to be known as Christians. Hm. (Mk 15:21) Paul advised: “*Whatever you do, do it heartily, as for the Lord, and not for people.*” (Col 3:23)

And, what professional photographer really *knows* any couple? Is one in it only for money? Is one doing it to spite a rival? Will they be divorced next year?

Olson is a Baylor theologian. He decries discrepancies between *price-tags* and *prices charged*: “Lying has become normal and acceptable.” Yes, ever since Eden – e.g., thumbs on scales, bait & switch, \$1.99, etc. “What’s worse”, he adds, “as a student of history”, is the “deception practiced by religious leaders—including Christian ones.” As an Arminian, without a doctrine of *total depravity*, he’s *shocked* at the “blatant deception if not a form of lying, when a church hides its denominational affiliation in order to appeal to the ‘post-denominational’ mindset of potential members.” He gives what he judges to be an even “worse” example, that, “seemingly reputable evangelical Christian theologians, seminary presidents, publishers and speakers blatantly lie to achieve the desired result to turn people in the pulpits and pews against open theism (and by extension Arminianism)”. Who but a theology prof thinks that people in the pews even know of, or care about “open theism” with its “Molinism”, “middle knowledge”, etc.?

But, for Olson, it’s *personal*: “One of the great defining moments (really series of events) in my life was the terrible controversy about open theism that raged among evangelicals in the 1990s and into the first decade of this century. It unveiled to me how willing some evangelical leaders, including theologians, were to manipulate evangelical opinion their way.”

No. What *so tragically* “raged among evangelicals” in those 1990s, ‘80s, ‘70s too, and on “into the first decade of this century” were the really *egregious* “*ex-gay*” *lies* resulting in thousands being dragged through false promises, depression, fractured families, loss of Christian faith, and suicides – all over their *unchosen, unchanging and unchangeable same-sex orientation*.

“Ex-gay” lies were far more destructive than squabbles over mini-matters in systematics. Yet, Olson bemoans: “I was treated very

badly [for] embracing open theism as a legitimate option.” He laments, *he was lied* about. But *these* weren’t lies about *visceral, unchosen and unchangeable sexual orientation* with which *any* honest Christian can *identify* by way of Jesus’ Golden Rule.

Olson has warned that those like him, who refuse to shift on homosexuality, may wind up as “Christians were in the Roman Empire except for the occasional violent persecution (yet)” or where Christians in the USSR wound up. Conflating a Golden Rule response for *freeing* the oppressed, with the Gulag’s *destruction* of the oppressed, surely *deceives* by *self-deception*.

Two theologians said to have most influenced Olson are Bernard Ramm and Jack Rogers. Way back in Ramm’s day, he warned: “Issues about homosexuality are very complex and are not understood by most members of the Christian church [who assume] a vile form of sexual perversion condemned in both the Old and New Testaments”. In 2006, Rogers blogged: “Many years ago, I was on a plane flight back from a conference and happened to be seated next to Dr. Ralph Blair – a noted psychotherapist, evangelical Christian, and openly gay man. At the time, I opposed the ordination of people who are LGBT. But we chatted amiably during the flight. During our conversation I was struck by how thoroughly evangelical he was – he loved Jesus and sought to follow him as much as anyone I’d ever met.” In 2007, Rogers keynoted an EC retreat.

In 2002, Clark Pinnock, an open theist, was nearly kicked out of the Evangelical Theological Society for “heresy”. At that ETS event, he took the time to encourage me about EC’s ministry.

Olson says he knows no “welcoming and affirming” *evangelicals*. Well, we’ve been around since Olson was 10, when, as a USC grad student in IVCF, I spoke up for gay Christians and IVCF students and the faculty advisor were fine with that. Olson was 12 when I did this on I-V staff at Penn. IVCF’s national president, biblical scholar Steve Hayner, supported EC and, up until his sudden death, we were working out a date for his keynoting EC. Campus Crusade, YFC, Young Life, and Navigators leaders have keynoted EC. EC’s 114 keynoters have included John F. Alexander, Jim Brownson, Cynthia Clawson, Don Dayton, Reta Halteman Finger, Nancy Hardesty, Henk Hart, Walt Hearn, Wally Howard, Fisher Humphreys, Todd Komarnicki, Kay Lindskoog, Ken Medema, Chip Miller, Jim Rayburn III, Ros Rinker, Charlie Shedd, Lew Smedes, Chuck Smith, Jr., Marsha Stevens, Nick Wolterstorff, et al.

EC retreats have commemorated Luther, Calvin, the Wesleys, Moody, Sankey, Lottie Moon, Susan and Anna B. Warner, Fanny J. Crosby, Booker T. Washington, Mary McLeod Bethune, William Booth, Helmut Thielicke, F. F. Bruce, Eugenia Price, Mahalia Jackson, Bob Jones, Jr. and *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, etc.

TEN and Justin Lee’s GCN were founded later, and Lee has been an invited speaker at Baylor.

We’re all drawn into ministries by *our* experience. But a will to *translate others’* needs by *way of ours*, identifies what we didn’t see. We can then be better informed for Golden Rule living.

