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Satanic Influences in the American Christian Church in a Post-Modern Consumer Society

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

SATANIC INFLUENCES IN THE AMERICAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH
IN A POST-MODERN CONSUMER SOCIETY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

Jerry Ressa

has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on February 16, 2018
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

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To my God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Thank you for life, for love, for opportunity and for pain and suffering in which to grow
and become closer to You.

You have my heart, my life, my submission always and forever.

I look forward to heaven and eternity with you.

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to propose evidences as to how and why the contemporary Christian church is satanically influenced, resulting in pain and suffering from devastating personal dysfunctions, interpersonal conflicts and divisions. This situation presents a great dilemma facing many, if not most, Christians in that they simply do not understand and are unaware of profound life altering significances of the spiritual battle being waged for souls and the satanic deceptions that draw people away from God. Satan, his fallen angels, and demons influence Christians and others through his primary tools of deceit and deception, delivered to the culture through media, radio, newspaper, television, blogs, Internet and social media, diabolically present the thesis of post-modernity, which centers on a self-fulfillment philosophy that adjudicates all morals, virtues, wisdom, and instruction by each person's individual standards developed in one's own mind. Satan's deceptions fashion the post-modern consumer culture with God given free will and choice to discern what is right, what is wrong and what is best for each individual, based on one's own understanding and desires. One of Satan's deceptions is that his evil is presented as a thorn in God's side and a menace to humankind as a result of personal sin. The thesis presented in this study, intends to clearly show how Satan, his fallen angels, and demons, coupled with their delivery of evil on humankind and the environment, does indeed ultimately bring glory to God and salvation to humanity.

Expected outcomes encourage priests, pastors, professors, and teachers to become aware of deceptions masking satanic influences causing divisions in relationships and in churches. Mitigation measures discussed in Chapter Six, if exercised, will seek to stabilize and improve relationships among believers and the church family.

CHAPTER ONE
UNAWARENESS OF SATANIC INFLUENCES

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”
– Edmund Burke¹

Introduction

Evil abounds. Regardless of when or where, the smoke of Satan discriminates not: in middle-age feudal systems, the 21st century cyber world, posh suburbs of major cities, poor slums spanning the globe, and organized crime activity. Not even the decency of organized religion is spared. In endless places and abundant ways, evil thrives bringing violent floods of pain, suffering, and chaos.

Pervasive evil poses tenacious problems for those who believe in God, the Good Shepherd. Surely a perfectly loving God would not want a world awash in widespread pain and suffering. Certainly an omniscient and omnipotent God could ensure that no such world exists. Yet, such a world does indeed exist; it is the world we live in.² In this post-modern world, evil remains no less present, no less pernicious and no less perplexing than any time throughout human history. Offering reasoned responses to the problem of evil in a post-modern consumer society adhering to traditional theism³ introduces a host of vexing burdens. However, is it also possible that Satan and evil

¹ Edmund Burke, “Edmund Burke Quotes,” 2017, accessed July 2, 2017, https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/17142.Edmund_Burke.

² Chad Meister and James K Dew, Jr., eds., *God and the Problem of Evil: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017), 1.

³ “Theism: the view that all limited or finite things are dependent in some way on one supreme or ultimate reality of which one may also speak in personal terms. In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, this ultimate reality is often called God. This article explores approaches to theism in Western theology and philosophy.” See David Lewis Hywel, “Theism,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2017, accessed January 9, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/theism>.

indeed bring glory to God and contribute to the salvation of humanity? This deeply profound question is at the heart of this study and more is substantiated so as to undergird this thesis in Chapter Six.

Study Limitations

Satan, his fallen angels and demons exercise acts of evil in myriad forms, manifesting in physical and spiritual realms, and recesses of the human mind. A growing library of theological works on satanic warfare, fallen angel manifestations as physical beings, the presence of angel/human offspring characterized as Nephilim, and other related topics fall outside the scope of this study. Many books and articles written on demons, demonization and demonic possession also reach beyond the relevant scope contained herein. Instead, the focus of this study explores ministerial problems permeating all faith communities, originating from satanic influence, and infiltrating in more subtle and sinister ways.

Susan Neiman in her brilliant book *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*, initiates now standard distinctions between moral evils as manifested in agents such as gangsters and terrorists, and natural evils such as tidal waves, earthquakes, and hurricanes.⁴ According to Neiman, moral evil is horrific while natural evil is harmful. Her definition of natural evil, “although distinct from moral evil, is not separate from it.”⁵ This dissertation seeks to direct the church away from the more dramatized and sensational evils, such as those mentioned above, along with those

⁴ Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 2015), 8.

⁵ Ibid.

promoted by the media and other cultural forces, toward the more subtle, cunning, and seemingly benign evils that does far more damage to people, relationships, and churches.

Chapter Two discusses Satan and his evil work against the backdrop of “internal consistency.”⁶ N.T. Wright cautions that “the problem of evil is not something that can be solved in the present world. Thus primary tasks are not so much to give answers to impossible philosophical questions, but to bring signs of God’s new world to birth on the basis of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection, even in the midst of ‘this present evil age.’”⁷ Such subtle satanic influences are the subject of this research.

Expected Outcomes

This study explores the question, contrary to popular belief, that evil is a thorn in God’s side and a menace to humankind, could it be that Satan, his fallen angels, and demons, in their delivery of evil, participate in God’s economy—his overall long- range plan to bring him glory and salvation to humankind?⁸ In support of this thesis, this study investigates how and where dark and demonic spirit influences begin, how God considers evil, how evil is addressed, the impacts of demonic spirit influences in our current post-modern consumer culture and, finally, how dark and demonic spirit forces manifest themselves in people, relationships, and churches. The goal of this study is to encourage church leaders to open their minds and become more aware of seemingly subtle and benign forces behind breakdowns in relationships among people and within their

⁶ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic), 414. “Internal consistency” relates unity between the following three propositions: “God is all loving,” “God is all powerful,” and “evil exists in a world created by such a God.”

⁷ N.T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 11.

⁸ This question was developed with the assistance of Dr. Michael Gamma, Technical Advisor at George Fox University (Portland Seminary), January 2015.

churches. If people follow the steps toward mitigation of disorders as discussed in Chapter Six, the expected outcome relationships among believers of church families will stabilize and improve.

The Church Appears to Suffer from Misunderstandings and Unawareness of Evil

Since the beginning of the human story, humankind has wrestled with understanding Satan and his dark and demonic forces in their administration of evil. Many learned church people think of evil as a result of sin. Others see it as an uncontrolled force that is equal though opposite to God.⁹ Hollywood and other entertainment media appears to dramatize sensationalism and lure of evil in the spirit world such that it successfully captivates the interest of many. One is reminded here of Romans packing the Coliseum in the first century to witness the slaughter of humans by gladiators and ferocious animals. Passive spectators seem to participate in dramatizations and real life news of Satan's evil acts. Such passive and consistent participation in the portrayal of evil cannot have any positive yield. Even so, any linkage between such viewing and the root causes of personal and cultural disorders are seemingly consistently denied. The ministry vignette narrative elucidates the personal and social dysfunctions personally witnessed.

The issue of God, good, and evil is a most important any proselyte considering claims of any given religion,¹⁰ and is an ongoing problem of both theological and philosophical interest to believers as well. This study focuses on identifying unique

⁹ For example, see A.C. O'Neil, "Sin," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton, 2017), accessed December 10, 2017, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14004b.htm>.

¹⁰ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Elwell, 413.

challenges facing Christian churches in US-America, which exist often unknowingly within its post-modern consumer culture, exposed continually to rapidly expanding influences of Satan and the world of dark spirits.¹¹ This reality can be most disturbing to many real people with real needs, disillusionments, and frustrations. Stresses and strains placed on Christian leaders who are not well informed on the nature and character of Satanic influences can, at times, lead to discouragement when faced with the realities and ramifications of learning more about the contemporary and very real challenge of satanic influences once regarded as an “ancient” and arcane subject.

Though much is written on this subject, an exhaustive review of literature revealed that little is written about this narrower and subtle form of dark spirit influences. Many books discuss natural and moral evils, dark spirit and demonic possession, exorcism, alleged abductions by beings other than human, sexual interaction with other than human beings; all of which do not impact the human population as much as satanic influences of a very subtle nature that are highlighted in this study. These more subtle dark spirit influences, such as gossip, do far more damage to human relationships and the church than the former. That is why this study is so necessary. It will impact a great many people in the church, if the root causes of breaking and undermining relationships can be understood. As a former military commander, I have learned the profound importance of knowing everything about the enemy before battle engagement, including its tactics. That said, leadership, especially in Western European and American churches, seems to lack the right lens for understanding the spiritual strategies needed to clearly see and counter

¹¹ Paul Chappell, *Understanding Satanic Influences and the Gothic Lifestyle* (Lancaster, CA: Striving Together Publications, 2008), 5-7. “‘Satanic influences’ are very real in modern culture, but they are often shrouded under the guise of something that appears to be more innocent.”

Satan's deceit and deceptions delivered to Christian churches and their members. A revitalized approach to understanding satanic influences on Christian churches may re-ignite many church leaders' spirits to very real satanic influences in their environment and sphere of influence, while providing a prescription for their mitigation.

The great paradox of humankind is that it perceives that it is so wise as to falsely believe it understands just about everything, excepting itself. This thinking has arguably never been more striking, or more troubling, than in the present generation.¹² Although, on one hand, technology has been expanding and growing at an alarming rate, on the other hand, our understanding of evil, "what it is, how it works, and why it so routinely and effortlessly ruins our lives,"¹³ is still a mystery to many. Beneath the tangible physical landscape lurks an invisible spiritual realm where unseen battles rage that are real and dangerous to humans in the physical environment. Scripture, an authoritative source, warns that humankind may be unaware of the problem of evil, and an argument can be made that, given our rationalistic paradigm, evil is not truly understood in terms of what it is and how to deal with it.¹⁴ In fact Scripture provides evidence that, regardless of religious belief, worldview, or opinion, there is a great battle raging in the spirit world:

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.¹⁵

¹² David Kupelian, *How Evil Works: Understanding and Overcoming the Destructive Forces that are Transforming America* (New York: Threshold, 2010), ix.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 11.

¹⁵ 2 Cor. 10:3–5.

This Scripture provides insight to understanding that daily pain and suffering are not merely or exclusively of this world in their root causes but are also the result of one's attitude in effectively dealing with them. Rather than limiting one's thoughts of physical ways of solving the physical impacts of pain and suffering, one should open his or her mind to think in such a way as to include a very real spiritual dimension and apply spiritual solutions to spiritual problems. This study contributes to the practice of ministry in that it uncovers underlying root satanic influences that divide people, families, and churches. The following real-life vignette sets the stage for highlighting physical consequences of spiritual unawareness and related dysfunctions.

The Ministry Problem Vignette: Unseen Satanic Influences

Co-Pastors Lynn Allison and David Crosby, of Northwest Bible Church in a Chicago suburb, began noticing critical issues of growing dysfunction among board and church members. These manifested in gossip, congregational division, false teachings, family breakdown, divorce, hidden sin, transfer growth diversion, self-dependence, discipleship distraction, unforgiveness, anger, bitterness, alcoholism, domestic abuse, rampant consumerism, and other such deep-seated sociological problems. These dysfunctions contribute to further concerns of divisions within the church, family breakdowns, hidden sin, transfer growth division, self-dependence, discipleship distraction, and hopelessness. David overheard one woman in the church foyer gossiping to another about Janet, the church secretary, saying that she was having an affair with Bill, the Bible Studies Associate Pastor; they should pray for the both of them. The woman continued: "I've never liked her. She's so annoying and I hate her hair; it's disgusting." The respondent replied: "I know, I think so too."

Concurrently, Lynn reported that a confidant told her of several church families who provide sizable donations were thinking about leaving because of disagreements with pastoral teachings and other church families about communion. Reports said they were “shooting each other in the back” over opinion differences. Some are so passionate about their opinions as being right and others wrong that loud and aggressive attacks against others are made in public places that display dysfunction within the church to outsiders. As Lynn and David talked about these deep growing dysfunctions, they began to see a thread of dissent that was beginning to divide their church.

Upon recognition that Lynn and David appeared to be diminishing in their ability to lead the congregation, Pastor David approached Pastor Lynn to inquire if there might not be theological realities that were being overlooked, blinding them to underlying root problems. Both agreed to seek counsel from a neighboring pastor, John Roland, who is known in the Chicago area for expertise in satanic influences. Roland first questioned what problems or indicators brought them to him. Lynn and Dave disclosed in detail the many issues plaguing their church. Roland validated their perceptions and suggested that in post-modern consumer culture, satanic influences have been largely dismissed or rationalized and hence unaddressed, even though there is much evidence that Satan and his demons are at the heart of deceiving congregational members into being self-focused and self-reliant masters of their own destiny, more influenced by the overall culture as opposed to embracing a Biblical worldview. Through continued discussions, John exposed the root causes of these deep sociologically dysfunctional problems plaguing Dave and Lynn’s church. In an effort to further educate and make the two pastors aware of what really is at the heart of these issues and how to combat them, Roland

recommended a book on Satanic influences in the American Christian Church.

Consequently, they were better able to recognize, address, and mitigate satanic influences within their church through the employment of more education, teaching, preaching, and counseling strategies.¹⁶

This vignette intends to make obvious that Satan seeks to divide and attack God's family, while influencing them to attack and injure each other. There are deep underlying spiritual warfare implications, such as satanic influences as the root causes of issues at Lynn and Dave's church and at the heart of this study. Satan, demons, and their evil acts are a thorn in God's side and a menace to people and the church.

Satanic Influences; Personal and Relational Dysfunctions

The ministry problem and its associated vignette just shared appear to show that a colossal struggle exists with many varied characteristics on many fronts; struggles between: good and evil, light and dark, truth and opinion, freedom and repression, right and wrong, and ultimately life and death. In churches, these satanic influences can be illustrated and evidenced by eight primary personal and social consequences as identified by spiritual warfare scholar Dr. Chuck Lawless:

- 1. Congregational Division:** "Many churches grow divided over budget decisions, paint colors, worship styles, Bible versions, community outreach, global missions, staffing choices, service times, choir robes, small group curriculum, and even the selection of church vans. Some of these issues are obviously more significant than others, but Satan and his demons still know this truth: believers make little dent in

¹⁶ Matt. 18:34.

the darkness when they shoot each other in the back, even or especially over otherwise small matters.”¹⁷

- 2. False Teaching:** Working mostly with solid evangelical churches, Lawless reports that blatant false teachings are not often seen, but rather they are much more subtle: “small group leaders teaching unbiblical theology with no internal system in place to recognize or address this problem. Also, there is typically no oversight or accountability regarding curriculum taught in small groups. Theologically-suspect materials grace the literature rack and problematic “recommended reading” is featured in church libraries. Finally, the music lyrics that promote bad theology and poor exegesis of biblical texts”¹⁸ are legion.
- 3. Family Breakdown:** “Many churches hardly pause when another home falls apart, and the enemy is pleased when the marriage picture of Christ’s love for His church is distorted.”¹⁹
- 4. Hidden Sin:** The story is tragic, but true in that many churches, when growth is stunted, invite consultants to help identify and recognize growth obstacles. Attention is given to infrastructure, programming, staffing, and facilities. Later, the truth of a more significant obstacle can surface: a church leader had been living in sin for months, if not years, even while doing day-to-day ministry.²⁰

¹⁷ Chuck Lawless, “8 Ways the Enemy Attacks Churches,” Thom S. Rainer, August 5, 2014, accessed July 1, 2017, <http://thomrainer.com/2014/08/8-ways-enemy-attacks-churches/>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., Eph. 5:25.

²⁰ Ibid.

5. **Transfer Growth Diversion:** “Satan and his demons are seldom threatened when churches “grow” by “swapping the sheep” of other churches. Many churches brag about their growth, but never ask whether they are seeing non-believers turn to Christ or simply reaping a growth that often distracts believers from exercising true evangelism.”²¹
6. **Self-Dependence:** Some churches would arguably, and sadly, “continue to exist for some time even if God withdrew His presence because they operate as well-oiled businesses on their own strength and abilities, and they do it well. Often there is enough size that in attendance is almost imperceptible. Often leaders in these churches are natural “fixers,” and they tend to fix first and pray second. Though these churches may speak passionately about the “power of God,” some, nonetheless, seem to rely more on their own power and charisma.”²²
7. **Discipleship Distraction:** “Satan and his demons delight in churches that have no strategic, effective discipleship strategy and have no plan to teach believers how to wear the full armor of God.²³ They frequently leave new believers to fight their battles alone, often selecting unprepared persons for leadership, providing little or no training for those new leaders. Because no one disciplined them, many of these believers often lose battles in a spiritual war they did not even truly know existed.”²⁴

²¹ Lawless, “8 Ways the Enemy Attacks Churches.”

²² Ibid.

²³ Eph. 6:11.

²⁴ Lawless, “8 Ways the Enemy Attacks Churches.”

8. Hopelessness: “All too often, church leaders give all they have to give, yet harvest few results. Their church may be dying but they unwilling to change. Lay leaders jealously protect their turf. Staff members sometimes battle among themselves and it seems that there are no lives experiencing transformation. “What’s the point?” Satan seems to ask, mockingly. “Why not just give up?”²⁵

The above eight points beginning with congregational division through hopelessness appear to demonstrate the degradation in life experiences that seem to be satanically influenced. In these instances, implications are that people may not know and understand what underlying forces divide people and churches, and subsequently, people will never be able to control and mitigate negative life experiences that damage lives and relationships.

The solution to mitigating satanic influences in the community is seated in underscoring an increased awareness of the root causes of community dysfunction. Community dysfunctions might be characterized as gossip, dishonesty, discriminations of all sorts and other such issues that divide and dishonor God’s community of the faithful. This awareness begins with “having ears to hear.” This central community issue is identified by God as well when He addressed the seven churches in the book of Revelation with His Words of having ears to hear as the beginning of awareness of His world and his realm, and the issues He sees as important. Seven times in the book of Revelation God says: “Whoever has ears, let them hear . . .”²⁶ Once there is an

²⁵ Lawless, “8 Ways the Enemy Attacks Churches.”

²⁶ See Rev. 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; and 3:22.

understanding to hear, then the community can become educated to understand how community dysfunctions bring division within God's community of the faithful.

These dysfunctions might be categorized as “nurtured dynamics” that impact how some live their lives. However, there are other instances in which “natural dynamic” dysfunctions impact lives and others in a person's social and relational environments. Examples might be birth defects, mental and uncontrollable behavioral challenges, and physical dysfunctions, all brought about by circumstances beyond an individual's ability to control.²⁷ Many times, both work in concert with each other. People in either of these dysfunctional circumstances are susceptible to negative influences from dark and demonic forces.²⁸

As Dr. Lawless points out, churches often fail to recognize these schemes of a real enemy, and have no plans on how to respond. These eight points appear to elucidate the importance and the ways that dark enemy spirits attack churches. There is hope in Jesus' words: “I will build My church, and the forces of Hades will not overpower it” (Matt. 16:18b). The enemy is viciously attacking and strategically targeting the church.²⁹

²⁷ Bruce H. Lipton, PhD. “Nature, Nurture and Human Development,” *Journal of Prenatal & Perinatal Psychology & Health*, June 12, 2012, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.brucelipton.com/resource/article/nature-nurture-and-human-development>. There is ongoing controversy concerning the role of “nature” versus “nurture” in life development. Advocates of “nature” invoke genetic determinism as being responsible for “controlling” a person's physical and behavioral traits. Genetic determinism is an internal control mechanism resembling a genetically-coded “computer” program. At conception, it is believed that differential activation of selected maternal and paternal genes collectively “download” an individual's physiological and behavioral character, and determines their biological destiny. In contrast, “control” by “nurture” argues that environment “controls” biological expression. Environmental experiences provide an essential role in shaping the character of an individual's life. Polarity between these philosophies simply reflects that those endorsing “nature” believe in an internal control mechanism (genes) while those endorsing the “nurture” mechanisms ascribe to an external control (environment).

²⁸ Eph. 6:12.

²⁹ Ibid.

Understanding of how to employ spirit weapons against a spirit enemy is the key to engaging these attacks.

In addition to Dr. Lawless' eight points of personal and social dysfunction, Nigel Nicholson writes that gossip is a substantial element of dysfunction with satanic overtones. From social engagements like cocktail parties to family reunions, from interactions at the water cooler to the professional convention, Christians often, like the secular culture, enjoy the guilty pleasure of gossiping about others. "However, gossip is far more than idle chitchat—it is how people arrange their social world. There are two sides of gossip. One side is warm feelings from spending time with a friend and sharing stories about mutual acquaintances. The other side is the stomach-churning anger, shame and frustration realized when someone is spreading bad news about you. People desire to be on the right side of gossip, but sometimes it illuminates while other times it just burns.³⁰ When it's good, it binds people and communities together. As anyone who has lived in a small community knows, gossip is something that people who share a collective identity do naturally. But rampant individualism, the fragmentation of our lifestyle and the pervasiveness of competitive striving can drive gossip and rumor down more poisonous channels."³¹

Lawless and Nicholson are both instrumental in exposing drivers of personal and social dysfunctions that initiate a chain reaction of evil events in people and churches by providing profound insight unveiling links to satanic influences underlying these issues.

³⁰ Nigel Nicholson, "The New Word on Gossip: It's More than Just Idle Chitchat," *Psychology Today*, May 1, 2001, accessed October 14, 2017, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200105/the-new-word-gossip>.

³¹ Ibid.

These dysfunctions expose the tip of the iceberg of the larger spiritual warfare beneath the surface. “The Cultural Iceberg Model”³² developed for studies in psychology and culture by Edward T. Hall and Gary Weaver represent dysfunctions discussed by Lawless illustrating how conflicts between cultures are represented by impacts to icebergs below the waterline. The visual culture is represented by the tip of the iceberg seen above the water, and hidden culture is the mass of iceberg below the water. Typically, when the bottom of the iceberg—where deeply held and often unconscious beliefs and values are located—collide with others, culture shock or some kind of cultural conflict incurs. In these instances solutions for mitigation many times escape our perceptions.³³

With this knowledge, church leaders can begin to recognize and understand underlying satanic influences dismembering churches, and employ mitigating strategies to begin reducing devastating effects of loosing spiritual battles. More is said about mitigating strategies in Chapter Six.

Spiritual Warfare and the Spiritual Battle

Both reason and the writers of Scripture suggest that there is a great spiritual battle of serious consequences that yields serious casualties.³⁴ This battle is often termed “spiritual warfare” and it is a reality.³⁵ Within the engagement of this battle, Scripture warns of not only a personal demon, but also a myriad of other demons that should be

³² Edward T. Hall, “Edward T. Hall’s Cultural Iceberg Model,” 1989. See also: Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989).

³³ Hall, “Edward T. Hall’s Cultural Iceberg Model.”

³⁴ Eph. 6:10–20; See also John Darnell, *Satanic Strategies in the 21st Century: Exposed* (Seattle: CreateSpace, 2013), Introduction.

³⁵ 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:8.

regarded as cunning enemies.³⁶ It is this author's position, coming from a Protestant perspective, that casualties are those souls who will not see eternal life in heaven because they are misinformed, unaware, and deceived by Satan's warfare techniques that serve to veil God's Word for eternal life in heaven with Him. For these casualties after death, it appears that there is no hope of resurrection to spiritual eternal life in heaven with Jesus. These spiritual battles over souls are also made clear from Paul's words to the Ephesians, and from the book of Daniel: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."³⁷

It is believed that many Christians know this and yet, too often, live otherwise and do nothing. Unfortunately, pressures felt now will become persecution later. If this spiritual battle is further denied, it has arguably already been lost.

Humankind's spiritual battle with Satan's deceit and deception is relevant to applied ministry within the church and to the Christian public at large. As the vignette narrative above demonstrated, many times, Christians are unaware and ill equipped to respond to the root of personal and social problems. Most books written about Satan and evil are written either by theologians, offering doctrinal explanations as to the origins and implications of evil, or by psychologists and psychiatrists, who present more clinical perspectives.³⁸ Many church theologians and ministers simply appear to not approach this subject at all because it is rarely understood. Also, in many cases, fear presides, and many

³⁶ See John 8:44, 13:27; Matt. 6:13, 9:34, 12:24; Luke 8:12, 13:16; 2 Cor. 2:11, 4:4, 11:3; Col. 1:13; 2 Thess. 2:9; Acts 16: 16–18; and 2 Tim. 2:26. These are key biblical passages that illustrate the theme of this section.

³⁷ Eph. 6:12.

³⁸ Kupelian, *How Evil Works*, x.

even regard evil and its consequences as a subject best avoided.³⁹ The net result is that in the United States and Western Europe—both heavily influenced by Enlightened thinking, rationalistic reasoning, and post-modern consumer cultural influences—it appears that many are lost in this spiritual battle: those who might otherwise be saved from eternal damnation, if were it not for Satan. The enemy often outsmarts and outmaneuvers humankind in its quest for spiritual righteousness.

This dissertation targets two components of understanding and mitigating this ministry problem. The first seeks to fill a profound gap of knowledge and understanding, linking factual understandings of Satan and his dark and demonic forces with Scriptures, and explore Satan and his evil works from the viewpoint of both the early church theologians and also contemporary thinkers who explore the Western post-modern consumer culture. The second component seeks to help church leaders recognize satanic influences and provide tactics and mitigations that can turn the tables on Satan and his evil acts. The ultimate goal is to reduce casualties attributable to Satan over the long term. Contrary to a vast reservoir of contemporary teaching on the subject of Satan and his strategies, this paper argues that Satan, his agents, and their resultant evil acts bring glory to God and salvation to humankind.

How People Think of Evil

In most discussions of good and evil, it appears that good receives most of the attention. Indeed, sometimes evil is completely ignored, almost as though it does not

³⁹ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 38.

exist,⁴⁰ and some theologians explicitly claim that evil does not really exist, despite the fact that the concept of evil is a central tenet of Christianity.⁴¹ Nonetheless, it is often seen as necessary to defend the claim that there is indeed evil in the world.⁴² Yet, many desire an explanation as to what God says about evil: what it really is, why it exists, why it has been allowed to continue, and how long it will persist. Although these questions are arguably answered in the Bible, they often do not seem to receive the sustained or serious attention of scholars, theologians, and religious authorities in this generation. They are certainly not the sort of answers that later philosophical traditions would consider adequate.⁴³ Discussions in this study will seek to demonstrate that there are many varied opinions of what evil is.

Fresh waves of discussions seek to wrestle with the phenomenon of evil, where it comes from, understanding it, how it impacts our worldview, and whether it is Christian or something other.⁴⁴ For many in the U.S.-American post-modern consumer culture, the understanding of Satan, his fallen Angels, and demons, and their resultant evil acts, is shaped by images of the movie and television industries. More will be said about media influences in Chapter Three.

Answers to questions as to the nature of evil are obfuscated at best. Many human languages contain words for “evil,” each with variations of meanings attached.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Bernard Gert, *The Moral Rules: A New Rational Foundation of Morality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 44.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Wright, 44.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁵ Wright, 34.

Following are a few examples sustaining this claim. One definition of many is that “evil” is “that which ought not to be.”⁴⁶ In another example, a distinction is sometimes made between physical/metaphysical (natural) evil (misfortune, woe) and moral evil (offence, wrongdoing). In *the Reality of God and the Problem of Evil*, Davies makes the point that in order to seriously consider the challenges of evil, there must first be some basic understanding of God’s existence.⁴⁷

Many regard evil as separate from and in competition with good.⁴⁸ Augustine argues against this theory in that he believes that: “evil is “parasitic on good and not separate from good.”⁴⁹ So, in his view, evil is a corruption or rejection of the good. Just as a shadow grows larger as we move away from the light source, so evil grows as we move away from what is good.”⁵⁰ Aquinas, on the other hand, writes that every evil has a cause. He believes that evil is the absence of the good which is natural; the way God intended it.⁵¹

⁴⁶ T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D.A. Carson, Graeme Goldsworthy, eds., *The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 465.

⁴⁷ Brian Davies, *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 226.

⁴⁸ Todd Calder, “The Concept of Evil,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2016, accessed June 12, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/concept-evil>.

⁴⁹ Gregory Koukl, “Augustine: On Evil,” *InterQuest*, 2002, accessed June 15, 2017, http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/Philosophers/Augustine/augustine_evil02.html.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Thomas Aquinas, “What is the Distinction Between Metaphysical Goodness and Moral Goodness in the Thought of Thomas,” trans. Joseph M. Magee, March 21, 2015, accessed June 15, 2017, <http://www.aquinasonline.com/Questions/goodevil.html>.

The Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 in the Kingdom of Portugal⁵² precipitated the now-standard distinction between moral evil and natural evil; because until that time, there was no distinction between evils caused by human's moral depravity and evils over which humans have no control.⁵³ Unlike the problem of moral evil, there is no moral agent that can be blamed for natural evil. The Lisbon earthquake, like other natural disasters and diseases, involves the very impersonal elements of nature.⁵⁴

Dostoevsky thought of evil as the destructive aspects of human freedom, which can only be bound by God.⁵⁵ Eagleton, in his article "The Nature of Evil," writes that: "evil is not something positive, but rather a kind of lack or defectiveness, a sort of nothingness or negativity, an inability to be truly alive."⁵⁶ Hefling, in quoting Francis Spufford in his book, *unapologetic*, thinks of evil in his discussion of original sin as: "the human propensity to fuck things up."⁵⁷ N.T. Wright reports that evil can be understood as it is outwardly manifested in pedophilia, terrorism, death, genocide, tribalism, Balkanization and other such atrocities.⁵⁸ Some people also use the term "evil" in a way

⁵² David Bressan, "1755 Lisbon Earthquake," *Scientific American*, November 1, 2011, accessed December 17, 2017, <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/history-of-geology/november-1-1755-the-earthquake-of-lisbon-wraith-of-god-or-natural-disaster>.

⁵³ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 20.

⁵⁴ Stephen Beale, "The Problem of Natural Evil," November 23, 2013, accessed December 29, 2017, <http://catholicexchange.com/the-problem-of-natural-evil>.

⁵⁵ Fyodor Dostoevsky, "The Problem of Evil," *Dostoevsky Research Station*, trans. Constance Garnett, 1879, September 17, 1999, accessed December 17, 2017, <http://www.kiosek.com/Dostoevsky>.

⁵⁶ Terry Eagleton, "The Nature of Evil," *Tikkun*, 2011, accessed July 3, 2017, <https://www.questia.com/magazine/1P3-2246899461/the-nature-of-evil>.

⁵⁷ Francis Spufford, "What Sin REALLY Is (The Human Propensity to F**k Things Up)," *Huffington Post*, January 23, 2014, accessed July 3, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/francis-spufford/what-sin-really-is-the-hu_b_4164852.html.

⁵⁸ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 29–34.

that is interconnected with sin and the nature of being human. Hefling writes that what is now “fallen,” because of the “original” sin in Eden, is human nature.⁵⁹ However, according to Wright, nineteenth century thought omitted original sin; and, as a result, a replacement theology was needed, “which Marx and Freud happily proposed, that provided explanations and solutions that were seen as new redemption doctrines that mirrored Christian doctrine.”⁶⁰ Joseph de Maistre writes, “If there is no moral evil upon the earth, there would be no physical evil.”⁶¹

Maximus the Confessor writes that: “of the blessed Dionysius who said that among the demons this is what is evil: irrational anger, senseless lust, and reckless imagination. However, among rational beings, it is unreasonableness, recklessness, and rashness that are privations of reason, sense, and circumspection. Based on this understanding, according to Maximus, privations follow upon habits, and as a result, demons that once had reason, sense, and religious circumspection, now by their evil nature, have become evil through the misuse of their natural faculties.”⁶² George Berthold translates Maximus, Confessor’s work in *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*, in a chapter on “The Four Hundred Chapters on Love,” that: “evil is not to be regarded as part of the substance of people, but part of a person’s mistaken and irrational movement.”⁶³

⁵⁹ Charles Hefling. “Why We Mess Things Up,” *Christian Century*, June 25, 2014, 24, accessed July 3, 2017, <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2014-06/why-we-mess-things>.

⁶⁰ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 23.

⁶¹ Joseph de Maistre, “First Dialogue,” *The Saint Petersburg Dialogues*, trans. Jack Lively, 1965, accessed January 2, 2018, http://maistre.uni.cx/st_petersburg.html.

⁶² Maximus the Confessor, *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*, trans. George Berthold (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1985), 62.

⁶³ Maximus the Confessor “The Four Hundred Chapters on Love,” in *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*, trans. George Berthold, 33–98.

Views and opinions of Satan, his fallen Angels, and demons, and their administration of evil acts vary widely among philosophers, theologians, ministers, priests, and church people. Many mistake Satan for what he is not—an equal and opposite force to God or to Jesus—and see satanic influences and activity behind every problem, suffering, and misfortune.⁶⁴ The opposite error that C.S. Lewis wrote about suggests in his book, *Mere Christianity*, is that people might sneer at or mock ideas of the demonic and imagine a figure in red tights, with horns, hooves and a tail, and, as such, have effectively dismissed the very existence of a real Satan.^{65, 66} N.T. Wright suggests that many pastors and church leaders downplay references to Satan as he is exhibited in some of our modern liturgies.⁶⁷ It seems that there is much to recommend in Wright’s understanding.

Other philosophers and psychologists characterize evil as the shadow side of good.⁶⁸ Again, it is these very mistaken beliefs that C.S. Lewis warns about that are also a target of this research. Lewis illustrates popular misconceptions of Satan and his influences in his *Screwtape Letters*, where he focuses on two equal and opposite errors that entrap people.⁶⁹ “One is to disbelieve in the existence of Satan and his demonic forces. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 110.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperOne, 1982), ix.

⁶⁷ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 110.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁹ Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, ix.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Satan and his demons are equally pleased with both errors and: “hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”⁷¹ Each of these errors, however, has a grain of truth associated with it.”⁷²

The *Screwtape Letters* are a series of fictitious letters exchanged between Wormwood, a junior devil, and his uncle Screwtape, and they discuss how Wormwood can cause his assigned humans to commit sins and subsequently damn themselves. Although Wormwood’s letters are not provided, their content is inferred from Screwtape’s replies. Although the book is written from the demon’s perspective, Lewis uses this illustrative technique to emphasize what he sees as important truths of Christianity. Although allegorically, on the whole, it reveals that Lewis genuinely believed that evil spirits existed and were constantly assaulting humankind.

Major worldviews also have different ways of understanding evil.⁷³ In U.S.-American and Western post-modern consumer culture, evil is mostly defined by super-human and demonic characters, which are sensationalized by the movie and television industries.⁷⁴ Media presentations have generated new flurries of captivating interest in evil’s deep and dark mysteries, as they are presented to the public, posing new questions previously not given much attention.⁷⁵

Satan is a liar,⁷⁶ and his primary tools are temptation, deceit, and deception. It follows that anything Satan presents to humans can take whatever character each

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 111.

⁷³ Ibid., 34.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 15–16.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁶ Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, ix.

person or group may have vulnerability for, and these draw them away from God are too often unaware and ill informed on the role and place in the physical and spirit worlds of Satan, his demons, and fallen Angels. As a result, people are ill equipped to deal with evil's deceit and deception and its impacts on individual believers, social groups, and churches. Because of this lack of knowledge, people therefore often react with inappropriate action against inappropriate targets, instead of understanding the role that evil plays in God's great design. Nevertheless, what is generally taken to be at the heart of the problem of evil can be simply put in standard logical form, as follows: If God exists then evil should not exist. Evil does exist. Therefore, God does not exist.⁷⁷

The problem presented appears to bear inconsistency between God's nature and the reality of evil. As ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus (341–270 BC) put it: "Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot; or he can, but does not want to. If he wants to, but cannot, he is impotent. If he can, but does not want to, he is wicked. If God can abolish evil, and God really wants to do it, why is there evil in the world?"⁷⁸ Arguments above present foundational issues relevant to other viewpoints concerning the classical views of evil that are derived from church fathers such as Augustine. His legacy to these thinkers is a sophisticated combination of biblical theology in ancient philosophy that remains inescapably influential and controversial.⁷⁹ Questions like this and others like it are relevant to this study in that they do not consider a Scriptural internal consistency. When the entire context of Scripture is considered in drawing conclusions about evil, answers become apparent.

If Christians understood that satanic and demonic influences do indeed ultimately bring God glory and are complements to God's long-range plan for humankind's

⁷⁷ Chad Meister and James K. Dew, Jr., eds., *God and the Problem of Evil: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017), 4.

⁷⁸ Rob Slane, "Epicurus and the Problem of Evil," *American Vision*, May 16, 2013, accessed December 10, 2017, <https://americanvision.org/7989/epicurus-problem-of-evil>.

⁷⁹ Meister and Dew, *God and the Problem of Evil*, 13.

redemption, it is believed that they would then bring themselves to a more joyous and content state and confront evil with a renewed energy and sense of challenge. Kathleen Norris writes in her forward to C.S. Lewis' book *Mere Christianity* that "Once we tune ourselves to this reality, Lewis believes, we open ourselves to imaginatively transform lives in such a way that evil diminishes and good prevails."⁸⁰ Lewis and Norris both suggest that learning to understand evil bring us closer to God. Our resultant pain and suffering caused by evil, is the path to perfection in God's eyes. Our resultant actions and life style will then be transforming to others.

Many Church Ministers and Believers Appear to be Unaware and Uninformed on Evil

Several factors, in concert with pride, further appear to convict and implicate unawareness and misunderstanding about the true nature and extent of satanic influences in Christianity. At the heart of misinformation and unawareness of Satan and his evil acts is an apparent deceit and deception about humans' relationship with God. These misperceptions are perhaps best seen against a backdrop of the "doctrine of progress," a fundamental tenet of the post-modern consumer cultural worldview.⁸¹

According to Hegel, everything moves forward toward a better, more complete, more ideal end; and if suffering is encountered along the way, so be it; a synthesis will emerge and such things as suffering are "the broken eggs from which delicious omelets are being made."⁸² Such beliefs in this seemingly repeated progress are found in poets

⁸⁰ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 1972), xix.

⁸¹ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 21. The Doctrine of Progress was first expounded by Hegel.

⁸² Ibid.

such as Keats, who embraced the pantheism of the Romantic Movement. Similar thought is detected in the philosophy of Malthus,⁸³ which influenced and sustained Western belief that Europe and North America were leading human improvement, justifying the imperial economic expansion that was a powerful 19th century force.⁸⁴

Media and politicians appear to teach, often as subtly by tone of voice, rather than by explicit argument, to submit to the doctrine of progress. As a result, this momentum becomes unstoppable. From a sociological perspective, no one wants to be left behind, left behind the times, to be on the wrong side of history, and to be yesterday's people? "The colloquial phrase "that's so last year," has become the ultimate put down: "progress"—by which we often simply mean a variation in fashion—has become the single most important measuring rod in society and culture."⁸⁵ Coupled with pride, it is this very social pressure that, in many cases, becomes the breeding ground for Satan and his minions to work their evil in the hearts of people. These cultural influences work to shape inappropriate conceptions of evil. First, evil is ignored when it does not impact people too radically. Second, evil surprises people when it impacts them. Third, reactions to evil are too often inadequate, leaving its victims exposed.⁸⁶

⁸³ Donald Gunn MacRae, "Thomas Malthus, English Economist and Demographer," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed January 2, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Malthus>.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ MacRae, "Thomas Malthus, English Economist and Demographer," 22.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 23–24.

Satan’s Primary Tools: Temptation, Deceit, and Deception

The biblical depiction of Satan is very different from popular contemporary depictions. The Bible speaks more about Satan’s extreme subtlety, trickery and deceptiveness than it does his power. His cleverness employs deceptive devices, crafty devices and deceitful plans, which is the point of the Screwtape letters.⁸⁷ C.S. Lewis’ work: *The Great Divorce*⁸⁸ also hints of this.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, after many years of exile and upon returning to his native Russia, was careful to hospitably greet everyone he met on his journey across Russia, including those in government who persecuted him and his followers under communist rule, and who remained in office until after 1989.⁸⁹ Many objected to his fraternizing with people who had been part of the evil system that persecuted them. Solzhenitsyn wisely pointed out that: “the line between good and evil threads through every person and wickedness persists both in low- and high-grade versions.”⁹⁰ He wrote that: “the trivial mistake must not be made of supposing that a onetime petty thief and an Adolph Hitler are exactly alike. One must not think therefore that evil can either be addressed or solved by minimalizing it through labeling some as “good” and others as “bad.””⁹¹ In a similar vein, Paul clarifies that Christians’ battle is not with humankind,

⁸⁷ Steven C. Riser, “Deception—Discerning the Devil’s Most Dangerous Device,” *The John Ankerberg Show*, October 2016, accessed May 27, 2017, <https://www.jashow.org/articles/guests-and-authors/dr-steven-c-riser/deception-discerning-the-devils-most-dangerous-device>.

⁸⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: HarperCollins, 1973), vii.

⁸⁹ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 38.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

but with spirit beings of the dark spirit world.⁹² Unfortunately, many theologians, teachers, pastors, and priests seem to read this passage with superficial levels of understanding of what God, through Paul, is trying to say.

The church, in this current generation, under the influence of an unholy culture, may in too many instances, be described as a community degrading into a body of indulgence and comfort seeking people that cater to personal comforts and desires of its members. From another viewpoint, as a result of Enlightenment influences, Western Christians not only tend to functionally disconnect with evil, but to also devalue deliverance and exorcism ministries. Now is a time of great change within the U.S.-American Christian church. Some would even argue this change includes an element of apostasy, or the repudiation and abandonment of orthodox faith that the church has classically professed.^{93,94} Post-modern consumerism looks at Satan and his evil acts through its cultural lens with a “raised eyebrow” followed by thoughts like, “Hmm, that’s interesting,” and the topic of conversation gently shifts to a safer, and perhaps more popular subject.

The Importance and Good of Satan and His Evil Acts

Little is researched and discussed on the various aspects and characteristics of evil and their contribution to God’s glory and the salvation of humankind, and as a result, information and theological reasoning is scant in this regard. This dissertation highlights and points to the importance and good of Satan and his evil acts in bringing God glory

⁹² Eph. 6:12.

⁹³ Heb. 3:12.

⁹⁴ Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 85.

and salvation to humankind. The problem, in the current post-modern consumer world, is arguably the presence of overwhelming satanic influences clouding the eyes of good-hearted and well-meaning Christian leaders as to a true understanding of Satan and evil. Christians are too often ignorant of the deceit and deception of dark and demonic spirit forces impacting their personal lives, relationships, and churches. Like the proverbial elephant in the living room, this problem may be far bigger than Christians wish to recognize. It is for these reasons that ancient and classical understandings of Satan and his evil acts, consistent with God's word, are explored here. These truths have too often been veiled by post-modern consumer culture, and as N.T. Wright, proposes in *Evil and The Justice of God*, that: "people do not have a clue about what to do with evil or what to do about it."⁹⁵ "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children."⁹⁶ "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."⁹⁷ Thus Satan and his evil acts bring God glory and salvation to humankind. More evidence supporting this argument is presented in Chapter Six.

Educate the Church in God's Intent and Purpose of Satan and Evil

This dissertation seeks to present a logical thought process toward the understanding that God's plan for humankind involves Satan and his evil acts. Supporting

⁹⁵ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 30.

⁹⁶ Hosea 4:6.

⁹⁷ Eph. 6:12.

this thesis, Oswald Chambers writes in *My Utmost For His Highest*, (teaching on Corinthians 4:11) that as believers in Jesus Christ: “Christians should not be concerned with being saved from hell, but rather of being saved in order to manifest the life of the Son of God in mortal flesh.”⁹⁸ Chambers also suggests that disagreeable things in human’s lives exhibit whether or not people are manifesting Christ’s life.⁹⁹ It is here, in the wisdom of Chamber’s thought that attention is turned to Satan, his fallen Angels, and demons and their evil acts as “disagreeable things.”

God ordained for humans, before the foundations of the world, a life that engages pain and suffering inflicted by Satan and his demons. If God is good, it can be argued that Satan, his fallen angels, and demons, and their resultant evil acts do indeed bring glory to God as part of his plan for humankind’s salvation: “In him, we people were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.”¹⁰⁰ Demonstrated by the vignette above, many do not see or understand how to manage evil and mitigate its breeding a chain of negative events that can become so devastating to so many. Based on evidences presented in Chapter Two, and in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as writings of early church fathers, some apocryphal books, and commentaries of theologians of the pre-modern world; all testify in unison to the real and present existence of spiritual dark and demonic forces and their influences on all humankind throughout history.

⁹⁸ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 1963), May 14.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Eph. 1:11–12.

The purpose and significance of this study proposes that those who have been significantly formed by post-modernity, but who now live in a post-modern philosophical paradigm, should be open—as were our forefathers, and as are current brothers and sisters in the non-Western church—to the reality of the influences of dark and demonic spirits in every aspect of people’s lives, relationships, and churches. These demonic influences are simply not recognizable in U.S.-American culture to many priests, pastors, ministers, teachers, and church members, nor are their good for God’s glory and mankind’s salvation realized. Simply stated, the enemy is neither known nor understood.

The Road Forward

Many successful military commanders testify to the paramount importance of accurate and complete intelligence gathering prior to battle engagement, the lack of which guarantees defeat. Within the realm of many churches, this intelligence gathering principle underscores significant unawareness and lack of education as to how to recognize and respond to satanic influences. Beset by such disadvantages, churches and their members incur significant forces tearing apart the fabric often perpetrated from within by the church’s own good and Godly members.

As a current associate pastor, I have witnessed the impacts these dark forces have had on the senior pastor, board members, associate pastors, church administrators, and attendees. Too often Satan and his demon’s work are simply not recognized as such. Paul instructs on how to recognize and prepare for this spiritual battle. He writes: “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.”¹⁰¹ Paul

¹⁰¹ Eph. 6:11.

then discloses the nature, character, and residence of our enemy.¹⁰² Paul's words to the Bereans then are preparation to launch into a unique and exciting study, teaching from Biblical scriptures of how the lower spirit world and its beings impact lives: "Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."¹⁰³

So, it is through Scriptural insights, with supporting dialogue from theologians throughout church history, that Satan, his fallen Angels, demons and their acts of evil working in people and churches can begin to be discerned. So, people in our current post-modern consumer culture are challenged, as were the Ephesians, to recognize that demonic manifestations acted out in people who are unaware of their influences. Paul writes to this understanding: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, in spite of this and the fact that God through Paul, advises differently, many Christians too often continue to choose not to see the work of Satan and his forces, but instead blame human vessels alone for divisive and destructive work.

¹⁰² Eph. 6:12.

¹⁰³ Acts 17:11.

¹⁰⁴ Eph. 6:12.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS SUPPORTING THE THESIS THAT GOD WORKS EVIL FOR HIS GLORY AND HUMANKIND'S SALVATION

Introduction

Chapter One detailed satanic influences within American Christian churches and cited examples of possible consequences of unawareness of Satan's strategies directed against God's people, their relationships, and the church. Chapter Two provides foundational Scriptures supporting God's understanding of Satan, his fallen angels, and demons, and their delivery of evil to His people. As stated in Chapter One, contrary to much teaching, Satan, his fallen angels, and demons are not a thorn in God's side, threatening His sovereignty or economy, but rather Satan, his agents and their resultant evil acts actually bring glory to God and salvation to humankind.

Chapter Two begins with seeking to unlock God's plan for Satan and evil in unlocking some profound Scriptural clues. Jesus' words begin this study:

Son of man, you are living among a rebellious people. They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people.¹

Then Jesus said whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.²

Jesus also said: for whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear. Consider carefully what you hear, he continued. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.³

¹ Ezek. 12:2.

² Mark 4:9.

³ Mark 4: 22–25.

These verses uttered by Jesus reveal that if Christians are willing to open their eyes to see and ears to hear God's message, then He will bless them with increased knowledge and understanding, enlightening them about Satan's role in God's overall plan for humankind. He continues to say that if ears are unwilling to hear His message, they will suffer the loss of the little knowledge they now have. David Kinnaman, President of Barna Group writes in *Barna Trends 2017*, edited by Roxanne Stone:

In our work, we sometimes see an unfortunate phenomenon: spiritual influencers who want to understand trends, but bring narrow motivations to the discernment process. Maybe they hope to keep their particular vision of the world alive, so they look for information that confirms their preconceptions and biases. Perhaps an entrepreneur looks for confirmation of his business model. The ministry leader scours data only to bolster a pet project. Or a preacher who looks for the right statistics to drive home his point, failing to wonder if the argument itself is true.⁴

As Biblical Scriptures are introduced in this chapter, hopefully, new doors of understanding will be opened, substantiating arguments presented demonstrating that Satan, his fallen angels, and demons, and their evil acts bring glory to God and humankind salvation. Perhaps it is somewhat unfortunate that in most discussions of good and evil, good receives most of the attention.⁵ Indeed, sometimes the reality of evil is completely ignored, almost as if it does not exist. Some theologians even explicitly claim evil does not really exist.⁶ It can arguably be proposed that this view is a central

⁴ *Barna Trends 2017*, ed. Roxanne Stone (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2016), 7.

⁵ Bernard Gert, *The Moral Rules: A New Rational Foundation of Morality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 44.

⁶ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "Preachers Who Don't Believe — The Scandal of Apostate Pastors," *Albert Mohler*, March 18, 2010, accessed December 21, 2017, <https://albertmohler.com/2010/03/18/clergy-who-dont-believe-the-scandal-of-apostate-pastors>.

tenet of one branch of Christianity.⁷ On the contrary, it seems clear that evil is real and far too much exists in the world—not all of it caused by man.⁸

Reason

Reason, and how it plays an extremely important role, in all areas of philosophy including moral philosophy, is central to this study. Reason is a foundational element of determining truth. Reason also plays an important role in social sciences, particularly political science, sociology, psychology and is crucially significant in psychiatry. Classical philosophers have generally used reasoning and logical tools in ways that assume that varied truths are uniformly understood the same by all.⁹ However, there is a growing awareness that varied life experiences that even reasoning and logical processes are indeed not experienced the same by all.

Actions can be rational or irrational. For instance, irrational beliefs are only irrational if: “they are held by a person with sufficient knowledge and intelligence to know that they are false; they are inconsistent with great numbers of things known to be true; and inconsistency is apparent to most people with similar intelligence and knowledge.”¹⁰ Thus, an irrational belief should not merely be a false belief, or even an obviously false belief, but rather an obviously false belief held by a person with adequate intelligence and to know that it is a false belief. Such beliefs are irrational, and holding

⁷ Timothy Tutt, “The Modern Church Doesn’t Need a Make-Believe Devil: The Biggest Problem With all this Talk of Satan is that He Doesn’t Exist,” *On Faith*, 2018, accessed January 2, 2018, <https://www.onfaith.co/onfaith/2014/05/15/the-modern-church-doesnt-need-a-make-believe-devil/32086>.

⁸ Gert, *The Moral Rules*, 44.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

them generally leads to irrational actions.¹¹ It then follows that in order to narrow the scope of understanding about reasoning that logical thinking and reasoning are critical tools necessary to the unlocking of Biblical truths—hopefully, truths God would have us understand and not merely convenient interpretations that buttress our preconceived worldviews. The Bible recognizes this pitfall and explains that humans’ own reasoning may itself lead away from truth and righteousness. It then offers this approach to truth: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.”¹² Here, God teaches that human reasoning brings about misconceptions and faulty thinking that may lead away from Him. More is said on misconceptions and faulty thinking in Chapter Three in discussions on post-modern consumer cultural influences.

Much of human history teaches that many people can quickly absorb surrounding worldviews, resulting in losing innocence, becoming self-centered and deceived like many.¹³ This said, is it not safe to conclude that far too many Christians are to varying degrees unaware that they are in Satan’s bondage? Likewise, most would scoff if presented with this idea. Even when informed through Gospel preaching, many do not fully grasp the criticality of reasoning and logical thinking, unless God draws them by opening their eyes spiritually.¹⁴

¹¹ Gert, *The Moral Rules*, 22.

¹² Prov. 3:5–7.

¹³ Rev. 12:9.

¹⁴ John 6:44–45.

The Power of Logical Thinking

Illogical thinking is a serious deficiency afflicting many. Often even educated persons lack rigorous training in the art of reasoning, logical and critical thinking, and problem solving.¹⁵ For instance, the ability to manage numbers (mathematics) is paramount in society, now more than at any other time in history. Are we measuring up to this challenge? “The numbers” say, “no.”¹⁶ According to the Commission on Professionals in Science and Technology, 774 Americans received doctorates in mathematics in 1973. Although the population increased over the next twenty years, that number of doctorates in mathematics decreased to 475 in 1993.¹⁷ Moreover, as science progresses, a direct human “grasp” of such often theoretical suppositions becomes increasingly out of reach, and advanced mathematics provide the only tools for even the most highly qualified people to manipulate these highly complex theories and principles. In short, if the math is not perfect every step of the way, conclusions drawn can range from meaningless to disastrous, while many may not perceive any difference. While giving cosmologists, astronomers, physicists, chemists, and mathematicians every bit of credit, what if just one of their seemingly countless steps toward forming critical conclusions is incorrect? Counterintuitive problems, solutions to which are strongly contrary to intuitions, are everywhere, though they are often unnoticed because they are counterintuitive. Unsharpened reasoning skills regularly yield mistaken conclusions and

¹⁵ Marilyn Vos Savant, *The Power of Logical Thinking: Easy Lessons in the Art of Reasoning . . . And Hard Facts About Its Absence in Our Lives* (New York: St Martins, 1996), xiv.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

unless people are “nose-to-nose” with logical steps and evidences, appropriate problem solutions are unrecognizable.¹⁸

The Doctrine of Internal Consistency

From a Biblical perspective, reasoning coupled with logical thinking argues that if indeed the Bible is God’s Word, written by the finger of the Holy Spirit, a divine being outside space and time, with the ability to see the beginning and the end of human history all at the same instant, then it would follow that there would be an “internal consistency” to its content. For example, it may be asked why God says that in all things He works for the good of those who love him and are called to his purposes,¹⁹ then why do some experience evil, pain and suffering? This is an intuition and dilemma formed by many informed and serious Christians, including teachers, pastors, priests, and theologians, but unfortunately in asking this question, many may not see that conclusions drawn are illogical, unreasonable, and inconsistent with other concepts presented in the Bible. In other words, conclusions drawn do not fit with God’s initial premise that He works all things for good. This is one example of many in which questions and even conclusions run counter to the doctrine of internal consistency. More is said about Scriptural internal consistency below.

Sound reasoning and clear logical thinking regarding Satan and evil’s role in God’s economy attempts to clarify the thought that they are integral to God’s plan for both His glory and humankind’s salvation.²⁰ Generally speaking, many theists perceive

¹⁸ Vos Savant, *The Power of Logical Thinking*, xiv.

¹⁹ Rom. 8:28.

²⁰ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic), 413.

evil as inconsistent with the internal consistency doctrine for the following three reasons: “God is all-loving,” “God is all-powerful,” and “evil exists in a world created by such a God.”²¹ The following propositions form arguments for inconsistent theistic positions:

1. God is all knowing;
2. God is wholly benevolent, i.e. totally disposed to will and do those things promoting happiness of others;
3. Evil consequences result from actions and events befalling humankind;
4. The omnipotent and wholly benevolent being of one and two eliminates every evil in so far as He can;
5. There are no logical limits to what an omnipotent being can do; therefore,
6. God eliminates every evil that is logically possible for him to remove.

Propositions one, two, four, five and six entail negation of three, and thus, the set of six is said to be self-contradictory.²² If one believes God is all-loving and all-powerful, then there is misunderstanding in logic substantiating a problem of internal consistency. In response to this position, it is therefore argued that indeed God is all-loving and all-powerful, and as a result, Satan and his evil actions must therefore be a part of God’s plan to bring Him glory and humankind salvation.

Moving forward, God’s discussion of evil in His word, what the Bible, and other Scriptures document about Satan and evil is also explored. What the early church fathers declared in supporting those views and how generations since the pre-modern era have unfortunately pushed aside what God wants humanity to know and understand about Him

²¹ Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 413.

²² Ibid.

and evil is also reviewed. Without a proper understanding of the problem, any hope of reclaiming reasonable and logical understandings appear to be lost. As a result, Christians are too often unaware and uninformed of God's purposes for Satan and evil. Satan and his fallen angels and demons control lives and relationships, wreaking havoc on those who are unaware, misinformed and ill-equipped to deal with their deceits and deceptions of his evil acts. Few academic theologians have or are unwilling to address this profound ministry problem. Although Scriptures clearly reveal a defeated Satan, many still battle his attacks, often seemingly unequipped with a full understanding of God's purposes.^{23, 24}

Scriptures evidence a great battle raging in the spirit realm between the gods of this age: Satan, who blinds believers and unbelievers, and God who shines light into hearts of those who choose to see it.²⁵ God wishes that His way of life be seen and that we are saved from Satan and his evil works. A theologically accurate and truthful understanding of dark and demonic forces is so important to leadership and ministry because it can be argued that few academics care to address the predominant influences of satanic spirits on humankind and churches, never mind venturing to discuss whether Satan and his works bring glory to God and salvation to humankind. On September 5, 2017, dialogue with Charlie Kamilos, Senior Librarian at Portland Center of the George Fox University Library, while researching peer reviewed articles on this topic, revealed

²³ John 12:31, 16:11; Rev. 20:1-3; Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 1:13, 2:14-15; Acts 26:18. In addition, the following verses reveal an active demonic army with goals of destroying humanity and its relationship with God: 2 Cor. 4:3-4; 1 John 4:1-4; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; 1 Cor. 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:26, 3:6-7, 4:1; Eph. 4:26-27, 6:10-18; 1 Pet. 5:6-8. Biblical examples that record how believers are influenced and demonized by evil are: Num. 22-24; 1 Sam. 10:6-12, 18:10-11, 19:9-10; Matt. 8:16; Luke 13:10-17; Acts 5:1-3, 8:9-24; 1 Cor. 5:1-13, 10:14 - 22, 12:2-3; and 2 Cor. 11:3-4, 12:7-8.

²⁴ Kenneth D. Royal, "Psychometrician: Investigating the Practice of Christian Exorcism and the Methods Used to Cast Out Demons," *Journal of Christian Ministry*, November 4, 2012, accessed December 31, 2017, <http://journalofchristianministry.org/article/view/10287>.

²⁵ 2 Cor. 4:4.

that Satan, evil, demons and the dark spirit world are not popular subjects within the academic world, evidenced by very few articles on this narrower study of evil. It may have also been most likely true in Paul's era, as it is in the present, that many then were deceived in understanding the real adversaries: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."²⁶ In this verse, Paul acknowledges misunderstandings in recognizing the real adversary and that many people unknowingly target others from an uninformed mind and satanic deceptions and manipulations.

A Time of Great Change within the American Christian Church

This is a time of great change within the American Christian church and many argue this "change" includes apostasy. In its most basic definition, apostasy means falling away.²⁷ Many believe this falling away is departure from values and richness of church traditions and relationships with other body of Christ members. Although many would affirm the above, apostasy is more accurately defined as falling away from truth. If this definition of apostasy is defensible, then it is instructive to know what is causing apostasy from truth, coupled with parallel discussions of satanic influences: "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons."²⁸ Likewise, James, Jesus' brother, is very clear on the perils of

²⁶ Eph. 6:12.

²⁷ The *Merriam Webster Dictionary Online*, defines "apostasy," as "an act of refusing to continue to follow, obey, or recognize a religious faith. Abandonment of a previous loyalty." See "Apostasy," *Merriam Webster Dictionary Online*, 2018, accessed January 2, 2018. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apostasy>.

²⁸ 1 Tim. 4:1.

falling away and of apostatizing as he cautions: “Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters.”²⁹ Deception and deceit perpetrated by Satan’s dark and demonic spirit forces have plagued human history since the beginning of time.

In *A Failure of Nerve*, Edwin Friedman, wrote: “The great thing to remember is that the mind of man cannot be enlightened permanently by merely teaching him to reject some particular set of superstitions. There is an infinite supply of other superstitions always at hand; and the mind that desires such things, that is, the mind that has not trained itself to the hard discipline of reasonableness and honesty, will, as soon as its devils are cast out, proceed to fill itself with their relations.”³⁰ Friedman then describes similar failures of nerve affecting American civilization when: “anxiety reaches certain thresholds, ‘reasonableness and honesty’ no longer defend against illusion, and then, even the most learned ideas can begin to function as superstitions.”³¹ Similarly, in his book *The Holy Longing*, Ronald Rolheiser describes present worldviews as ones that doubt the credibility of both dark and demonic forces; the world is divided between those who have a life-giving spirituality and those who have a destructive spirituality.³²

The Bible and Evil

In approaching subjects of deceit and deception and the resultant consequences of such dark and demonic influences, it seems reasonable to begin by recognizing and

²⁹ James 1:16.

³⁰ Edwin H. Friedman, *Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York: Church, 2007), 1.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

³² Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 11.

considering what has already been written and accepted as truth on this subject, beginning with Jesus, the Bible, the Early Church Fathers and theologians of the pre-modern world. The Bible deals with evil in many different ways. One of the most deeply formative Biblical narratives, found also in Judaism, and a key biblical answer to questions of what God does with evil, is the story of the Exodus: Israel's release from slavery in Egypt.³³ In Old Testament story after story, the problem of evil appears in familiar forms of wicked pagan nations oppressing God's poor and defenseless people. N.T. Wright applies this principle to current theology in proposing that the problem of humankind and creation itself is central to philosophical and theological understandings disclosing the larger problem of Israel.³⁴ Wright also argues evil must be judged and judged severely.³⁵ The Scriptures clearly remind followers that the struggle is not against flesh and blood (humankind), but against rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world, and against spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms.³⁶ The Bible illustrates that God knows well about evil and is prepared to deal with it, as shown through Joseph's words that "you intended evil against me, but God intended it for good."^{37,38} Thus, it should be clear that according to God, there is internal consistency within His Word about working all things for good, including Satan and evil.³⁹ So, with reasoning and logical thinking as

³³ N.T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 55.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

³⁶ Eph. 6:12.

³⁷ Gen. 50:20.

³⁸ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 54.

³⁹ Rom. 8:28.

foundational establishments of understanding truth, coupled with knowing and understanding the Bible as God’s Word, the reader is invited to carefully consider what Scriptures say about Satan, his fallen Angels, the demons, and their resultant evil acts as bringing Him glory and salvation to humankind.

All Scripture is God-Breathed

The Bible testifies to itself as breathed (written) by God: “All Scripture is God-breathed or in other words; inspired, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”⁴⁰ If God breathed all Scripture and it is so inspired, then one must seriously consider the ramifications of the following verses written by God:

- “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).
- “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance” (James 1:2–3).
- “But He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 Cor. 12:9).
- “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed” (1 Pet. 4:12–13).

⁴⁰ 2 Tim. 3:16–17.

- “Strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God, they said” (Acts 14:22).
- “Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Rom. 5:3–4).
- “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4).
- “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown” (Rev. 2:10).

If the messages of the above scriptures are logically connected into a theme, it can clearly be seen that God, through Jesus Christ’s discipleship on earth, demonstrates that pain and suffering administered through trials and difficult life circumstances should be considered joy, in Paul’s words. God encourages people to be faithful, joyous, and persevere through their trials, which tests our faith, teaches wisdom, discernment, character and strengthens hope. If Christians look back over their history, it can be seen that it was only in the midst of their trials, pain and suffering that they grew in wisdom and faith. This next section begins to build a logical and consistent train of thought demonstrating that God does indeed know all of things, and works all things for the good of humankind that love him and are called according to his purposes.⁴¹

⁴¹ Rom. 8:28.

Omniscience of God: God Knows All Things

The traditional orthodox doctrine of God's omniscience is the principle that God is all-knowing; that He encompasses all knowledge past, present, and future. In the beginning, God created the world and everything in it, including knowledge.⁴² Christian thinkers and theologians have historically acknowledged the omniscience of God. God does not continually learn, but knows everything at once. He knew before He created the world that He would send His Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins: "He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake."⁴³ God revealed His plan to Old Testament prophets, such as Isaiah, who spoke God's word to the people: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."⁴⁴ According to Catholic doctrine, omniscience is: "the property of having complete or maximal knowledge, and along with omnipotence and perfect goodness, is one of the central divine attributes."⁴⁵ Sources of understanding are derived from numerous biblical passages ascribing vast knowledge to God. St. Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae*, in his discussion of God's knowledge cites Job 12:13: "With God are wisdom and strength; he has counsel and understanding," and Romans 11:13: "O the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God."

⁴² Edward, Wierenga, Edward N. Zalta, eds., "Omniscience," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2017, accessed January 2, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/omniscience>.

⁴³ 1 Pet. 1:20.

⁴⁴ Isa. 7:14.

⁴⁵ Wierenga and Zalta, eds., "Omniscience."

If God is all-knowing, it follows that the Bible accurately represents God's Word for humanity. God knows humanity and has a plan for each individual before birth. He knows us better than we know ourselves. God, through Matthew, says that He numbers even the hairs on our head; no matter how carefully we keep secrets from others, we have no secrets from God.⁴⁶ God as omniscient also means He knows all there is to know, and nothing is outside His knowledge, conception, understanding, or attention, including Satan and his evil works. God neither studies, nor learns, nor progresses in His knowledge because He is already infinite. Probability does not exist for God and there are no "maybes." "There is one reality or truth and God knows it, as it exists. God is also not surprised by the unfolding of world events or by the unfolding of human events. He is not shocked by the choices humans make. Omniscience is the passive end of His providence—the working out of God's predetermined purpose via His sovereignty (that is, His mastery over all that is)—in that it is the means by which providence can exist, but neither the engine nor the fuel that brings about His action."⁴⁷ If God knows all things, past, present, and future, viewing events from a human, linear perspective, then one can rest assured in there being a complete and seamless consistency of His Word. Theologians describe this seamless consistency as the doctrine of "internal consistency."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Matt. 10:30.

⁴⁷ Chris Poblete, "The Attributes Of God: Omniscience," *The Blue Letter Bible*, September 28, 2011, accessed June 2, 2017, <http://blogs.blueletterbible.org/blb/2011/09/28/the-attributes-of-god-omniscience>.

⁴⁸ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic), 414.

God Tells Us to Read and Understand His Word

People are exhorted to indeed question Scriptures with an open heart and mind, aided by influences of the Holy Spirit. By such study, we are assured that we will be able to discern God's intent. Likewise, Scriptures themselves establish foundations of God-given logical thought processes in arguing that God's Word does indeed establish and affirm Satan's existence and activities. Once the ramifications of God's existence and omniscience are recognized, one is better able to also recognize His instruction as to how and why evil exists, why humans suffer evil and evil's "place" in God's economy.

My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.⁴⁹

Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.⁵⁰

As is written in Psalm 32:8, "Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret; it leads only to evil." Anger leads to wrath, as wrath ultimately leads to evil. In other words, anger and wrath bring forth an evil that in effect, is freely chosen. Also, unless one controls unforgiveness and anger, God turns the individual over to demons to be tortured until forgiveness is learned. Jesus substantiates this understanding with this parable: "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."⁵¹ These verses, from the "Parable of the Wicked Servant," clearly indicate that the Father in heaven will turn

⁴⁹ Hosea. 6:12.

⁵⁰ Acts 17:11.

⁵¹ Matt. 18:34–35.

humans over to torturers if unforgiveness is harbored in our hearts. The torturers, or in some translations tormentors or jailers, can be viewed as demons.⁵²

“Demon” is an English transliteration of the Greek term (*daimon*), originally referring to any one of numerous vaguely defined spirit beings, either good or bad.⁵³ Demons must do Satan’s bidding.⁵⁴ In the New Testament, they are understood as evil spirits, conflicting to God and His people, though modern rationalistic sensibilities argue against this idea. This author proposes that it is as equally valid to understand evil forces, manifesting themselves in this world, as it was for pre-moderns. Demons are characterized as dis-embodied spirits, who seek to possess and inhibit humans.⁵⁵ God employs demons to discipline those He loves that they may be urged to become closer and more intimate with Him. One can see then that these torturers or demons punish humans on God’s behalf to bring humankind closer to Him.⁵⁶

In Scriptures, to deceive is to cause someone to believe something that is not true.^{57,58}

⁵² Derek Prince, “Demons Torture,” *End Times Ministries*, December 14, 2014, accessed November 25, 2017, <http://www.deliveranceministriesgroup.com/demons-torture>.

⁵³ *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 217.

⁵⁴ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Elwell, 1055.

⁵⁵ Douglas Hamp, “Are Demons the Same as Fallen Angels?” *Douglas Hamp Ministries*, April 25, 2011, accessed December 31, 2017, www.douglashamp.com/are-demons-the-same-as-fallen-angels.

⁵⁶ Another example is found in 1 Samuel 15–16: “Saul’s attendants said to him, ‘See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our Lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the lyre. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes on you, and you will feel better.’”

⁵⁷ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, “Deceit, Deceive, Deception.” *Guide to the Scriptures, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter – Day Saints*, September 1, 2016, accessed May 27, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/gs/deceit-deceive-deception?lang+eng>.

- “Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god” (Psalm 24:3–4).
- “Vindicate me, my God, and plead my cause against an unfaithful nation. Rescue me from those who are deceitful and wicked” (Psalm 43:1).
- “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Isaiah 5:20).
- “Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become ‘fools’ so that you may become wise” (1 Corinthians 3:18).
- “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient” (Ephesians 5:6).
- “While evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13).
- “Satan, who deceived the whole world, was cast out” (Revelation 12:9).
- “Satan was bound that he should deceive the nations no more” (Revelation 20:1–3).
- “The Lord cannot be deceived” (2 Nehemiah 9:41, *The Book of Mormon*).
- “If you follow the Jesus, and not hiding any deception from God, you will receive the Holy Spirit” (2 Nehemiah 31:13, *The Book of Mormon*).

⁵⁸ Citations from the Book of Mormon were included because these particular cites are consistent with the Bible and they demonstrate that there is some commonality in faith between Christianity and Mormonism; a major theme of this dissertation.

- “Sherem confessed that he was deceived by the power of the devil” (Jacob 7:18, *The Book of Mormon*).
- “The people of King Noah were deceived by flattering words” (Mosiah 11:7, *The Book of Mormon*).⁵⁹
- “He became Satan, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men” (Moses 4:4, *The Book of Mormon*).^{60, 61}

Deceit and deception, the resultant consequences of succumbing to temptation are themselves evil. Deceit and deception are arguably Satan’s most potent weapon against Christian faith and belief. Many believers and non-believers alike ask the question: “If God is all good and all powerful, then why does He allow evil to exist?” Responses to these and similar questions may, at times, be little more than a regurgitation of ill-reasoned and illogically conceived answers, inconsistent with God’s truth. On the one hand, some have raised the problem of evil merely to show that its theology is internally self-contradictory and is therefore incompatible with the doctrine of internal consistency. In other words, internal consistency is contradictory, considering claims that an all-loving, all-powerful God cannot justify evil’s existence. On the other hand, Atheists are convinced that there is no way for classical theists to solve the problem of evil.⁶² Yet, Psalm 11 helps underscore the truth that God’s goodness and wisdom are far above

⁵⁹ Mosiah 11:7 (The Book of Mormon).

⁶⁰ Moses 4:4 (The Book of Mormon).

⁶¹ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter – Day Saints, “Deceit, Deceive, Deception,” *Guide to the Scriptures, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter – Day Saints*, September 1, 2016, accessed May 27, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/gs/deceit-deceive-deception?lang+eng>.

⁶² William Hasker, “The Problem of Evil in Process Theism and Classical Free Will Theism,” *Religion Online*, 2000, accessed November 26, 2017, <http://www.religion-online.org/article/the-problem-of-evil-in-process-theism-and-classical-free-will-theism>.

humankind, and understanding even bedrock “problems” of good and evil: “All he does is just and good, and all his commandments are trustworthy. They are forever true, to be obeyed faithfully and with integrity. . . . Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true wisdom. All who obey his commandments will grow in wisdom. Praise him forever!”⁶³

Another looming question then presents itself: Within the spirit world, how could so many angels in heaven who “knew” and “saw” God regularly, be deceived? One answer could be that until the time of the fall, a lie was never told or heard in God’s heavenly world. It appears that lies, products of deceit and deception, misled a third of the angels. If there was no sin until that time, Lucifer and his angels perhaps never knew consequences of sin. Also, it is sobering to consider that fallen angels may never have anticipated Lucifer (now Satan) stooping so low as to murder his creator—the Son of God—on the cross. It is more probable than not to consider that in the physical world, within humankind (below that of angels); humans may possibly be more susceptible to Satan’s deceit and deception than angels were.⁶⁴

Isaiah 29:15–16 says, “Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the Lord, who do their work in darkness and think, ‘Who sees us? Who will know?’ You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘You did not make me?’ Can the pot say to the potter, ‘You know nothing?’” These words echo the ethos of post-modern consumerism proposing the ascendancy of self-will over God’s will. God knows all things and he knew Lucifer would rebel. Lucifer was

⁶³ Ps. 111:7–8, 10.

⁶⁴ Heb. 2:7: “You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.”

created with freedom of choice and free will, allowing the possibility of rejecting God. Love by its very character must be freely given, and it cannot be void of God's free will and choice gifts. Consequently, the God of love only desires true love offered Him from his free-willing creatures. After Satan's fall, and expulsion from heaven, creation began to understand consequences of sin and rebellion.

What Jesus Said about Dark and Demonic Forces

Many believers in Jesus Christ, recognize Him as the most credible source of information on the subject of dark and demonic forces and how they affect human life. Events recorded in Scripture, attributed to Jesus, warn on how to avoid dark and demonic spirit influences:

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me?" ... "You wicked servant," he said, "I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.⁶⁵

Quickly reading over these words, it is easy to overlook God's intent and purpose for demonic beings (jailers,⁶⁶ or in some translations, torturers⁶⁷ or tormentors⁶⁸) and their mission to torture or torment humankind until forgiveness for others is achieved. In other words, if people harbor anger, bitterness, and unforgiveness in their hearts, God will turn

⁶⁵ Matt. 18:21–35.

⁶⁶ Translated "Jailers" in the New International Version (NIV) and Revised Standard Version (RSV) translations.

⁶⁷ Translated "Torturers" in the *New American Bible Revised Edition* (Catholic) (ABR) and *New King James Version* (NKJV) translations.

⁶⁸ Translated "Tormentors" in the King James (KJV) translation.

them over to torturous treatment by spirit jailers (demons). Interpreted in this manner, these jailors may torture humans' spirits, inciting them to possibly lash out against others by reason of misperceived insecurities, gossip, slander, anger, and other such personal and social dysfunctions. Paul warns that in reacting to this torturous treatment, the battle is not with other people (flesh) but with dark world spirits: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."⁶⁹

Certainly it can be argued that these dark and demonic powers are not of God, but allowed by God to torture because of the human heart's condition. It appears that many Christians do not understand the gravity of this warning. Scriptures themselves corroborate this understanding and provide the answer to avoid being turned over to jailers or torturers: "Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."⁷⁰ Additionally, Luke 4 relates the temptations of Jesus by Satan while the Lord was fasting and praying in the wilderness. These accounts suggest that, in many ways much like Jesus Himself, humans too are to recognize that they are also targets of Satan's temptations, even though they may not realize or believe what is happening.

⁶⁹ Eph. 6:12.

⁷⁰ 2 Cor. 2:10–11.

What the Bible Says about Dark and Demonic Forces

Peter warns, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”⁷¹ Even so, the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit is always available as Christians seek to overcome demonic influences and oppression. No demon, not even Satan himself, can prevent Christians from surrendering to the Holy Spirit and thereby overcoming any and all demonic influences. Scripture continues to emphasize this point with over 200 explicit references to Satanic and demonic forces that humans deal with, and well over 100 implicit references to the same issue. So why does it seem that so many believers, and the church itself, struggle with simple recognitions of realities of dark and evil forces and their effects on our lives?

Peter encourages believers to resist the devil by, “standing firm in faith”: “Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”⁷² Being firm or steadfast in faith means relying on the Holy Spirit’s power to successfully resist demonic influences. Steadfastness in faith is built through spiritual disciplines of knowing and understanding God’s Word, persistent prayer, virtuous living, and godly fellowship. Strengthening faith by these means enables putting up the shield of faith that extinguishes Satan’s flaming arrows. The Holy Spirit’s power is always available, with a condition of having a sincere heart preventing Christians from surrendering to dark and demonic spirit influences.

⁷¹ 1 Pet. 5:8.

⁷² 1 Pet. 5:9.

From The Old Testament

The Biblical Old Testament is a primary source document recording evils brought upon humankind by Satan and his dark and demonic spirit forces. Its verses record satanic deceptions beginning in the garden with Adam and Eve: “Now the serpent was more crafty. . . . He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, you must not eat from any tree in the garden?’ . . . ‘You will not certainly die,’ the serpent said to the woman, ‘For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”⁷³ Even if one were to understand this account as being merely symbolic, it suggests a real Satan, employing real tools of deception and deceit misleading people to evil and away from God’s will.

As the story of God’s love for humanity unfolds through history and the Old Testament, there is continued emphasis on substantiating satanic influences. The Old Testament adds emphasis to satanic influences with the story of Satan’s attack on Job, which God personally initiates by suggesting to Satan that he test Job. The account begins: “One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. . . . The Lord said to Satan, ‘Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.’”⁷⁴ Here, Job—an innocent and righteous man—was tortured (tormented) by Satan, which was allowed by God Himself. The account infers there was no malice, unforgiveness, or any other sin disclosed, implicating Job, and prompting God to test him.

⁷³ Gen. 3:1–5.

⁷⁴ Job 1:6–9.

The following verses also give testimony to the satanic influences of dark and evil forces in the spirit realm: “Then he [the angel] continued, ‘Do not be afraid, Daniel. ... The prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.’”⁷⁵ This verse, like many others in the Old Testament discuss humankind’s conflict with evil forces and is documented by Biblical authors to underscore the challenges people face in their encounters with Satan and his evil acts.⁷⁶ It seems that from the time of Adam and Eve that humankind has contested with Satan and his evil acts. This conflict continues evidenced by a similar theme is presented in the New Testament scriptures.

From The New Testament

In many ways, like the Old Testament, the New Testament, in concert with the Old provides references to satanic influences. For example, Mark 1:34 describes Jesus driving many demons out from many people: “Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.” Jesus also drove many demons from one human:

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. ... A man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ... ‘My name is Legion,’ he replied, ‘for we are many.’ ... The demons begged Jesus, ‘Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.’ ... The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Dan. 10:12–14.

⁷⁶ Some examples are: Ps. 24:3-4, 43:1; Isa. 5:20; Jacob 7:18; Mosiah 11:7; and Moses 4:4.

⁷⁷ Mark 5:1–13; also see Luke 8:30–33.

It can be understood from this reading that demonic activity in biblical times is similar to demonic activities in this generation.

Continuing on in the book of Revelation, and referring to human history's end and the tribulation period, John reveals that dark and demonic spirits are still a persistent and nagging plague on humanity. John records his testimony, revealed by Jesus of humankind's condition: "The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk."⁷⁸ Yes, even in, or perhaps especially in, the last days, Satan's deceit and deception continues with great persistence. Even so, contemporary post-modern, Enlightenment-based scientific thought still prohibits fully comprehending the truth of satanic influences and dark spirit forces.

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.⁷⁹ Immersed in post-modern consumer culture, the above passages may not strike Christians with the literal power with which they were written. Even more counterintuitive to humanistic reasoning and logical thinking, is that people are startled by the seemingly enigmatic and grotesque rhetoric delivering someone over to Satan for destruction of the flesh in order that they may be saved spiritually. Paul testifies to the Corinthians of this counter-intuitivism in 1 Corinthians 5:5: "Hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord." This verse speaks of God's unconditional

⁷⁸ Rev. 9:20.

⁷⁹ 1 Tim. 4:1.

love, focused on our eternal well-being as an act of harm to the events of our physical life. People frequently hear God in a physical sense when He actually is speaking in a spiritual sense.

Moving forward from these foundations, the Bible again, assuming the reality of dark spirits and their attacks, provides a method for testing spirits to determine whether they are of God or Satan: “This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.”⁸⁰ These same spirit qualifiers apply today as much as they applied to Jesus’ generation. Too many, even otherwise true-hearted Christians of this generation, however, appear calloused to the gravities of the antichrist’s revealed and active presence.

Post-modernism and Dark and Demonic Forces

The Western post-modern consumer world is populated by angels, demons, and dark forces as it has previously been. Hence dark forces should not be reduced to metaphors, as they are in this culture, but should be taken seriously, just as they were in previous generations and in other non-western cultures. Satan, fallen angels and demons employ lies, deceit and deception as primary tools to separate humans from God. Edwin Friedman comments with this understanding that merely teaching rejection of particular superstitions does not always enlighten man’s mind.⁸¹ “There is always a seemingly

⁸⁰ 1 John 4:2, 3.

⁸¹ Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York: Church, 2007), 1.

infinite supply of other superstitions or deceptions at hand; and the mind that desires such things is not a mind trained to the hard disciplines of reason, honesty and logical thinking. As soon as the mind casts out its demons, it will proceed to fill itself with their relations.’’⁸²

Summary

Based on Scriptural evidence presented in this chapter, those who have been significantly formed by modernity, but who now live in a post-modern philosophical paradigm, should be open—as our forefathers were in the non-western Church—to realities of satanic influences of demonic spirits in every aspect of life and in churches. However, as the ministry problem vignette in Chapter One dramatizes, it is unfortunate that many church pastors, ministers, and teachers often simply do not recognize satanic and demonic spirit influences in their environments. This unawareness and lack of understanding to the presence and work of Satan and demons in influencing every human’s life is the ministry problem stated in Chapter One, and this problem presents two issues to the church. The first is that church leaders are unaware and not well informed on the nature and character of satanic influences and, secondly, as a result of not being well informed, discouragement and fear impede many from teaching truths about God’s Word on this important subject. Simply stated, Christians, too often, do not know the enemy nor understand the manner of his assault. As a result, Christ-followers are significantly unaware and uneducated when it comes to recognizing satanic influences and how to best respond to them, based on scriptural guidance.

⁸² Ibid.

The more disastrous ramifications of this unawareness appear to be tearing churches apart with clandestine satanic influences and deceptions. As a current associate pastor in church, firsthand disastrous impacts by demonic spirits on church management, governance and programs have been witnessed going wholly unrecognized and unresolved. Consequences of demonic deceptions and attacks are often blamed on human vessels, which, if perhaps were better understood, could be rightly addressed, resulting in greater church health and healing.

CHAPTER THREE

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Introduction

Satan and evil are not merely thorns in God’s side, as taught and believed by many, but instead, as this study demonstrates; they do indeed bring glory to God and salvation to humankind. While Chapter Two provides Scriptural support undergirding this viewpoint, Chapter Three considers how culture and the subject of satanic influences is important in that culture seems to control many thoughts, words, and actions of an individual’s daily life. Regardless of putting God’s wisdom and direction above that of society, one’s spiritual life is impacted by culture, “It impacts how, when, and where we worship. It impacts how willing people are to accept the Holy Spirit. It impacts which kinds of doctrine are accepted. It impacts if and how people gather in worship.”¹

“Cognitive psychology holds that people from different cultures actually think differently, so even their logic and how they reason is different.”² “Geert Hofstede’s theory of the ‘Software of the mind’³ says that, like computers, we are “programmed” by culture. Thus, culture shapes cognition.”⁴ Knowing this, Satan manipulates the media to shape the post-modern consumer worldview such that it discredits God and His wisdom and replaces them with a self-serving relativism. Although the media reflects and

¹ Cierra Wallace (an International Communication, Intercultural Relations, and Diplomacy scholar from American University’s School of International Service and Korea University’s Graduate School of International Studies, who has also worked as an Intercultural Trainer), personal communication, December 30, 2017.

² Ibid.

³ Geert Hofstede, *Software of the Mind* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2010), 5.

⁴ Cierra Wallace, personal communication, December 30, 2017.

reinforces satanic influences, some argue that consumerism and self-serving relativism have deeper roots in the values of freedom, independence, democracy, capitalism and notions of U.S.-American superiority.⁵

From God’s perspective, culture seems to covertly shape ways of looking at life, perceptions of others, relationships in family and society, and relationship to God. Under influences of the post-modern consumer cultural worldview, people willingly, though to some extent unknowingly, have allowed Satan’s influences to inflict life-changing damage to perceptions of and knowledge of God, neighbors, life, relationships, and churches. The post-modern consumer culture—with its associated characteristics of relativism, humanism, and materialism—are arguably among Satan’s most powerful and influential tools used in deceiving, if possible, even God’s elect. These deceptions generate the ministry problem articulated in Chapter One.

Marshall McLuhan and Edward T. Hall, godfathers of media and culture studies, thought of “mechanical tools as media because, as artifacts that come between people—and given that they were “extensions of man”—they could be said to “mediate” in a certain sense. However, this isn’t an academic treatise in this book.”⁶ “Mediation refers to arts and artifacts that represent, that communicate—but also, and especially, to their effects on the way we experience the world and ourselves in it.”⁷ McLuhan believes that

⁵ This response was developed with the assistance of Cierra Wallace. She is an International Communication, Intercultural Relations, and Diplomacy scholar from American University’s School of International Service and Korea University’s Graduate School of International Studies and has also worked as an Intercultural Trainer), personal communication, December 30, 2017.

⁶ Karen E. Dill, “The Oxford Handbook of Media Psychology,” *The Oxford Press*, January 2013, accessed January 10, 2018, <https://www.scribd.com/document/368579132/Karen-E-Dill-The-Oxford-Handbook-of-Media-Psychology-pdf>.

⁷ Thomas de Zengotita, *Mediate: How the Media Shapes Your World and the Way You Live in It* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2005), 8.

the medium is the message, while Hall believes that the medium shapes the message, but meaning is assigned by the receiver, based on his/her worldview/individual culture.⁸

Culture and its Impact

Within the world of academia and cultural studies, there are literally hundreds of definitions of culture supported by many articles and debates.⁹ However to narrow the field of understanding, culture, by popular definition is “a particular society at a particular time and place, defined in art and manners favored by particular social groups, and their knowledge and values.”¹⁰ *The Cambridge Dictionary* says: “culture is the way of life of a particular people, especially shown in their ordinary behavior, habits, and attitudes towards each other and their moral and religious beliefs.”¹¹

Marshall Singer holds that culture, like personality, is an abstraction; it is a shared perceived reality, an identity group/group phenomenon, and constantly changing (not static). Thus, a national identity/culture is based on shared historical experience.¹² Looking from a different worldview lens, Dr. Gary Weaver holds that as each person has a unique culture, culture and personality are the same. He believes that culture is: a system, an abstraction, an intangible social construct, and a generalization.¹³ Weaver also

⁸ Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1981), 24.

⁹ Cierra Wallace, personal communication, December 30, 2017.

¹⁰ Daniel Webster, “What is Culture?” *Webster Dictionary*, 1913, accessed October 18, 2017, <http://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/culture>.

¹¹ Cambridge University, “What is Culture?” *Cambridge Dictionary*, 2017, accessed October 19, 2017, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us>.

¹² Marshall Singer, *Perception and Identity in Intercultural Communication* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1998), xv, 295.

¹³ Cierra Wallace, personal communication, December 30, 2017. Wallace was a student of Dr. Gary Weaver, one of the founders of the field of International Communication.

talks about internal (hidden) and external (visual) culture. Visual culture is what can be seen, such as behavior and mannerisms. Hidden culture is the deep underlying (often unconscious) beliefs and values that shape visual culture.¹⁴ Music, literature, food, and media are then “cultural products,” not “culture.”¹⁵ Alternately, Clifford Geertz¹⁶ sees culture as comprised of systems of meaning. Margret Mead also recorded an approach in culture and personality studies related to behavior that conceives of culture as a set of patterns similar to the organization of an individual personality.¹⁷ On a different level, Laurence E. Harrison¹⁸ evaluates culture more in relation to the nation-state.

In many cases, and in consideration of many definitions, culture seems best defined as: “an amalgam of beliefs and principles of a certain group, and is central to concepts in anthropology, encompassing ranges of phenomena transmitted through social learning in human societies.”¹⁹ Many, on the one hand, believe culture is central to formation and learning, while many on the other hand, believe culture is an obstacle to reasoning and critical thinking. Wallace posits that culture is both, and it is also cyclical.²⁰ Culture influences formation and learning, but that same culture also

¹⁴ Gary Weaver, *Intercultural Relations: Communication, Identity, and Conflict* (London, UK: Pearson Learning Solutions, 2013), 14.

¹⁵ Cierra Wallace, personal communication, December 30, 2017.

¹⁶ Clifford Geertz, “Ethos, World-View and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols,” *Antioch Review* 15 (Winter 1957): 436, accessed January 2, 2018, www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdfplus/10.1086/486568.

¹⁷ Library of Congress, “Margaret Mead: Human Nature and the Power of Culture,” *Library of Congress*, 2017, accessed January 2, 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/mead/field-sepik.html>.

¹⁸ Laurence E. Harrison and Samuel E. Huntington, eds., *Culture Matters* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), vii.

¹⁹ Jeremy Hansel Gonzal, “What is Culture?” *Wikipedia*, August 17, 2017, accessed August 18, 2017, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture>.

²⁰ Cierra Wallace, personal communication, December 30, 2017.

determines if and how reasoning and critical thinking and cognitive psychology are approached. Culture is part of being human, and it unquestionably influences us. In any case, it can rightly be proposed that culture is the force that establishes connections between individuals as the force that establishes their identity.

From a biblical standpoint, it may be argued that those who place culture above faith (a person's belief in God) do not have God's wisdom in allowing His ways and reasoning to guide lives,²¹ as they instead favor self-fulfillment thinking and reasoning.²²

Thomas P. Harmon and Roger W. Nutt, editors of *Wisdom and the Renewal of Catholic Theology: Essays in Honor of Matthew L. Lamb*, write that Fr. Lamb identifies the "wisdom" approach as: "belonging to the patrimony of church fathers and the best of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas."²³ Fr. Lamb traces abandonment of this wisdom theology to the late medieval nominalists and volunteerists who inaugurated shifts in faith and focus from wisdom to power as the world entered modernity, and passed through the Enlightenment toward the post-modern era.²⁴

Significances of Cultural Influences

It has been argued by many contemporary thinkers that post-modern consumer cultural influences are indeed Satan's most destructive agent, crippling the formation of a

²¹ Prov. 3:5–7.

²² See the discussion about tenets of the post-modern consumer culture later in this section.

²³ Thomas P. Harmon and Roger W. Nutt, eds., *Wisdom and the Renewal of Catholic Theology: Essays in Honor of Matthew L. Lamb* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

truly Christian mind.²⁵ These influences have been identified as negatively impacting the church through the deceptive promises of relativism and self-fulfillment that they promise. Satanic influences, delivered through contemporary media, the Internet, movies, television, and social media, become embedded in current post-modern consumer culture as they promote Satan's deceit and deceptions and diminish God's truth about life and living. As evidenced herein, media and culture together substantially support a relativistic worldview of self-fulfillment. The net result is arguably the fabrication of the most powerful satanic snare of our time, with perceived consequences of bringing spiritual death to its undiscerning victims. Unfortunately, many in the faith whose lives are woven into the fabric of society and culture, as we all are, remain largely unaware of these dangerous deceptions. Correcting this lack of awareness—even to the smallest measure—is the motivation behind this paper.

It seems that the battle with satanic influences begins in the mind, and elements in this battle vary widely as they target individual weaknesses in human logic and thought. Battle engagement begins with formation—the shaping of belief, mores, and opinions that counter biased and value-laden media influences. It can be argued that much of culture and media serve as Satan's vehicles of deception and deceit to lure humanity away from God's eternal truths and His mind and wisdom. Satanic attacks and influences come from all directions all day, and every day. In this post-modern consumer culture, the church and its truths are often simply overpowered by the overwhelming influences of smartly packaged media continually shaping post-modern consumer appeals.

²⁵ Discussions on this subject have been conducted by numerous contemporary thinkers, including Pope Francis, Fr. Gabriele Amorth, Gil Bailie, Don Basham, George Barna, Bill Bennett, John Darnell, Paul Chappell, Bernard Gert, Rene' Girard, Rev. Thomas Holm, Dave Hunt, Chip Ingram, Chuck Lawless, Dr. Chuck Missler, Dr. David Kupelian, Jon D. Levenson, Franci MacNut, Dr. Henry Malone, Malachi Martin, M. Scott Peck, Bill Scott, Charles Stanley, Dr. Bruce Wilkinson, Dallas Willard, Walter Wink, N.T. Wright, and many others.

Pre-modern Culture

Many writers have offered a wide array of definitions of the Pre-modern era or pre-modernism from a variety of different lenses and viewpoints.²⁶ In light of these insights, and for purposes of this dissertation, pre-modernism or the pre-modern era is considered as that period before the Enlightenment or the “Age of Reason” with origins established during the Renaissance and Reformation. “Societies were agrarian, family or tribe-centered with literature passed along substantially by oral tradition or held closely by the very highly educated elite.”^{27, 28} During this period there was not a sense of what we call “media” as used in the present post-modern consumer culture. “Truth in the pre-modern culture was measured by whether or not the phenomenon could be observed within physical reality and whether or not the truth in question was coherent with past and initial truth claims. Life during this period was less advanced with slower technology and communication.”²⁹ It is significant to see that the manner in which people became informed and evaluated truth in the pre-modern culture is vastly different than the manner of learning and evaluating truth in the post-modern consumer culture; which is more the focus of this dissertation.

²⁶ A number of international communications scholars and practitioners who offer definitions and descriptions of the Pre-modern era are: Daya Kishan Thussu, Manuel Castells, Harold Innis, Elizabeth Eisenstein, Paul Starr, John Sinclair, Silvio Waisbord, Colin Sparks, Armand Mattelart, Jeffery S. Juris, Ameila H. Arsenault, W. Lance Bennett, and Elizabeth Hanson. Reflective insights provided by Cierra Wallace, personal communication, December 30, 2017.

²⁷ Andy Kalan, “Analysis of History: The Story of Pre-modernism, Modernism & Post-modernism,” *Directions on Upward Existence*, July 2, 2012, accessed December 31, 2017, <https://andykalan.wordpress.com/2012/07/02/analysis-of-history-the-story-of-premodernism-modernism-postmodernism-2>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

Modern Culture

Following the pre-modern era, modern culture uses different definition criteria and definitions shift in collective thought beginning with the rise of scientific advancements during the Renaissance that has continued to the current generation. Defining “modern culture” is a substantially elusive task. However in theological terms, modernism is a variety of liberal thinking styles that have changed over time developing distinctions between liberalism in Europe and North America.³⁰ Little space is given to the discussion of the modern culture since the primary focus of this dissertation is the post-modern culture, which follows.

Post-modern Culture

Those in the West are entering a new chapter of their story, and yet, a common acceptance of defining attributes has not yielded a unified description.³¹ If there is one thing that can be said about the present time, it is that there is no one thing in particular that can be said about the present time.³² Many would argue that there has always been fluctuation and transition, but with the development of technology (and consequent amplification of what and how things are changing), fluctuation and transition are happening much more quickly.³³ Although there has always been fluctuation and transition, but with technology development, fluctuation and transition, fluctuation and

³⁰ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic), 682.

³¹ Charles R Conniry, Jr., *Soaring in the Spirit: Rediscovering Mystery in the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: Authentic, 2007), 162.

³² Ibid.

³³ Cierra Wallace, personal communication, December 30, 2017.

transition are happening much more quickly.³⁴ From evidences presented, it can be seen that the further society moved into the present age, the more apparent it becomes that the term “post-modern” has little, if any descriptive value. As responsible people of faith, it is essential for Christians to understand the characteristics of post-modern consumerism, know what they mean, and be aware of faithful antidotes, because the effects of the post-modern consumer culture impact every aspect of our lives, including faith and relationships to God. Thus, to the extent that Christians are more able to clearly see and understand the values and formative influences of post-modern culture, the more clearly they will be able to discern ungodly satanic cultural influences. More discussion is presented on relativism in Chapter Four.

By their own definition, “post-modernists do not place their philosophy in a defined box or category; their beliefs and practices are personal rather than being identifiable with a particular establishment or special interest group.”³⁵ Nonetheless, certain generalized traits or tenets of what might be identified as a (Western) post-modern worldview might include the following:

- “There is no absolute truth: the notion of truth is a contrived illusion, misused by people and special interest groups to gain power over others.
- Truth and error can be relative and elastic: facts are difficult, if not impossible, to identify and further, too limiting to determine anything. Simply put, today’s facts can be tomorrow’s falsehoods.
- Self-conceptualization and rationalization: traditional logic and objectivity are spurned, preferring perspectives rather than on fixed points of reference, even to the point of rejecting the scientific method.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ All About Philosophy, “Characteristics of Post-modernism,” *All About*. . ., 2017, accessed August 18, 2017, <https://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/characteristics-of-postmodernism-faq.htm>.

- Traditional authority is regarded as false and corrupt: intellectual revolution is waged to voice their concerns regarding traditional establishment, speaking out against the constraints of religious morals and secular authority.
- Ownership: collective ownership would most fairly administrate goods and services.
- Disillusionment with modernism: post-modernists rue the supposed unfulfilled promises of science, technology, government, and religion.
- Morality is personal: morality is defined as each person's or groups private code of ethics as opposed to the identification of fixed and traditional values and rules.
- Globalization: national boundaries are a hindrance to human communication and growth. Nationalism is outdated and needlessly causes wars. Therefore, post-modernists often propose an internationalism uniting separate countries.
- All religions are valid: valuing inclusive faiths, post-modernists gravitate towards New Age religions, denouncing the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ as being the only way to God.
- Liberal ethics: post-modernists defend the cause of feminists, homosexuals, and other groups who would be identified as the "Other" and the marginal.
- Pro-environmentalism: defending "Mother Earth," Western society is responsible for its destruction."³⁶

Many post-modernists believe that Western claims of freedom and prosperity are empty promises that subjugate those who have no power. They also believe truth is relative to each individual, who is free and obliged to determine truth for themselves. Most post-modernists believe that: "Nationalism builds walls, makes enemies, and destroys "Mother Earth," while capitalism creates a "have and have not" society and organized religion merely adds moral frictions and divisions among people. Post-modernists: "challenge Western world core religious and capitalistic values and seek change for a new age of liberty within a global community."³⁷

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

“Many post-modernists would seem to prefer life under a global, non-political government without tribal or national boundaries, believing that such a world government would be more sensitive to the socioeconomic equality for all people.”³⁸ When carefully studied with the clear, unclouded lens of reason and working to discern underlying philosophies, there are only two principle philosophies to post-modern consumerism: self-fulfillment and relativism. More detail about self-fulfillment and relativism is discussed in Chapter Four.

From definitions presented, truth within the post-modern consumer worldview appears to become highly elastic, and as a result, develops into what one might describe as simulated truth or more recognized as verisimilitude,” or the quality or state of being verisimilar” (very similar).³⁹ For considerations of this paper, the term “simulated truth” will serve the same purposes. Simulated truth has resemblances or similarities to truth, but because it is elastic, twisted or relativistic, simulated truth, is clearly not truth.

Consider the Genesis narrative in the Garden of Eden as truth when God told Adam, “But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”⁴⁰ Satan later approached Eve when she was alone in the garden, deceiving her to eat the apple saying, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”⁴¹ Satan uttered this simulated truth: “You will not certainly die, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Merriam-Webster, “Definition of Verisimilitude,” *Merriam Webster’s On-line Dictionary*, 2017, accessed November 24, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/verisimilitude>.

⁴⁰ Gen. 2:17.

⁴¹ Gen. 3:1.

will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁴² The simulated truth is, that despite Satan’s claim: “You will not surely die (spiritually),” the real truth was that both Adam and Eve would indeed physically die. Satan was speaking spiritually and Eve was hearing physically. Satan knew exactly what he was saying and how Eve was hearing. Because of Satan’s twisting of the truth, the statement became a simulated truth. After being questioned by God, Eve admits the real truth, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”⁴³ However, Adam committed the greater sin, because he had a covenant with God, knew the truth, and yet he elected to follow Eve’s action because he loved her so much.

As in the Eden events, it is also absolutely true that many are presented with satanic influences: twisted truths through media channels and through the post-modern consumer culture that deceive people from seeing and knowing real truth. Much of the post-modern consumer worldview’s twisted truths are lies that propose that people are both masters of their own destiny and determiners of truth are in their own minds. God warns about this self-fulfillment philosophy in saying: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil,”⁴⁴ and “For the Lord detests the perverse but takes the upright into his confidence.”⁴⁵

It appears that the post-modern consumer worldview seems most certainly to fall short of a Godly worldview in that post-modernists follow their own evil and ungodly

⁴² Gen. 3:4–5.

⁴³ Gen. 3:13.

⁴⁴ Prov. 3:5–7.

⁴⁵ Prov. 3:32.

desires. It proposes the viability of a fulfilled life without living in God's wisdom and grace. Independently determining what to believe and not believe is a sin against God and the first commandment, which says: "You shall have no other gods before me."⁴⁶ People subscribing to the post-modern worldview become false gods when they choose to interpret which of God's commandments and biblical instructions they will follow or discard. People in this position place themselves in the position of God, much like Satan did. Recall Satan's prideful words: "I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."⁴⁷ However, Satan's demise is presented in the next verses:

But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit. Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: 'Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble? The man who made the world a wilderness, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home'? You will not join them in burial, for you have destroyed your land and killed your people. Let the offspring of the wicked never be mentioned again.⁴⁸

God is clear that if humans choose not to lean on His direction for life, He will certainly allow them to choose to follow their own evil and ungodly desires. For as Scripture foretells that: "the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears desire to hear."⁴⁹

As already implied, one of many examples regarding the critical question of truth is that post-modernists believe there is no absolute truth, and that the notion of truth is

⁴⁶ Exod. 20:3.

⁴⁷ Isa. 14:14.

⁴⁸ Isa. 14:15–16, 19.

⁴⁹ 2 Tim. 4:3; Jude 1:18.

socially constructed or even a contrived illusions that are misused by many to gain power over others. It can be argued that their claims more accurately state: “absolutely, there is no absolute truth.”^{50, 51} With careful consideration of post-modern consumer cultural foundational elements, it can be clearly seen that many are deceived into believing that they are masters of their own destiny and can determine what is best for them without consulting the real truth of God’s Word. It can also be clearly seen that morality and ethics, after the embrace of the lie, have themselves become increasingly personal and relative. A key point of this study asserts that, in many important ways, the self-fulfillment philosophy of post-modern consumers makes them easy targets for Satan’s deceptions. Again, this is due to their worldview permitting the sorting, picking and choosing or rejecting supernatural scriptural wisdom while embracing the personal opinions instead.

Employing human reason alone to determine truth leads to deception and the possibility that people will fall prey to faulty reasoning that resembles true reasoning. It seems that God did not design the human mind such that it alone can determine His supernatural wisdom and plan for humankind. Had He done so, there would be no need for faith and trust in Him, which is a key element of His plan for humankind’s salvation. God warns humans of dangers of total reliance on human reasoning with the following: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own

⁵⁰ In Search of Shalom, “There Is No Absolute Truth. Absolutely?” *In Search of Shalom*, accessed April 23, 2018, <https://insearchofshalom.com/there-is-no-absolute-truth-absolutely>.

⁵¹ Matthew Hammerton, “There Are No Absolute Truths,” *Socratic Society*, March 24, 2009, accessed April 23, 2018, <https://socraticsociety.wordpress.com/2009/03/24/there-are-no-absolute-truths>.

eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.”⁵² Thus, we can conclude that God advises humans not to trust in their own reasoning (opinions), but rather to trust His judgments as they walk through human life experiences. In doing so, people can trust that God will set them on the right path of life; on the narrow road and through the narrow gate.

God, throughout Scripture, consistently discloses the fallacies of placing total trust in human reasoning and that His supernatural wisdom cannot be fully understood by the human mind. For example, God himself makes these assertions concerning the limits of the human mind and human wisdom: “Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?”⁵³ “Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!”⁵⁴ and “Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?”⁵⁵ These scriptures from Job compare God’s wisdom concerning humankind’s understanding and ability to reason through life’s experiences and clearly show God’s evaluation of human reasoning. Hence, when God’s supernatural truth is processed through the human mind and evaluated through the lens of the post-modern consumer worldview, sinful elements of self-fulfillment and pride allow dark and demonic forces to influence people. The net result is deception, deceit, and division, not only among God’s family (the church), but through most human relationships.

In the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve turned from being God-centered to being self-centered, the paradigm was established for all types of sins and disobedience

⁵² Prov. 3:5–7.

⁵³ Job 38:2.

⁵⁴ Job 40:2.

⁵⁵ Job 40:8.

that have impacted people and society to this day.⁵⁶ In Jeremiah, God said, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can fathom it?”⁵⁷ The current intellectual, spiritual, and social conditions of the world are indeed proof that society is definitely disordered and distressed.

There are essentially two worldviews predominant in this society. “The one is the humanistic, self-centered view that depicts humankind as being able to defend himself from every threat to his “royal” personhood. The second worldview is a spiritual one, based on biblical truths and principles, and producing a willful God-centeredness rather than a destructive self-centeredness. Romans 8:6 says, “For to be selfishly minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” There are many people, selfishly minded, that are living in the margins of human life, rather than enjoying the fullness of life, which is what human life is designed to be. Christ said, “I come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).⁵⁸ Sin in the heart of every person has produced the problems people face.⁵⁹ Only by society returning to biblical truths and principles, and teaching them to children, will humanity ever emancipate itself from pitfalls of anarchy, which society is sliding toward.”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Rom. 5:12.

⁵⁷ Jer. 17:9.

⁵⁸ John H. Stoll, “What is Wrong with Society Today?” *Leadership U*, June 20, 1998, accessed October 19, 2017, <http://www.leaderu.com/offices/stoll/society.html>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Stoll, “What is Wrong with Society Today?”

Consumerism as Cultural Ideology

The pursuit of the “good life” through “consumerism” is a dominant world-wide cultural influence that oversteps religious, class, gender, ethnicity, and nationality diversities, and it is an ideology of market globalism and is central to what Manfred Steger calls the “global imaginary.”^{61,62} In the 21st century’s globalized economy, coupled with consumerism has become a formidable cultural element with many critics claiming that consumerism is culturally and environmentally unsustainable. Leslie Sklair comments on consumerism as a cultural ideology in saying that: “First, capitalism entered a qualitatively new globalizing phase in the 1950s. As the electronic revolution got underway, significant changes began to occur in the productivity of capitalist factories, systems of extraction and processing of raw materials, product design, marketing and distribution of goods and services. Second, technical and social relations structuring mass media globally, make it very easy for new consumerist lifestyles to become the dominate motif for these media, which became, in time, extraordinarily efficient vehicles for broadcasting culture-ideologies of global consumerism.”⁶³

People in this generation in U.S.-American influenced regions are bombarded by media promoting mass consumerism that blurs lines between product information, entertainment, and promotion. Shopping malls are environments that welcome and encourage consumption and present many alternatives that manipulate shoppers'

⁶¹ Manfred Steger, *Global Imagery* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University, 2008), 10-14.

⁶² Paul James and Imre Szeman, “Globalization and Culture,” vol. 3, *Global-Local Consumption*, London: Sage Publications, 2010, accessed August 18, 2017, <http://www.westernsydney.academia.edu/PaulJames>.

⁶³ Leslie Sklair, *Globalization, Capitalism and its Alternatives* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 2002)

behavior.⁶⁴ This consumerist cultural ideology is evidenced in consumers buy products via credit card spending, thus bonding themselves into the capitalist globalization financial systems.⁶⁵ This post-modern consumer character, coupled with other characteristics of the culture distracts people's focus from virtuous living to a life focused on personal choices to purchase material comforts that are promoted to bring happiness. It can be argued that the underlying agenda is satanic in that consumerism deceitfully offers Christians everything materially (assuming it can be afforded) and gives nothing in the way of improving the spirit life. **Humanism**

The American Humanist Association advocates and promotes progressive values for humanists, atheists, and freethinkers. In an answer to the question: "What is humanism," they respond in saying that: "it depends on the sort of humanist one asks."⁶⁶ "The word "humanism" has a number of meanings, resulting in potential confusion. Different types become separated and defined by a variety of adjectives and of the many different types, only the following relevant examples are discussed in this dissertation:

Western Cultural Humanism is a good name for the rational and empirical tradition that originated largely in ancient Greece and Rome, evolved throughout European history, and now constitutes a basic part of the Western approach to science, political theory, ethics, and law.

Philosophical Humanism is any outlook or way of life centered on human need and interest. Sub-categories of this type include Christian Humanism and Modern Humanism.

⁶⁴ Jon Goss, "Magic of the Mall: An Analysis of Form, Function, and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment," 1993, *Wiley Online Library*, accessed December 31, 2017, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1993.tb01921.x/abstract>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Fred Edwards, "What is Humanism?" *American Humanist Association*, 2008, accessed July 2, 2017, <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/edwards-what-is-humanism>.

Christian Humanism is defined by *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* as “a philosophy advocating the self-fulfillment of man within the framework of Christian principles.” This more human-oriented faith is largely a product of the Renaissance and was a fundamental component of Renaissance humanism.

Modern Humanism also called Naturalistic Humanism, Scientific Humanism, Ethical Humanism, and Democratic Humanism, is defined by one of its leading proponents, Corliss Lamont, as “a naturalistic philosophy that rejects all supernaturalism and relies primarily upon reason and science, democracy and human compassion.” Modern Humanism has a dual origin, both secular and religious, and these constitute its sub-categories.

Secular Humanism is an outgrowth of eighteenth century Enlightenment rationalism and nineteenth century free thought. Many secular groups, such as the Council for Secular Humanism and the American Rationalist Federation, and many otherwise unaffiliated academic philosophers and scientists, advocate this philosophy.

Religious Humanism largely emerged out of Ethical Culture, Unitarianism, and Universalism. Many Unitarian Universalist congregations and Ethical Culture societies describe themselves as humanist.”⁶⁷

The most critical ironies dealing with modern humanism are for advocates to:

“disagree on whether or not this worldview is religious. Those who see it as philosophy are Secular Humanists while those who see it as religion are Religious Humanists. This has been an ongoing dispute since the origins of the 20th century, when secular and religious traditions converged and brought modern humanism into existence.”⁶⁸ From another viewpoint on humanism, Dan Dana, writes in “*The Reason Revolution: Atheism, Secular Humanism and the Collapse of Religion*,” that there is another quiet revolution underway with no engagement in any battle. It is a peaceful evolution, a slow motion,

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

though accelerating, transformation of the world order that has been in place for over two thousand years.⁶⁹

The three primary Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), combined with South Asian (Dharma) and East Asian (Taoist) faiths, comprise a supernaturalistic bloc of belief systems that has held sway to the present, and is beginning to lose its grip on the hearts and minds of people.⁷⁰ He continues in writing that “most scientists are atheists,”⁷¹ and numerous studies correlate religious belief inversely with intelligence and education in science and quotes a common study finding that ninety-three percent of the National Academy of Science members are atheists, a number that increases only when those in the natural sciences, such as chemistry, physics, astronomy, and biology are considered.

Dana holds that science and religion are irreconcilable and further concludes that it is only a matter of time until the supernaturalist theology of religionist arcs toward irrelevance, and at that point, reason will overtake faith.⁷² On the one hand Dana believes that empirical science is the only valid approach to factual knowledge, while curiously on the other hand, he states that there are insights of meaningful subjective experiences that are not objective, and do not apply universally. In other words, “true for me” does not

⁶⁹ Dan Dana, “The Reason Revolution: Atheism, Secular Humanism and the Collapse of Religion,” *Barnes & Noble*, July 15, 2014, accessed January 10, 2018, <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-reason-revolution-dan-dana/1119908053?type=eBook>.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Dana, “The Reason Revolution,” 62.

mean “true for all.” Even so, he then concludes that proven, verified, replicated results of scientific research are true for all, even for those who deny their factual validity.⁷³

Some Mainstream Media Appears to Shape Public Opinion

Media in general for the most part heavily influences and impacts both individuals and society as a whole. It can be argued that many rely on media for information without even a thought as to its veracity. As a result, media are a very powerful weapon that can quickly change perspectives and beliefs on a widespread basis. For example, news reports concerning the Israeli and Palestinian conflict (or any other heated, contentious and controversial situation) that focus only on or even subtly favor one side of the story while ignoring or failing to mention the other, can influence viewer’s pity for one side and neglect for the other. Moreover, increasingly, it seems that news presenters and commentators do not hesitate to give their own opinions, along with the hard news. Thus, many undiscerning viewers may take these opinions as final truth and as a result maintain superficial and false ideas regarding crucial topics.⁷⁴

Much can and has been presented substantiating media’s ability to shape public opinion. These comments are particularly relevant to this study in that it can be argued that ungodly and even satanic control over the media profoundly impacts people and their viewpoints, and as a result, shapes the culture in negative and even satanic ways. If it can be shown that the media are satanically influenced, then it would arguably follow that culture is satanically influenced, as well. Jose Ortega y Gasset, a classical liberal theorist from Spain wrote, *Revolt of the Masses*, affirming the eternal truth of rule by consent.

⁷³ Ibid., 72.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Gasset spent his career warning readers of dangers presented by unmediated majorities. One rules only when and how the public allows. In the modern era, according to Gasset, rulers rule only in a manner the masses ultimately find and deem acceptable. The result, he argued, has been cultural degradation.⁷⁵ He thus concludes that the masses are destined to destroy the highest achievements of western society.⁷⁶ In support of Gasset's argument, it is apparent to many in this generation that post-modern consumer societies are deteriorating rather than flourishing. Any news reported on any given day discloses this sad truth. It can therefore be argued that if society is indeed deteriorating, it is apparent that this is not of God or the result of His plan for humankind.

Some Media Can Be Shown to Promote Satanic Agendas

It is clear that the post-modern consumer culture promotes the self and self-fulfillment above all else. And it is often due to this constant promotion and messaging via the media that people's eyes cannot see truth nor their ears hear truth. God's will is very simply incompatible with and counter to the self-fulfillment philosophy of post-modern consumerism. It is here that Satan introduces doubt through temptation, deceit, and deception, in similar ways that he did long in the Garden. People become and remain susceptible to satanic influences. When Jesus (the Truth)⁷⁷ stood in front of Pilate, Pilate queried: "You are a king, then?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side

⁷⁵ Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Revolt of the Masses*, trans. J.R. Carey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1960).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ John 14:6.

of truth listens to me.”⁷⁸ Pilate then responded “What is truth?”⁷⁹ Passages such as these and many more reveal that the Bible has much to say about those who do not have eyes to see and ears to hear. Consider the following verses:

- “Hear this, you foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear” (Jeremiah 5:21).
- “Son of man, you are living among a rebellious people. They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people” (Ezekiel 12:2).
- “But to this day the Lord has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear” (Deuteronomy 29:4).
- “Ears that hear and eyes that see—the Lord has made them both” (Proverbs 20:12).
- “Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed” (Isaiah 6:10).
- “And he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears” (Isaiah 11:3).
- “Those who walk righteously and speak what is right, who reject gain from extortion and keep their hands from accepting bribes, who stop their ears against plots of murder and shut their eyes against contemplating

⁷⁸ John 18:37.

⁷⁹ John 18:38.

evil—they are the ones who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. Their bread will be supplied, and water will not fail them” (Isaiah 33:15–16).

Not only was this true in biblical times, but it is even true now, and as God warns, many, including Christians, do not have ears to hear or eyes to see. Not hearing and not seeing is the satanic swamp where Satan approaches many. The post-modern consumer self-fulfillment philosophy is the swamp of deception that Satan manipulates to deceive people in his efforts to undermine trust in God’s Word using the same lie: “You will not surely die.”

Some of Hollywood Media Redefines the Way We See God, Satan, and Ourselves

Of the many satanic deceptions and deceptions in contemporary culture, with post-modern consumerism being the most influential, use of the media for evil is probably the second strongest deception. “John Calvin cautions against “undue speculation” which is completely ignored in the post-modern consumer culture, evidenced by an ever-expanding cluster of films that explore the mysteries of reality and being itself, along with an inquiry into the relationships between the demonic and eschatological events.”⁸⁰ A quick survey of popular films and movies evidences the truth of satanic influences of the post-modern consumer social reality, which should be alarming to most Christians. It is evidently clear that outward demonic influences are shaping our worldview.

⁸⁰ Kathleen Waller and Michael O’Keeffe, “How Hollywood is Rewriting the Way We See God, the Devil, and Ourselves,” *The John Ankerberg Show*, 2001, accessed May 27, 2017. <https://www.jashow.org/articles/society-culture-politics-2/how-hollywood-is-rewriting-the-way-we-see-god-the-devil-and-ourselves>.

Dr. O’Keeffe and Dr. Waller write of their experience that: “students find these movies particularly appealing, even when the films present untrue, perverted, and wildly erratic images of Christianity.⁸¹ The most popular of this genre continues to be *The Seventh Sign*, a 1988 film starring Demi Moore. Dr. O’Keeffe and Dr. Waller comment that not a semester goes by without students referring to *The Seventh Sign*⁸² as their prime example of the Bible’s account of what will happen before the world comes to an end. Both are convinced that this film portrays an accurate picture of Christian eschatology, and it is difficult to persuade some students otherwise.”⁸³

“Parallel distortions are also problematic in films portraying Satan and the demonic realm in humorous, glamorous, and/or entertaining ways, providing equally false and deceptive representations. For example, Jack Nicholson in the *Witches of Eastwick*⁸⁴ plays the devil, Daryl Van Horne, who is a lusty, fun-loving guy, and whose presence lends excitement to three single women living in a conservative New England town. Van Horne woos the sanctimonious citizens of Eastwick and represents evil as exciting, sexual, comical, and only slightly naughty. Similarly, in the film, *Bedazzled*,⁸⁵ Elizabeth Hurley appears as the female version of Nicholson’s Van Horne. Beautiful,

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Carl Schultz, Director, “The Seventh Sign,” 1988, accessed December 30, 2017, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0096073/>.

⁸³ Waller and O’Keeffe, “How Hollywood is Rewriting the Way We See God.”

⁸⁴ George Miller, Director, “The Witches of Eastwick,” 1987, accessed December 30, 2017, www.imdb.com/title/tt0094332.

⁸⁵ Harold Ramis, Director, “Bedazzled,” 2000, accessed December 30, 2017, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0230030>.

seductive, and wily, she willingly grants seven wishes to the boorish Brendan Fraser in exchange for his soul.”⁸⁶

“Even the seemingly innocuous film, *Little Nicky*,⁸⁷ aimed at the lucrative audience of teenage boys, which tells the story of Satan’s “good son,” distorts the Christian conception of the demonic by portraying the devil as a comedic figure. A different, but related tactic is employed in *the Devil’s Advocate*,⁸⁸ a film mentioned often by our students. Here Al Pacino’s character, John Milton, is a devil that is rich, successful in his profession, irresistible to women, and thoroughly enjoying a lifestyle envied by all who take their cues from the culture. Milton is larger than life and powerful enough to pulverize anyone foolish enough to challenge him. Even when we acknowledge that Milton’s morals are slippery, he presents an imposing and compelling figure, difficult to disregard.”⁸⁹

“Students say, ‘Yes,’ to the perception that Milton is over the top and acknowledge that they would want to live like that for at least a little while. Milton’s appeal is largely because he totally controls his destiny and avoids the mundane aspects of everyday life, which is a central tenant of the post-modern consumer cultural ideology. Evil also provides drama to misperceptions about life in that it is exciting, fast-paced and filled with the accouterments of success. Its allure is difficult to resist, even if people

⁸⁶ Waller and O’Keeffe, “How Hollywood is Rewriting the Way We See God.”

⁸⁷ Stephen Brill, Director, “Little Nicky,” 2000, accessed December 30, 2017, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0185431>.

⁸⁸ Taylor Hackford, Director, “The Devil’s Advocate,” 1997, accessed December 30, 2017, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0118971>.

⁸⁹ Waller and O’Keeffe, “How Hollywood is Rewriting the Way We See God.”

know that these are not accurate representations of life experiences and not Christian understandings of Biblical principalities.”⁹⁰

“Many students ask, “Why be Christians,” while the other side is having fun and success?”⁹¹ *The Seventh Sign*⁹² and *The End of Days*⁹³ are representative of many other films that deal with the demonic. The themes portrayed in these movies seem relatively consistent: malevolent supernatural forces are real and humans are powerless in the face of evil. This dissertation addresses that Christian doctrine and religious training do not provide recourse or significant spiritual guidance in the struggle with evil, consequently rendering the Christian church and its leaders powerless before Satan and his minions. In addition, it is believed by many that God is too distant, or uncaring, unable, or unwilling, to check Satan’s power. These films, and others like them, on the one hand, borrow freely from Christian teachings and symbols, but on the other hand, usually subvert them beyond recognition or take such dramatic license that any sound theological insight is lost. Many movies like these often purport to quote from the Bible or to interpret biblical eschatology, but interpretations are substantially skewed.”⁹⁴

“Several movies are so visually stunning in their special effects, that even if one is able to recognize the faulty theology, the world they portray is so compelling that it is hard not to accept Hollywood’s version as true. Waller and O’Keeffe disclose that it is

⁹⁰ Waller and O’Keeffe, “How Hollywood is Rewriting the Way We See God.”

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Carl Schultz, Director, “The Seventh Sign,” 1988, accessed December 30, 2017, www.imdb.com/title/tt0096073.

⁹³ Peter Hyams, Director, “The End of Days,” 1988, accessed December 30, 2017, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0146675>.

⁹⁴ Waller and O’Keeffe, “How Hollywood is Rewriting the Way We See God.”

not surprising that many of their students are unable to identify the unorthodox teaching in these films, and instead, they come away convinced that they have learned something valuable about Christianity and its inability to deal with evil.”⁹⁵

These are just a small representative sampling of the movie industry’s portrayal of Satan and evil, evidencing a vastly different picture and understanding from the true biblical description. Again, the result seems to be an overwhelming deception to those who view such movies, as evidenced by Drs. O’Keeffe and Waller’s research and reporting. The beliefs, convictions and mores of our post-modern consumer culture appears to militate against God’s truth and reality, what he did for us on the cross, the reality of His salvific plan and life, and the deliverance He can provide from the grip of Satanic evil.

Unprecedented Technological Advances

Unprecedented technological advances evidenced by events and phenomena such as the landing of men on the moon, worldwide audio and video conferencing abilities, instant telecommunications with anyone in the world, computer generated animations make it difficult for many to distinguish simulations from reality. Apparent fast growing fascination with satanic and demonic spiritual manifestations, coupled with technological advances in television, movies and the Internet are delivering an unprecedented satanic deception, never before experienced.

Ever since the production and release of the Hollywood movie *The Exorcist*⁹⁶ in 1973, many Christians seem to have turned a blind eye to any suggestion that dark and

⁹⁵ Waller and O’Keeffe, “How Hollywood is Rewriting the Way We See God.”

demonic forces are a reality and are influencing people without their awareness and understanding: “Christians spend seven times as much time on entertainment as they do on spiritual activities.”⁹⁷ This commitment gives the appearance of overpowering influences of the post-modern consumer culture that deceives many to believe that their new happiness and enjoyment are more important than their understanding of life-changing spiritual issues that impact themselves and their relationship to others. Many movies and media entertainment now depict vampires, sorceries, warlocks, and witches all of which are intended to make the dark and demonic world look very appealing and exciting. However, behind this appealing façade are forces that appear to have a demonic plan to deceive.

In the post-modern culture, media seems to shape worldviews and public opinions. The media today is a very powerful tool that has mastered this craft of deceit and deception. Movies, television programs, art, articles, newspapers, magazines and other such current media tell a truth about the character of dark and demonic forces expressed in the physical realm as witches, warlocks, dark angels, demons, werewolves, vampires, and other such dark spirit beings. These portrayals of dark and demonic spirits and their character are real; however, they are portrayed as thrilling fictional villains who have no direct influence on viewers. These media presentations become “simulated truths.”

⁹⁶ William Friedkin, Director, “The Exorcist,” 1973, accessed December 30, 2017, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0070047>.

⁹⁷ George Barna, “Statistics for the Changing Church,” *Kjos Ministries*, 2008, accessed November 25, 2017, <https://www.crossroad.to/charts/church-statistics.html>.

Mobile Technology and Social Media Change Impacts

The explosive growth of digital technology and mobile devices appears to have fundamentally altered the way many communicate and engage with each other. Social media sites mediate online presence and set new rules for digital interactions. Though it appears people can experience social media in mostly positive ways, studies have shown that after using social media eighty-one percent of women feel connected to friends and fifty-eight percent feel encouraged. The pace of technological change has surpassed anyone's capacity to develop enough wisdom to handle it, says Andy Crouch, Executive Editor at *Christianity Today*, in an exclusive interview featured in *Barna Trends* 2017.⁹⁸

“We are stuffing our lives with technology's new promises, with no clear sense of whether it will help us keep the promises we already made.”⁹⁹ In an almost overnight change, technology has become ever present in every place in our homes, lives and pockets, and deceives many into thinking with overwhelming default settings that our lives are indeed improving. With this mis-understanding, it is important to step back and determine the proper place for technology to support the wisdom and virtues of a life worth living.

Cultural Impacts of Some of America's Books, Films, and Television Shows

“Although fears of the United States becoming a post-literate culture may be overstated, they are not completely unfounded. Few Americans regularly read books, and with the surging number of cable stations and the rapid rise of subscription-based internet streaming services like Netflix, Hulu and Amazon, television is experiencing a renaissance—and people are watching.”¹⁰⁰ Because many and varied deceptions induced by Satan, his fallen angels, and demons are being promoted through some of the current

⁹⁸ *Barna Trends: 2017*, ed. Roxanne Stone (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2016), 24–28; 56–57.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 84–86.

media, coupled with the philosophies and tenants of the current post-modern consumer cultural worldview, it is no wonder and no surprise that many today become blinded by these satanic influences and are not aware of the resultant consequences of ignoring virtuous living. If Christians do not live by the guidance of virtues or ethics in everyday life, many become subject to post-modern consumerism's interpretations of what living "the good life" is. The post-modern consumer cultural worldview teaches that there are no common standards (virtues) and interpretations of how to live life and interpretations are entirely up to the individual. See Chapter Six for more sustentative details on the theology of virtues and their defense.

Summary

It seems clear from these analyses of the study of cultures, the various forces in culture such as humanism, relativism, materialism and their respective influences upon societies, particularly post-modern consumer culture, that through human influences that shape culture, culture then appears to correspondingly shape some people and their worldviews. Post-modern consumerism culminates with the self-fulfillment worldview and this view clearly contradicts God's commandments on how humans should relate to one another (culturally). "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Matt. 36-40.

Thus, God's cultural worldview seems to conflict with the post-modern consumerist worldview. This conflict evidences that post-modern consumerism is not of God and therefore by default, is of Satan. Therefore it appears that Satan indeed, who has a prominent influence on thoughts and thought processes, with such thoughts, then directs actions which then seem to ultimately define who people really are. Even as devout Christians, in many cases, it seems that satanic influences substantially drive many thoughts, words, and actions. As pointed out in Chapter One, it is imminently clear, evidenced by over 33,000 different Christian denominations worldwide¹⁰² that, while diversity is divine, factions and divisions over many church issues appear to be diabolically influenced. Careful reading of Scripture enumerated in Chapter Two substantiates this claim that the family of faith is substantially divided, but according to God, all true-hearted Christians should work for unity among each other as a response to His will.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Eric Hatfield, "How Many Christian Denominations Worldwide?" *The Way: Following Jesus in the 21st Century*, November 23, 2012, accessed August 19, 2017, <https://theway21stcentury.wordpress.com/2012/11/23/how-many-christian-denominations-worldwide/>.

¹⁰³ Eph. 4:12–14.

CHAPTER FOUR
SATANIC INFLUENCE DECEPTIONS

“The more society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those that speak it.”

George Orwell¹

Introduction

As stated in Chapter One, contrary to a vast reservoir of teaching on the subject, Satan and his evil acts may not be a thorn in God’s side. Instead, Satan, his agents and their resultant evil acts bring glory to God and salvation to humankind. There are many deceptions presented by Satan that lure people away from God and His love for humanity. Media that shape public opinion and buttress the resultant post-modern consumer worldview seem to display many of these deceptions and evil influences. As also discussed in Chapter One, the great cosmic conflict centers on who will have authority: God or Satan.² It’s an age-old spiritual warfare between good and evil. These two opposite and opposing forces are always at odds: God and his legitimate authority, against Satan and his host of rebellious forces.³ It is either one or the other. Many see these opposite and opposing forces at work in others in everyday encounters, yet many often fail to understand why this is and how it can be a part of God’s overall plan for humankind’s salvation. Deception and misunderstandings impact real people with real needs, disillusionments and frustrations.

¹ “George Orwell, “George Orwell Biography.com,” *Biography.com*, October 19, 2017, accessed January 13, 2018, <https://www.biography.com/people/george-orwell-9429833>.

² Henry Malone, *Shadow Boxing: The Dynamic 2-5-14 Strategy to Defeat Darkness Within* (Irving, CA: Vision Life, 1999), 31.

³ *Ibid.*

Chapter Four builds on deceptions of the post-modern consumer cultural influences and discusses how satanic deceptions seem to battle our thoughts every waking hour of every day. The deceptive morality of self-fulfillment fueled by the post-modern consumerism world view, deceives people's thoughts about life, relationships with others, and ultimately about God. As a result, God's family of faith is divided, at war with each other, and seemingly ineffective in preserving itself and protecting itself and the church against Satan's agendas.

In much the same way as military commanders evaluate their intelligence before battle engagement, so it should be with us as sincere Christians. Humans cannot begin to challenge Satan, his fallen angels, and demons in their administration of evil until it is understood with whom the battle is with and why the battle has begun in the first place.⁴ Therefore, in order to understand this battle and its participants, it is necessary to open the mind to seek out and understand truth, research Scriptures with an unbiased heart, and begin to understand reasons for such warfare and how understanding can impact existence in eternity. As a result of unawareness coupled with misinformation presented by deceit and deception, it appears that many are at risk of losing this battle.

This chapter argues that post-modern consumer cultural worldviews, fueled by a great portion of the motion picture industry, radio, newspaper, magazine, television and Internet media are shaping substantial declines in U.S.-American and Western European Christianity as a result of deception masking truth about life, both physical and eternal. In fact, it appears that the waning of Christianity will be a catastrophe both for the church

⁴ Malone, *Shadow Boxing*, 31.

and society in ways secular Americans do not appreciate.⁵ Preparing for this post-Christian future requires honest assessments of both modern churches and contemporary worldviews. This scenario could be painful, but denial only makes its likely inevitable reckoning worse.⁶

Satanic Influences in the Post-modern Consumer Culture

Spiritual realities, whether or not people are aware of them, are around constantly. However, all too often, many seem to not have eyes to see and ears to hear them. Distinctions are sometimes made between physical/metaphysical evil (misfortune, woe) and moral evil (offence, wrongdoing). The Bible includes terms for both categories.⁷ Brian Davies, a philosopher and theologian, makes this point in his *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil*.⁸ Many today, he proposes, are deceitfully influenced by the post-modern consumer culture and believe that there is no heaven, hell or a devil. Bill Bennett, in his book *I Am Not Afraid*, cites a brilliant quote from theologian Helmut Theilicke explaining why so many modern theologians deny the spiritual reality of Satan's existence:⁹ "1. The fear of being perceived as a simpleton by one's academic peers; 2. Recognizing that the demonic cannot be placed into scientific categories or objective terms; and 3. Because evil cannot be seen by the evil just as stupidity cannot be

⁵ Jeff Byerly, "Watch This and Know Something is Coming," *Whistleblower Jeff*, October 23, 2017, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://whistleblowerjeff.holyspiritwind.net/2017/10/23/watch-this-and-know-something-is-coming-2017-2018>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D.A. Carson, Graeme Goldsworthy, eds., *The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 465.

⁸ Brian Davies, *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 226.

⁹ Helmut Theilicke, *The Evangelical Faith* (Edinburgh, Scotland, UK: Clark, 1978), 448.

perceived by the stupid.”¹⁰ These same factors shroud understandings of satanic and demonic influences as not being influential to people’s lives. Because of these deceptions, Bennett presents clear and convincing evidence as to why the Western Church would be wise to put exorcism back in its spiritual toolbox—it is going to be needed as post-Christian culture continues to slide into Eastern mysticism and neo-paganism.¹¹

Clear, well-researched and objective thinking coupled with wisdom given from prayer by the Holy Spirit exposes dichotomies of knowing God’s truth and yet not doing it. The beginning of such wisdom through clear objective thinking will uncover deceit and deception in the cultural influences that we succumb to every day.

Many Satanic Deceits and Deceptions Seem to be Promoted in the Post-modern Consumer Culture

To begin the discussion of deceit and deception, Chapter Three presented research of Internet, many movies, social media, and television and how they, in many cases, seem to impact culture, and more specifically, the post-modern consumer culture. These influences—coupled with subcomponent elements of relativism, humanism, and materialism—seem to shape the post-modern consumer worldview. With the stage of deceptions now set, one can now look at how Satan uses these cultural characteristics to deceive humans.

¹⁰ Robert H. Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession & Spiritual Warfare* (St Louis, MO: Concordia, 2013), 158.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 62–63.

In his article “Media Deception: You are *Not* Getting the Truth,” Tim Watts suggests that much of reality is different than what is reported.¹² “The old saying that “truth is stranger than fiction” could not be more accurate in depicting the presence of satanic deceptions that are on such a grand scale that most would have difficulty in comprehending its full and true extent.¹³ “Behind the scenes machinations of big money and politics are so well hidden from most of the population, Watts suggests that if people actually knew how things were really run, there would quite literally be a second revolution overnight.”¹⁴ Henry Ford knew this well when he said, “It is well enough that people of the nation do not understand our banking and monetary system, for if they did, I believe there would be a revolution before tomorrow morning.”¹⁵

What Watts does not discuss is the apparent spiritual forces and deceptions driving big money and politics. Satan is the ultimate liar and the root cause of deceit and deception behind masking the truth about all of life, including big money and politics. It is factual that much of media control dispenses only information that shapes a controlled worldview and that is deception. Deception is at the heart of Satan’s plan to keep humankind from knowing truth and loving God first and foremost in their lives.

George Barna writes in his book *America at the Crossroads, Explosive Trends Shaping America’s Future and What You Can Do about It* that: “from the most hardened

¹² Tim Watts, “Media Deception: You are *Not* Getting the Truth,” *Sharing Biblical Truth*, June 8, 2011, accessed August 27, 2017, <http://www.sharingbiblicaltruth.co.za/index.php/articles/89-the-media/931-media-control-you-are-not-getting-the-truth>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Henry Ford, “Famous Quotations on Banking, ‘Henry Ford,’” *The Money Masters*, 2012, accessed December 30, 2017, <http://www.themoneymasters.com/the-money-masters/famous-quotations-on-banking>.

social critic to the most optimistic church lady, U.S.-Americans recognize that they are living in dangerous and bewildering times.¹⁶ The evidence for this suspicion is everywhere, and it is undeniable.¹⁷ The gulf in perceptions and probable responses between elected officials and those who elected them is wider than at any previous time in memory. Fewer American parents than at any other time since scientific polling began, believe their children will have a better life than they did.”¹⁸ Many in the contemporary U.S.-American Christian Church also embrace these same perceptions. David Barton, in an endorsement to Barna’s book, observes that Barna offers a panoramic view of the progressive collapse of American society while Christians stand by and watch with seeming indifference.¹⁹ This is what good God-fearing Christians are also doing as they witness the collapse of many U.S.-American Christian Churches. Satan’s deceit and deceptions cloak the nature and character of God’s world all around. It is only when people can begin to become capable of renewing their minds that they will be able to see what is happening and thus, begin to clearly see God’s truths.

Relativism

Webster defines “relativism” as the “philosophical doctrine that all criteria of judgment are relative to the individuals and situations involved.”²⁰ More generally defined, relativism: “is the view that truth and falsity, right and wrong, standards of

¹⁶ George Barna, *America at the Crossroads: Explosive Trends Shaping America’s Future and What You Can Do about It* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bakerbooks, 2016), 9.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Barna, *America at the Crossroads*, Back cover endorsement by David Barton.

²⁰ Daniel Webster, “Relativism,” *Webster’s On-line Dictionary*, 2017, accessed October 19, 2017, <http://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/relativism>.

reasoning, and procedures of justification are products of differing conventions and frameworks of assessment, with their authority confined to the context that defines them. More precisely defined, relativism maintains that, at a high level of abstraction, at least some class of things have properties they have (e.g., beautiful, morally good, epistemically justified), but only relative to a given framework of assessment (e.g., local cultural norms, individual standards). Therefore, truth claims attributed to these properties holds only once the relevant framework of assessment is specified or supplied. Relativists characteristically insist, furthermore, that if something is only *relatively* so, then there can be no framework-independent vantage point from which the matter of whether the thing in question can be established.²¹ Relativism has been, in its various guises, both one of the most popular and most reviled philosophical doctrines of our time. Defenders see it as a harbinger of tolerance and the only ethical and epistemic stance worthy of the open-minded and tolerant. Detractors dismiss it for its alleged incoherence and uncritical intellectual permissiveness.”²²

The Catholic Church responds in declaring that roots of relativism are: “to be found in certain presuppositions of both a philosophical and theological nature, which hinder the understanding and acceptance of the revealed truth. These include: the conviction of the elusiveness and inexpressibility of divine truth, even by Christian revelation; relativistic attitudes toward truth itself, according to which what may be true for some would not be true for others; the radical opposition posited between the logical mentality of the West and the symbolic mentality of the East; the subjectivism which, by

²¹ Stanford University, “Definition of Relativism,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, September 11, 2015, accessed October 19, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/relativism>.

²² *Ibid.*

regarding reason as the only source of knowledge, becomes incapable of raising its “gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being;”²³ the difficulty in understanding and accepting the presence of definitive and eschatological events in history; the metaphysical emptying of the historical incarnation of the Eternal Logos, reduced to a mere appearing of God in history; the eclecticism of those who, in theological research, uncritically absorb ideas from a variety of philosophical and theological contexts without regard for consistency, systematic connection, or compatibility with Christian truth; and finally, the tendency to read and to interpret Sacred Scripture outside the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church.”²⁴

It can be discerned from the discussion above that relativism has no boundaries, no consistent moral values and pays scant attention to traditional authority or mores. Thus, relativism applied to philosophy, theology, and life yields a belief that what the individual determines is most appropriate for their life and lifestyle is, indeed, “truth.” This philosophy of relativism is consistent with Satan’s deceptions to humans, and is contrary to the timeless theology, ethics, virtues, and truth put forth by God in Scripture.

The Morality of Self -Fulfillment

Research on post-modern consumerism, relativism, materialism, and their influences on human thinking, clearly substantiates that self-fulfillment and redefinition

²³ John Paul II, “Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*,” *John Paul II, Encyclicals*, September 14, 1998, accessed September 21, 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html.

²⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, Cardinal, “Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Declaration: ‘*dominus iesus*’ on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church,” *The Vatican*, August 6, 2000, accessed October 18, 2017, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html.

of virtues appears to open doors of the mind to satanic influences. Thusly influenced, many are deceived into believing they are the masters of their own destiny and are thus free to independently determine what's right or moral, and to construct and live within realities of their own making. Such radical self-determination can be to lives lived bereft of constructive "outside" influences.²⁵ It can clearly be seen that today's "new morality," promoted by such relativism, yields a personal and ethical "system" of virtues that are at best relativistically convenient and self-serving. "Thus, post-modernists subject morality to personal opinion and define morality as each person's private code of ethics without the need to follow traditional values and rules."²⁶ Supporting this analysis, Barna Research reports that: "U.S.-Americans are both concerned about the nation's moral condition and even evidence an uncertain reality about itself. As even nominally Christian moral norms are discarded, what, if anything, is taking their place?"²⁷ A nationally representative study reveals the degree to which U.S.-Americans pledge allegiance to the "morality of self-fulfillment;" a new moral code that, as Barna President David Kinnaman argues, has all but replaced Christianity as the cultures moral norm."

"The morality of self-fulfillment can be summed up in six guiding principles: 1. The best way to find yourself is by looking within yourself; 2. People should not criticize someone else's life choices; 3. To be fulfilled in life, you should pursue the things you most desire; 4. The highest goal of life is to enjoy it as much as possible; 5. People can believe whatever they want, as long as those beliefs don't affect society; and 6. Any kind

²⁵ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic), 1002–1003.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Stone, *Barna Trends*, 53.

of sexual expression between two consenting adults is acceptable.”²⁸ “The highest good, according to our society, is ‘finding yourself’ and then living by ‘what is right for you.’”²⁹ When the layers are peeled back, it might be argued that, terminology aside, many Christians are using the way of Jesus to pursue in their own way, the same six steps to “self-fulfillment.” While Christians wring their hands about secularism spreading through a culture, it has been proposed that a majority of Christians that attend church are living the postmodern consumer culture’s “me-centered theology.”³⁰ Kinnaman adds,

There appears to be a dichotomy present among practicing Christians in America in that most believe the Bible is the source of moral norms that transcend a person’s culture, those moral truths being absolute rather than relative to circumstances. Yet, at the same time, solid majorities ascribed to five of the six tenants of the new moral code. Such widespread cognitive dissonance of professing Christians and among Americans in general, is another indicator of the cultural flux Barna researchers have identified over the past two decades. It also represents an opportunity for leaders and mentors who are prepared to coach people, especially young people, toward deeper wisdom and greater discernment.³¹

Pride

It can be argued that one of the first acts in renewing the mind is to address the mind’s deceptive thinking that grows out of the root sin of pride thereby opening the door to Satan’s deceptions. John Cassian in *The Institutes* discusses the seven deadly sins, highlighting pride as at the heart of all sin, underscoring that pride destroys all virtues

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Stone, *Barna Trends*, 53.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

together.³² People are confused about pride in this post-modern era. Although pride has been classically and universally understood to be a bad thing, today even the word itself has evolved several contradictory meanings, some of them good.³³ People speak of “pride of craftsmanship” (doing an expert job) and “pride of ownership” (maintaining one’s home and property well). Spiritual pride, in contrast, is far different and is one focus in this study.

The first known example of pride is revealed in Satan when he allowed his love for God and his God-given beauty and intellect to transform his focus on God to focus on himself. This condition is understood as narcissistic, self-focused, or self-absorbed, but, at its core, is simply pride. “How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’”³⁴ Simply stated, pride is nothing less than a private war with God,³⁵ and this was the sin that was Satan’s primary downfall.

It appears that pride opens the floodgates for Satan and his demons to control and influence minds and thought processes, leveraging the same sin of pride that caused his downfall. Evagrius Ponticus, in his classic work *The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*,

³² John Cassian, *The Institutes*, ed. Dennis D. McMannis, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Mahwah, NJ: Newman, 2000), 253.

³³ David Kupelian, *How Evil Works: Understanding and Overcoming the Destructive Forces that are Transforming America* (New York: Threshold, 2010), 86.

³⁴ Isa. 14:12–14.

³⁵ Kupelian, *How Evil Works*, 86.

writes that the demon of pride is the most damaging to the soul. Pride induces humans to deny God and to consider the human as the cause and sustainer of reality. Further, as humans grow more prideful, they fall into all manner of sins against their brothers and sisters, ultimately discounting them and considering them inadequate because they do not share the same opinions.

Evagrius continues in saying that anger and sadness follow on the heels of this demon of pride, and from there a chain of the greatest maladies commences, which include the derangement of the mind, associated with wild ratings and hallucinations of all multitudes of demons in the sky.³⁶ Evagrius also points to satanic lies that deceive people into thinking they are masters of their own destiny, independent from God's work in them. John Cassian supports Evagrius' position when he writes: "Here is how we can grasp the power of its most grievous charity. We see that the angel who, on account of his great splendor and beauty, was called Lucifer, was cast out of heaven with no other device than this one, and that, having been wounded by the dart of pride, he fell from the Blessed and sublime post of the Angels into hell."³⁷

Other scholars similarly point out that it is with this root problem of pride that Satan begins his deception of the church and its members, among others, to believe the lies embraced by post-modern consumer culture: humanism, relativism, and most fundamentally, that the self resides at the center of the universe. The significance of human pride in Satan's "economy" cannot be overstated. It has been said of the post-modern consumer culture that self-fulfillment is at the center of its doctrines.

³⁶ Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*, trans. John Eudes Bamberger, (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian, 1972), 20.

³⁷ John Cassian, *John Cassian: The Institutes* (New York: Newman, 2000), 256.

Self-fulfillment can be understood as simply another term for pride. Cassian writes:

How people can take hold of the power and devastation of this most serious oppression in seeing that the Angel (Satan) who, on account of his great splendor and beauty, called Lucifer, was cast out of heaven for no other vice than pride, and having been wounded by the dart of pride, fell from the position of the angels into hell. If then a single instance of pride was able to cast him down from heaven to earth from a position of such great virtue, adorned with privileges of such great power and beauty, the immensity of his downfall demonstrates what care it behooves people to take who are girded in frail flesh.”³⁸ It is therefore concluded that: “although the disgrace of pride is the last in the order of battle, it is nonetheless first in terms of origin, and it is the source of all sins and misdeeds.”³⁹

Unconfessed Sin

Since it can be argued that pride is the root of all evil, it follows that the sin of pride leads to unconfessed sin:

- “If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).
- “All sin was paid for when we accepted Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf” (Rom. 3:24-26).
- “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

“If one could imagine the experience of standing by a south-facing window, that is filled with sunlight, on a cold winter day with the sun beginning to make a person feel warm, this experience can be likened to God’s wisdom. Although the outside air temperature is frigid, the sun shining through the window makes a person warm. Imagine

³⁸ Cassian, *The Institutes*, 256.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 257.

then pulling the drapes closed. At that moment, the room becomes dark and the warmth of the sunlight is blocked. The drapes are an element that has blocked the sunlight. However, if the drapes are open again, a person can again feel the warmth and glow of the sunlight. The point is simply that people draw the drapes to block out the sunlight, but the sun does not stop shining. The opening and closing of the drapes to allow or block the sunlight is up to each person and the barrier to the sunlight is controlled by each person.

Unconfessed sin works like the drapes in the above analogy. God wants people to bask in the warmth of His grace, but when people choose sin, they build a barrier between themselves and God. Many seem to pull the drapes on fellowship with Him and begin once again to feel the chill of spiritual loneliness. Many times, people angrily accuse God of leaving them when, in truth, they have left Him. When they stubbornly refuse to repent, God will discipline them,⁴⁰ and His discipline can be severe, even leading to death, when a heart has hardened to the point of no return.⁴¹ God longs for restored fellowship even more than humanity does.⁴² God pursues people, disciplines them, and loves them even in their sin.⁴³ But He leaves free will intact. People must pull back the drape by confessing and repenting of pride, which sits at the seat of all subsequent sin.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Heb. 12:7–11.

⁴¹ 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16.

⁴² Isa. 65:2; 66:13; Matt. 23:37; Joel 2:12–13.

⁴³ Rom. 5:8.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Unforgiveness

Malone, in *Shadow Boxing*, writes that there are five open doors that invite demonic forces and influences into people's lives: disobedience (willful sin), unforgiveness, emotional trauma, inner trials, judgments and curses. If one or more of these doors are open to Satan, then people give him legal grounds to operate in their lives.⁴⁵ Unconfessed sin then appears to lead to sins of unforgiveness. Forgiveness is not a choice, nor is it a luxury: it is an imperative. Christ-followers cannot hope to live in peace and freedom unless they learn how to forgive both themselves and others.⁴⁶

When people do not forgive someone who has hurt them, or if they cannot forgive themselves for something they have done, they make a prison out of their own hearts. This prison is a dark, painful place, and only true, complete forgiveness can open its doors.⁴⁷ It seems that unforgiveness is always accompanied by suffering of some kind; it is a universal reality and it affects billions of people.⁴⁸ The very same heart that should be open to God's joy, peace, and love becomes a locked cell because of unforgiveness.⁴⁹ Consider the following words of Jesus: "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'"⁵⁰ He then offers the parable of "The Wicked Servant" to dramatize His point:

⁴⁵ Malone, *Shadow Boxing*, 67.

⁴⁶ Bruce Wilkinson, *The Freedom Factor: Finding Peace by Forgiving Others and Yourself* (Portland, OR: Zeal, 2016), i.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁰ Matt. 18:21–22.

Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. At this the servant fell on his knees before him. “Be patient with me,” he begged, “and I will pay back everything.” The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. “Pay back what you owe me!” he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, “Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.” But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. “You wicked servant,” he said, “I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?” In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be, until he should pay back all he owed.⁵¹

To assure that there is no misunderstanding in interpreting this parable, Jesus then clarifies: “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”⁵² There are many teachings from this very compact parable of profound truth and wisdom. The parable states that the master handed him over to jailers (torturers, tormentors) to be tortured. The Greek word for jailers, tormentors or torturers, depending on the translation, is *bas-an-is-tace*.⁵³ This word is used only once in the New Testament King James Translation. It is linked to the Greek word: *bas-an-id’-zo*, meaning “to torture”—to pain, toil, torment, toss, vex—and is used twelve times in the New Testament King James Translation.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Matt. 18:23–34.

⁵² Matt. 18:35.

⁵³ James Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 1372.

⁵⁴ Rick Meyers, “E-Sword,” *E-Sword Electronic Bible Software*, 2017, accessed December 31, 2017, www.e-sword.net/downloads.html.

It can be argued that these tormentors are indeed demons. If God, as evidenced by His words in this parable, says: “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you,” then it can be argued that this action takes place in the spirit realm, and if so, then these tormentors would be spirit realm demons. This interpretation is consistent with theology that Satan and his fallen angels and demons bring glory to God and salvation to humankind. Jesus, as an example of being turned over to the torturers, was tortured by Satan himself. If what Paul writes is true, and it is known that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose,⁵⁵ then it must therefore be good that pain and suffering resulting from torture, as Jesus demonstrated with His life, is also good for all of us humans in that it perfects believers in their salvation.

God’s words are also crystal clear on how He feels about unforgiveness. With this strong language, it should be clear that unforgiveness is a very serious problem in God’s eyes. The question then arises: why do people dare to harbor unforgiveness? The post-modern consumer culture deceitfully teaches that if people do not make mistakes, then forgiveness is unnecessary. This philosophy is counter to what God teaches. Although people are obviously not responsible for the wrongdoing of others, they are however responsible for their own response.⁵⁶ Forgiveness is not an option, and it is the primary mark of Christians. It is clear that there is a high price to pay for unforgiveness in that it causes embracement of bitterness that affects everyone around us and builds walls between God and us. Bitterness also causes physical illness, resulting from various

⁵⁵ Rom. 8:28.

⁵⁶ Malone, *Shadow Boxing*, 77.

chemical changes taking place in the body.⁵⁷ Finally to complete the forgiveness cycle, we must bless and pray for people who have wronged us. This action has powerful results, evidenced by Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount.⁵⁸

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.⁵⁹

In attempting to understand the gap that exists in our post modern consumer culture between God's commandment of forgiveness to all and the actual practice of most Christians, it can be argued that there is an element of pride and deception that evidences itself like the analogy of drapes that block light and warmth that was discussed earlier. Satan appears to lure Christians into thinking and subsequently acting on using our free will to choose anger and bitterness that is directed towards those who have made offenses against others. This element of pride is at the heart of the divisions among the family of faith and Christian churches.

Pain and Suffering Administered by Satan's Evil Forces:

God's Will for Spiritual Perfection

In preparation for the consequences of our choosing to follow Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit warns through Matthew that God is sending humans into a world of natural adversaries, and as a result, people will endure consequences of hardship, pain, and

⁵⁷ Malone, *Shadow Boxing*, 71.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁵⁹ Matt. 5:44-48.

suffering. Often, the delivery and administration of such evils is accomplished by Satan, his fallen Angels, and demons. As an example, the following substantiates this understanding:

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”⁶⁰

These verses seem to highlight God’s intent that pain and suffering are His tools that bring us closer to Him. When the Father sent Jesus to teach humanity how to live under the new covenant of love and forgiveness, Jesus demonstrated throughout his entire life, that indeed pain and suffering are the Father’s will to achieve spiritual growth and spiritual perfection. It seems that fellowship with Jesus, in suffering, conforms Christ-followers to him. It can be argued that pain and suffering conforms and energizes people to God’s image and drives them to God in prayer, seeking His will and direction.

Summary

Joyce Meyer’s *The Battlefield of the Mind* explores where Satan’s deceit and deceptions begin. Deception and sin commence in our mind’s thoughts, she proposes, and once affirmed, these thoughts mature into action. So, it follows that it is in the mind and thinking processes that people can begin to overcome satanic influences. Renewing the mind to think healthy, positive, pure and clean thoughts, allowing ears to be open to hear

⁶⁰ Matt. 10:16–22.

and discern truth and seeing truth with our eyes are first steps in the line of defense against unseen satanic influences.

Jesus Christ substantiates that to follow His Word to love God first and our neighbor as ourselves second, are the two prominent commandments of the Bible and the foundation of Christian faith.⁶¹ The post-modern consumer culture, by contrast, appears to teach that an individual is the master of his own destiny and that life is all about them. Clearly, these two worldviews are in conflict. If Christianity calls for someone to love God first and their neighbor second, then it follows that a person's personal needs, goals, and desires are not on God's list of the two most important considerations. Clearly, this humanistic worldview is for Christians, deceptive and destructive because it does not honor God's Word. Christians who believe that the Bible is the Word of God, should also want their neighbor's highest good above their own, or in other words, love neighbors. Knowing these foundational Christian principles, it is deception to believe that personal needs and desires are to be considered above a person's neighbors.

Recognizing the presence of demonic spirits would be easy if each demonized person had symptoms that were as dramatic as those seen in movies like *The Exorcist*,⁶² *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*,⁶³ and *The Rite*.⁶⁴ These dramatizations teach what deliverance looks like: projectile vomiting, head spinning, levitating, a sudden drop in room temperature, a total distortion of the individual's appearance, a guttural voice, a sense of evil, and the ability to make objects levitate and fly

⁶¹ Matt. 22:36–40.

⁶² William Friedkin, "The Exorcist," 1973, accessed January 1, 2018, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0070047>.

⁶³ Scott Derrickson, "The Exorcism of Emily Rose," 2005, accessed January 1, 2018, www.imdb.com/title/tt0404032.

⁶⁴ Mikael Hafstrom, "The Rite," 2011, accessed January 1, 2018, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1161864>.

around.”⁶⁵ Although this is true in rare cases of possession, David W. Appleby, after being involved in deliverance ministry for more than thirty years, and having seen more than one thousand people set free from demonic control, can attest that: “deliverance rarely looks like what is depicted in the movies and on television.”⁶⁶

In the above commentary, as Appleby points out, appropriate discernment of demonic possession and control is far more difficult than initially what is perceived. However, as stated earlier, if the character of love is missing from a person’s personality traits, then it is more probable than not, that satanic deception is at work in a person’s heart at some level. Brokenness can many times be covered with a smile, torment with service, and compulsive behavior with secrecy, and often what others see on the outside does not reflect what is going on inside. Many people can give themselves to the Lord, be baptized, and try to walk with him, but yet still be oppressed and victimized by spiritual forces beyond their control. Everything that is done, thought, and felt is the result of a mix of biological, cognitive, psychological, social, and spiritual factors, and as a result, it is very difficult to say: “This is what a demonized person looks like.” The Bible itself lists a broad assortment of symptoms that are attributed to demonic spirits.⁶⁷

To add to this point with other words, most people, Christian and non-Christian alike, to one degree or another, deal with symptoms of demonic influences that have deep roots in many and varied life difficult experiences that have a wide range and combination of biological, cognitive, psychological, social, and spiritual factors.

In the psychological realm, some symptoms exhibited by demonized people documented in the New Testament would be categorized as characteristic of a

⁶⁵ David W. Appleby, “Diagnosing the Demonic: Can You Recognize the Presence of Evil Spirits?” *Christianity Today*, 2012, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2012/spring/diagnosingdemonic.html>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Appleby, “Diagnosing the Demonic.”

mental disorder in this generation. Unprovoked violence, crying out uncontrollably, raving, and being troubled are also mentioned (Matt. 8:28, Mark. 1:23–24, Luke. 6:17–18, and Acts 19:13–16). These are not symptoms of stable, healthy behaviors. In many instances, mental health symptoms and demonic symptoms can be similar. In the relational realm, demonic involvement is documented in Luke 8:27–28, manifested in a man who lived naked among tombs and was impossible to restrain. This demonically induced behavior blocked interaction with family, friends, and those in the community. Scriptures show that physical, psychological, or social symptoms may be attributed to demonic spirits. Satan and his demons attack humans on all possible fronts. The most accurate diagnoses of demonic possession not only consider symptoms, but also predictive life experiences. If an individual has opened certain doors, there is an increased probability that demonic involvement is present. These include: generational curses, oaths, and soul ties; occult involvement; trauma or victimization; and long-term ongoing unrepentant sin, many of which create spiritual vulnerability invoking demonic spirits.⁶⁸

Appleby continues to comment above that in order to more accurately diagnose demonic influences or possession, careful study of predictive life styles will highlight any satanic and demonic influences. Based upon his experiences, he suggests that there is great exposure to satanic and demonic influences by inviting or evoking these dark and deceptive spirit beings to some sort of relationship.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE
IMPACTS OF SATANIC INFLUENCES

Introduction

Having identified the ministry problem and its related consequences in Chapter One, and subsequently supporting our thesis by scriptural foundations in Chapter Two, Chapter Five continues with foundational elements exposing satanic influences within the U.S.-American Christian church. These influences are coupled with combating the consequences of satanic evil influences and not so much in reducing and mitigating them, but simply understanding them, managing them and addressing them with a Godly lifestyle in this evil world.

The Ministry problem and vignette of the problem detailed in Chapter One asserts great satanic deceptions and influences challenging Christians and churches in the US today. Misinformation and unawareness of these deceptions appear to divide God's family of faith, creating a seemingly growing apostasy that drives many away from traditional faiths. In fact, in this generation, more probably than not, the church does not, in many cases, appear to think like Jesus.¹ These assertions of Satan's deception and influences in the church are confirmed and evidenced by statistical research. Barna exposes wide spread disillusionment in the U.S.-American Christian church in that: "four out of five Americans today call themselves Christians, with most not knowing what it means to truly follow Christ,"² in the way that the Bible recommends.³ A Barna poll

¹ World Net Daily, *Worldnetdaily.com*, December 3, 2003, accessed January 1, 2018, http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=359.

² Barna Group, "The Bible in America: 6-Year Trends," *Faith & Christianity*, June 15, 2016, accessed January 1, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/the-bible-in-america-6-year-trends>.

reflected that: “only nine percent of self-proclaimed born-again Christians actually embrace a biblical worldview,”⁴ or in other words, embracing what the Bible says about how to live life.⁵ This same poll found that forty-five percent of “born-again Christians” teach their children that: “there are no absolute values.”⁶ These statistics expose the painful truth that Christians and churches, deceived by poor formation, scandals, and controversy, do not possess strong foundations yielding strong character, strong churches and a righteous nation. So questions abound as to how Christians are to respond to this apparent slide in church culture and effectiveness. As this dissertation alleges, unawareness, being un-informed and unaware is a major ministry problem in this post-modern consumer generation. Chapter Six seeks to present mitigating measures for turning the tide of satanic deceptions in the Christian church.

Satan’s Plan: Division within the Church

The body of Christian faith arguably is unaware, ill-equipped, and ill-informed of the dark forces that create great deception, deceit, and divisive barriers among itself and its members. Satan also seeks to divide God’s people by suggesting that neighbors in the Christian community are uninformed, difficult, and incapable of understanding truth the way that it is known and understood by others. By Paradox, this form of narcissism is a

³ David Kupelian, *How Evil Works: Understanding and Overcoming the Destructive Forces that are Transforming America* (New York: Threshold, 2010), 211.

⁴ Barna Group, “Barna Survey Examines Changes in Worldview Among Christians Over the Past 13 Years,” *Faith & Christianity*, March 9, 2009, accessed January 13, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/barna-survey-examines-changes-in-worldview-among-christians-over-the-past-13-years>.

⁵ Ronald J. Sider, “The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience: Why Don’t Christians Live What They Preach?” *Books & Culture: A Christian Review*, January–February 2005, accessed January 1, 2018, <http://www.booksandculture.com/articles/2005/janfeb/3.8.html>.

⁶ Ibid.

two-edged sword in that this study also suggests that the church is largely uninformed and ill-equipped to deal with satanic influences. The diversity, which God imparted to each person makes them unique and different from every other human that has ever lived. This diversity of spirit and character is divinely ordained, but seductive practices of manipulating this diversity into dissention and finding fault with Christian neighbors, spouses and friends is indeed diabolical. It can be argued that God may not have intended that the family of faith to become divided, but with His created diversity, to enjoy a unity of life with others of diverse character.

Clarifying the epidemic of satanic influences dividing churches, contemporary Catholic theologians proclaim Jesus Christ as, “the way, the truth, and the life,”⁷ and in this way, strive for inter-religious dialogue. “However, such dialogue does not replace, but rather accompanies the *missio ad gentes* (mystery of unity).”⁸ It follows that all men and women who are saved share, though differently, in the same mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ through his Spirit. “Inter-religious dialogue, which is part of the Church’s evangelizing mission, requires an attitude of understanding and a relationship of mutual knowledge and reciprocal enrichment, in obedience to the truth and with respect for freedom.”⁹

⁷ John 14:6.

⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, Card., Prefect. “Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Declaration: ‘*dominus iesus*,’ On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church,” *The Vatican*, August 6, 2000, accessed October 19, 2017, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html.

⁹ Ibid.

Diversity is Divine and Division is Diabolical¹⁰

This short simple phrase speaks volumes about the disconnect between God’s design of humankind and humankind’s unawareness of God’s intent in relating to neighbors. It can therefore be argued that more probably than not, people many times, simply do not practice building each other up in support of God’s design for mankind, but rather ridicule, belittle, criticize, gossip and slander others, thereby dividing His people. To make this concept clear, Jesus said: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”^{11, 12} In other words, the entirety of His written Word and command is to love Him and to love our neighbor. Our God-ordained diversities strengthen relationships among neighbors through our individuality and uniquenesses which by God’s design are intended to strengthen and support the family of faith or the body of Christ. As an example, Paul presents the following argument for family unity in God in an analogy with the human body and its many members:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. . . . If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that

¹⁰ Bob Williamson, “Diversity is Divine Division is Diabolical,” *Words for the Day*, November 6, 2014, accessed January 1, 2018, www.wordsfortheday.com/index.php/2014/11/diversity-is-divine-division-is-diabolical/.

¹¹ Matt. 22:36-40.

¹² See also Exod. 32: 27; Deut. 6:4-5; Levit. 19:18, 24:14; Mark 12:30-31; and Luke 10:27.

there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.¹³

God himself clarifies: “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”¹⁴ The opposite is inferred as well, that if each Christian is part of the body, then dividing the body will destroy it. This understanding of divisions of the body of Christ as dangerous is reaffirmed by our Lord himself: “Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: ‘Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall.’”¹⁵ Also: “If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.”¹⁶ These words offer an analogy with any relationship, group of people, church, or any other organization, corporation, or government that discloses if unity is destroyed by divisions among the various groups of people, then relationships, organizations and governments will fail. Careful study of the above scriptural verses substantiating this fundamental tenet of Christianity of unity among God’s people and the church provides a solid foundation of God’s commandments that directs people to build relationships between each other and the church. The great divisions discussed in Chapter Three¹⁷ among people, and relationships, and divisions within the church appear to exhibit signs of satanic deceptions and perceived unawareness of the central tenants of Christianity.

¹³ 1 Cor. 12:12–31 (ESV).

¹⁴ 1 Cor. 12:27.

¹⁵ Luke 11:17.

¹⁶ Mark 3:25.

¹⁷ Eric Hatfield, “How Many Christian Denominations Worldwide?” *The Way: Following Jesus in the 21st Century*, November 23, 2012, accessed August 19, 2017, <https://theway21stcentury.wordpress.com/2012/11/23/how-many-christian-denominations-worldwide>.

America's Churches Appear Deceived by Satanic and Demonic Influences

Perhaps the clearest and most irrefutable examples of divisions within the body are the church denominational divisions that satanic influences have affected over (in many cases) the most trivial and insignificant details among churches who claim Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. While it can be questioned; are these divisions really the work of Satan and his dark spirit forces or simply sin in the hearts of various church members and leaders? Circumstances are varied and individual cases and should be studied to determine if satanic influences are involved. Satanic influences to people and churches begin with willful, unrepentant sin that leads to demonic influence, should repentance and forgiveness be lacking. Consider again, Jesus' parable to the wicked servant.¹⁸ Divisions within the Family of God begin with sin, and are then greatly expanded by satanic influences to divide the family of God.

In this generation, the Christian faith is less of a worldview that challenges the supremacy of individualism and more of a worldview that faith is defined by individualism.¹⁹ "U.S.-Americans are increasingly comfortable picking and choosing what they perceive as accurate theological views, and becoming comfortable discarding many Biblical teachings."²⁰ Growing numbers of people now serve as their own theologian-in-residence.²¹ Consequences to this worldview generate unpredictable and contradictory beliefs. Barna points out, as examples, "that on the one hand millions who

¹⁸ Matt. 18:22–30.

¹⁹ The Barna Group, "Implications of the Research," *Faith & Christianity*, 2009, accessed January 2, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/christianity-is-no-longer-americans-default-faith>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ The Barna Group, "Implications of the Research."

consider themselves to be Christian, now believe that the Bible is totally accurate in its teachings, while on the other hand and at the same time, believe Jesus Christ sinned.²² It can be argued that in many cases, denominational and doctrinal divisions are not of God, and if it is not of God, then it is the result of Satan. Christians who promote divisions and attacks against other Christians further promote the belief that the worst enemies of Christianity are Christians!^{23, 24} It has been argued that Christians are doing more damage and inflicting more harm on the body of Christ than most other groups.

With many contemporary Christian churches unfortunately embracing post-modern consumerism values, the body of Christ is more fractured than ever before:

Based on interviews with 601 Senior Pastors nationwide, representing a random cross-section of Protestant churches, Barna reports that only half of the country's Protestant pastors—51%—have a biblical worldview. Defining such a worldview as believing that absolute moral truth exists, that it is based upon the Bible, and having a biblical view on six core beliefs (the accuracy of biblical teaching, the sinless nature of Jesus, the literal existence of Satan, the omnipotence and omniscience of God, salvation by grace alone, and the personal responsibility to evangelize), the researcher produced data showing that there are significant variations by denominational affiliation and other demographics. The most important point is that you can't give people what you don't have. The low percentage of Christians who have a biblical worldview is a direct reflection of the fact that half of our primary religious teachers and leaders do not have one. In some denominations, the vast majority of clergy do not have a biblical worldview, and it shows up clearly in the data related to the theological views and moral choices of people who attend those churches.²⁵

²² Ibid.

²³ L.Z. Granderson. "When Christians Are Their Own Worst Enemies," *CNN*, July 24, 2012, accessed May 17, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/07/24/opinion/granderson-christians/index.html>.

²⁴ A.W. Tozer, *Rut, Rot or Revival: The Problem of Change and Breaking Out of the Status Quo* (Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread, 1993), 8.

²⁵ The Barna Group, "Implications of the Research," *Faith & Christianity*, 2009, accessed January 2, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/christianity-is-no-longer-americans-default-faith>.

A newer parallel, survey conducted by Barna also indicates that: “large numbers who attend Protestant or Catholic churches have adopted beliefs conflicting with the Bible.”²⁶ Barna’s continuing research among teenagers and adolescents further reveals that: “trends advancing at full gallop away from adopting biblical theology in favor of syncretic, culture-based theology.”²⁷ Thus, division and deceit by dark and demonic forces are indeed having great impacts on the U.S.-American Christian church.

Consider, for example, attitudes reflected by three Christian writers in recent biblical and theological publications. First, is the celebrated New Testament scholar N.T. Wright, who appears to be fully aware of the pervasive presence of evil in our world today. In a recent monograph, Wright points out that: “evil is present in both disruptions of the physical environment and also through its control of human minds and spirit. The line between good and the evil does not separate any one people or individual from another, but rather, it runs “through every individual and every society.”²⁸

Second, Robert H. Bennett reveals in his book: *Afraid*, that, partially via the media, exorcism, Satan, demonic and dark spirits, have substantially increased, just within the last ten years. Fascination with the paranormal has taken over late night radio and cable television’s documentary channels with feature programs on true haunting, ghost encounters, mediums and other paranormal related phenomena.²⁹ Lastly, addressing the same point, Eugene Peterson, in *Christ Plays in 10,000 Places: A Conversation in*

²⁶ George Barna, “Statistics for the Changing Church,” *Kjos Ministries*, 2008, accessed November 25, 2017, <https://www.crossroad.to/charts/church-statistics.html>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 43.

²⁹ Thomas Bennett, *Afraid* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing, 2016), 68–69.

Spiritual Theology, writes that spiritual property is all around and yet there is a lack of interest in dealing with other people. A lack of interest in others' mentality that is encountered in schools, businesses and, places of worship, permeates the mindset of the post-modern consumer culture.³⁰

Apparent Satanic Influences on the Millennial Generation in Churches

The larger and more significant impact of both technological advances and fascination with the demonic realm is manifested in our youth: the Millennials. This generation, which some describe as woefully poorly spiritually formed, uninformed, and seem largely unaware of the risks and liabilities incurred from entertaining dark and demonic forces. They are also arguably the most vulnerable to post-modern consumer cultural deceptions. This age group, as a cohort, seems hungry for satanic and demonic spirituality, as evidenced by their overwhelming interest in movies, music culture, and media that portrays the spiritual world, either as darkness or benign. These are the same satanic influences that are forming church and secular children, young adults, and to a degree, everyone. This process, as discussed above, is ongoing in homes and churches.

Adding to the drift away from Christian orthodox values is a growing significant cultural and generational gap between Christian teachers who are typically in the forty-five to fifty-year age range, and are formed, raised, and trained in world of Christian apologetics and the modern embrace of rationality. This philosophical backdrop can be contrasted to that of the students they teach, who have been formed and raised in a post-modern consumer culture; a culture far different from that of their teachers. As a result, teachers and students are often from two different and distinct worlds. The impacts and

³⁰ Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in 10,000 Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 2005), 5.

consequences of this sociological phenomenon can be very problematic. For example, millennials in this culture have grown up with legalized abortion, same sex marriage, discredited governments, and failing church institutions. Many millennials seem to trust no one and seem to rely upon their own instincts and assessments of life in formulating decisions about their lives. Many millennials claim spirituality over religion. Information that is being transferred from teacher to student is falling on deaf ears, not because the information is incoherent, but because the ears of the students are closed. They often assume that they must filter God's supernatural wisdom through their own life experiences and belief systems.

Satanic Involvement in the Economy of God

The theological doctrine known as the Divine Economy of God addresses God's dealings and plans for the world's salvation and humankind's redemption.³¹ It is within this economy of God doctrine that people are called and have the capability to know some of God's mysteries, including why Satan and evil exist. It is in the overall economy of God that the realities of evil and Satan, his angels, and demons are best understood.³² "Now we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began."³³ In other words, the Divine Economy even encompasses God's will for Satan and his evil works to bring about humankind's salvation and redemption. Satan and his evil forces would not exist if God's will did not allow Satan and his evil to glorify Him and also to play a role in the salvation of

³¹ Witness Lee, *The Divine Economy of God* (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream, 1986), 13.

³² Rom. 9:18–29.

³³ 2 Cor. 2:7.

humankind. Also, the fullness of God’s mercy could not be accomplished unless there were vessels of wrath.³⁴

Thomas Oden writes in *The Word of Life* that God countered the deceiver’s unjust rule over humanity because of his apostasy and rebellion. To do this, God chose a just way to recover what was His own. God did not recover His own through coercion or by arbitrary fiat, but by way of persuasion; fitting to the character of God. God would redeem humanity not by force, but by taking responsibility for humanity, allowing the enemy to stumble over his own follies.³⁵ It seems that the key understanding of God’s divine economy’s scope is to recognize that Satan was to play a part, but that he was also to be overcome, not by God’s power, but by God’s justice, love and mercy.^{36,37} Satan had become a “lover of power” and this pleased God because He rescued humankind from Satan’s power, not by His own power, which is unfathomably far greater than Satan’s might, but by His justice.³⁸ Augustine clarified this concept by saying that, although God had every means available to Him for humankind’s redemption from sin, the most fitting of all means was the incarnation and the atonement.³⁹ Reflecting on Augustine’s thoughts, it becomes clear that if people model their lifestyle after Jesus, then, much like Him, sin will be dealt with by yielding to its power and would therefore express faith in

³⁴ Rom. 9:22.

³⁵ Thomas C. Oden, *The Word of Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989), 397.

³⁶ St. Augustine, “Augustine, Book 13: Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy,” *Cambridge University Press*, ed. G. Matthews, trans. S. McKenna, 103–135, 2002, accessed January 5, 2018, doi:10.1017/CBO9781139164658.010, 393.

³⁷ Oden, 397.

³⁸ Augustine, “Augustine, Book 13,” 393.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 388–390.

God's justice. Scripture expresses this thought in the following ways: "If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them."⁴⁰

- "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."⁴¹
- "But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God."⁴²
- "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."⁴³

These scriptural verses are probably most counterintuitive to, not only human nature, but to major tenants of the post-modern consumer culture. People who choose to be guided and influenced by much of human nature and culture are unwittingly and unknowingly satanically deceived to believe that human emotions and human beliefs not based on God's principles take precedence over God's wisdom.

⁴⁰ Luke 6:29.

⁴¹ Luke 6:35.

⁴² 1 Pet. 2:20.

⁴³ Rom. 8:28.

Praxis, Practical Theology, and Cultures

“If there is no one ideal strategy or model for all churches, then each particular church, usually in local networks and other associations, must gain competencies and capacities that are specific to its own time and place. To do this, church leaders should gain skills in theological reflection; or “practical theology. This is not an approach that selects a theory, and then applies it, or what is termed ‘theory to practice,’ but rather the process proposed, although more complicated, is improved. For example, if the church is to live in responsiveness to and dependence on God, reflective discernment becomes a continuous practice, rooted in the current environment, and experiences of the church.”⁴⁴

“This approach to practical theology, is a continual movement from experience to reflection and study, and then on to new actions and experiences. This sequence of events is termed “praxis,” and is often misunderstood as “practice,” referring to how a concept or theory is first understood mentally, and then applied to real-life circumstances. Praxis is the whole cycle of reflection and study on the one hand, and engagement and action on the other. Further reflection and study with this paradigm views Scripture differently. “So, in the church, praxis is the constant rhythm that includes study and reflection, including working with theology and other theoretical material, with continual interaction, engagement and action. A church’s capacity to discern and participate in God’s will is increased whenever this rhythm is well resourced, intentional, and applied.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Luke 6:29.

⁴⁵ Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez, *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2011), 40.

Praxis, therefore, is the recommended strategy to engage competent study of the Scriptures concerning satanic influences in their ability to divide people, relationships, and churches. Praxis employs careful study of Scripture within parameters of the internal consistency doctrine discussed previously in this study and, in this way, becomes clear as to what God's plan is for employment of Satan and his evil works for His glory and humankind's salvation. The engagement and action elements of praxis then move people to employ moral virtues in every aspect of their lives. More is discussed about virtues in Chapter Six as mitigation measures to satanic influences.

Learned Guidance

Responses to questions on how to reverse the tide of growing deceptions and the subsequent devastating responses involve a process that begins with Learned Guidance. As an example, one of the United States' founding fathers and founder of Pennsylvania, William Penn, offered guidance to his own children on how to find God:

Soon after you wake, retire your mind into a pure silence from all thoughts and ideas of worldly things and in that frame, wait upon God, to feel his good presence, to lift up your hearts to him, and commit your whole self into his blessed care and protection. Then rise, if well, read a chapter or more in the Scriptures, and afterwards dispose for the business of the day, ever remembering that God is present as overseer of all your thoughts, words and actions, and, my dear children, accordingly, do not dare to do that in his holy, all seeing presence which you would be ashamed. And as you have intervals from your lawful occasions, the light to step home (within yourselves, I mean), commune with your own hearts in the steel; and, as many condenser said on another occasion, one like the son of God. You shall find any joy with you and in you: I treasure the world knows not of, but is the aim, and, and diadem of the children of God. This will bear you up against all temptations, and carry you sweetly and evenly—through your day's business, supporting you under disappointments, and moderating your satisfaction and success and prosperity.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ William Penn, "William Penn's Advice to His Children, Chapter 2," *The Quaker Writings Home Page*, 1699, accessed July 4, 2017, <http://www.qhpress.org/quakerpages/qwhp/advice2.htm>.

William Penn's timeless words, although written in 1699, are applicable today as they were his generation. He advises that at beginning of each new day, to clear the mind of all distractions and pray for communication with God. Then, prepare the mind with Bible readings to get ready for the challenges, pains and sufferings of the day so that God-centered decisions are made in all matters. Penn reminds his children (and us) that there is nothing that is outside of God's vision, so every thought word and action should be accomplished with this thought in mind. This is key for leading a God-centered life; reflecting His character, love, mercy, and forgiveness in everything that is thought and done for the day and if each day is centered on God and we resist Satan and his evil, then Satan will flee from us.⁴⁷

Malone writes in his book *Shadow Boxing: The Dynamic 2-5-14 Strategy to Defeat the Darkness Within*, that Jesus has given humankind the keys to the kingdom of heaven, but does not force their use. Jesus waits for people to take action and then intercedes for them. His 2-5-14 strategy offers two ways of access, five open doors and fourteen root spirits. Malone summarizes that people cannot accomplish what Jesus did nor will He will do what He commanded people to do.⁴⁸

This dissertation is focused on understanding spirit world dynamics where humans are engaged in a raging battle that requires training and action to survive.⁴⁹ Satan's intrusions always attack anything affecting the outcome of God's purposes for

⁴⁷ James 4:7.

⁴⁸ Henry Malone, *Shadow Boxing: The Dynamic 2-5-14 Strategy to Defeat Darkness Within* (Irving Vision Life, 1999), 41.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

humankind with disturbances and unnecessary conflicts.⁵⁰ Satan's goals are to spiritually destroy humans by bringing them down, keeping them in darkness and generally rendering humans ineffective in accomplishing their God-given lives according to His will. If people are ignorant of satanic strategies, then they are less than God created them to be, and consequently time is needlessly spent ineffectually fighting Satan while in bondage in many areas of life, uninformed or misinformed about the kingdom of darkness, and—even worse—possibly even unaware that there is a battle that rages over souls.⁵¹

Pain and Suffering under Challenge

Many secular people view God's church and the family of faith as divided, judgmental and exclusive. As a result, they criticize the church and its members alleging that they do not practice its beliefs. Chief among misunderstandings both within and outside the church is the misunderstanding and ignorance of the place and the role of pain-and-suffering in the life of faith.

It is believed by some that pain is not a subject or experience that many are naturally drawn to. If love is the most desired among human experiences, then it appears that pain is possibly the most dreaded.⁵² This small word "pain" seems to describe every imaginable shade and variation of physical suffering and emotional anguish, and it seems to be an integral universal reality within human experience. In addition to physical pain and suffering, there is an enormous area of vulnerabilities to the heart and mind as well.

⁵⁰ Malone, *Shadow Boxing*, 46.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁵² Andrew Elphinstone, *Freedom, Suffering and Love* (London: SCM, 1976), 92.

Even so, this most dreaded and disliked human experience is also one of the most potentially positive contributors to human health.⁵³

Elphinstone writes that if pain and suffering could be abolished, it would have to be invented again immediately, for it occupies a truly astonishing place in the unfolding of the creation scheme. Evolution itself tells us of the necessity of pain in the business of biological development. At the same time it seems that pain and suffering are central raw materials for man's entry into that dimension of love, which lies beyond evolution. It is indispensable for the survival and progress of the humblest species, yet it is the experience most deeply shared between God and man, and helps to bring man towards that love which characterizes him in his intended divine likeness. Love in any dimension, which might be called divine, is inseparable from pain and suffering. It is an enduring thread running through the whole human story, from its most primitive animal background to its most profound spiritual experience. This earthly equipment of evolutionary survival becomes, in humankind, a kind of assault course through which man is challenged to discover deeper meanings of love and more selfless expressions of it.⁵⁴

Provided out of the evolutionary cradle, pain and suffering become, paradoxically, a principal mechanism by which the human spirit perceives its place in the hierarchy of being. For people standing at the end of the long evolutionary journey and now at the threshold of further dimensions of being, pain and suffering hold a position of

⁵³ Elphinstone, *Freedom, Suffering and Love*, 92.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

crucial importance.⁵⁵ On the one hand, it is more the business of the biologist than the theological thinker to detail the various functions and importance that pain fails in evolutionary processes. No doubt he would say that the whole of evolution and the very existence and survival of living species would be unimaginable without pain-and-suffering. It is not hard for the uninformed layman to see that all the positive needs and satisfactions of life are backed by an ultimate sanction of pain and suffering and that to the satisfying of such needs as hunger, thirst, sex, rest or warmth are given their urgency. It is the only easy to understand that pain is the natural warning of damage threatened or done, and that in all sorts of ways. Behavior is dictated by the messages which pain conveys. D.L. Moody wrote that:

When a battle is fought, all are anxious to know who the victors are. When I was converted, I made this mistake: I thought the battle was already mine, the victory already won, the crown already in my grasp. I thought that old things have passed away, that all things have become new; that my old corrupt nature; the Adam life, was gone. But I found out, after serving Christ for a few months, that conversion was only like enlisting in the Army, that there was a battle on hand, and that if I was to get a crown, I had to work for it and fight for it.⁵⁶

It appears clear from Moody's writings and disclosures from the Gospel Scriptures that the battle against satanic influences and forces seems to never end, but knowing and understanding them gives strengths to resist Satan's accusations, lies, deceit, and deceptions.

How Christians Justify Belief in God in the Face of Pain and Suffering

This "problem" of pain and suffering, is one with which humankind has struggled throughout all of history. Its solution seems to elude many, even from within the pages of

⁵⁵ Ibid., 93.

⁵⁶ D.L. Moody, *The Overcoming Life, And Other Sermon* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 2.

Scripture. I propose that providing mitigations and management of satanic influences and attacks begins with understanding answers to this critical question: “Why people suffer?”

The great New Testament truth reveals that God became human, and in so doing, freely gave up His heavenly glory to live among us. Why? Scriptures answer in saying that Jesus began to teach humankind that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and after three days rise again.⁵⁷ He also said that His coming also was to destroy Satan’s works and his hold on humanity.⁵⁸

Much like Jesus, people also are called to suffer like Him, because He suffered for humankind, leaving them with an example of how to follow in Him.⁵⁹ Through the Apostle Peter, Jesus expressed that, if people follow Him, they will suffer too, much as He. This biblical truth of the cost of discipleship begins to provide an answer to the problem of pain and suffering. In fact, it might also be proposed that all who want to live a Godly life in Jesus Christ will be persecuted.⁶⁰

God makes it clear that if we choose to live a God-centered life, we will be persecuted.⁶¹ Paul then builds on this point saying that if we are to grow in “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,”⁶² then people must imitate and follow Jesus. Christ’s passion clearly demonstrates attitudes and actions to imitate. “Have this mind

⁵⁷ Mark 8:31.

⁵⁸ 1 John 3:8.

⁵⁹ 1 Pet. 2:21.

⁶⁰ 2 Tim. 3:12–13.

⁶¹ John 15:20.

⁶² Eph. 4:13.

among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God . . . humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.”⁶³ The profound expression of love that Jesus demonstrated through His willing endearment of pain and sacrifice to atone for humanity’s sins is beyond human comprehension.

Jesus Christ’s passion on the cross demonstrates that love is costly to God, and the difficult truth is that it will also be costly to humanity as well.⁶⁴ Contrary to this understanding, it appears that Satan provides a relatively worry-free environment with adequate income, job security, and comfortable relationships. It is said by many: “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and need nothing,” but it is not realized that that these are characteristics of wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked character.⁶⁵ Contrasting this worldview, God clearly says that people will suffer: “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have and,”⁶⁶ “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.”⁶⁷

Scriptures reveal that Christians are one of few groups taught to rejoice in suffering. Paul even boasted in suffering for his faith. Suffering is a refining process of the spirit in that people should both find glory in their sufferings, and also learn

⁶³ Phil. 2:5–6, 8.

⁶⁴ Paul Thigpen, “Did Christ Have to Suffer: Or Could Man Have Been Saved Another Way?” *Catholic Answers*, February 1, 2004, accessed July 9, 2017, <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/did-christ-have-to-suffer>.

⁶⁵ Rev. 3:17.

⁶⁶ Phil. 1:29–30.

⁶⁷ Rev. 3:19.

perseverance through them.⁶⁸ All of this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as Christians persevere in faith, they will be counted worthy God's kingdom.⁶⁹

Recommendations to Curb Evil and Mitigate Satanic Influences

The Bible presents answers on how to understand and manage evil and there are several approaches that, when linked, will expose satanic influences that shape worldviews and uncover God's plan for humans to deal with satanic influences. This dissertation proposes that, having an ear to hear God's voice, then to renew the mind, study the Scriptures with a fresh heart, then understandings will surface about Satan and his demons and their resultant evil acts and their damage to humans.

As discussed in Chapter One, the process of enlightenment begins with not allowing Satan to influence humankind to think of themselves as independent masters of their own lives and destinies. Fueled by Satan, through deceptions cloaked in the post-modern consumer worldview, human thought becomes inflated with personal pride. As a result, many consumed by the post-modern consumer culture live in an emotional prison formed by indelible negative experiences, unresolved by love and forgiveness.⁷⁰ David Kupelian describes pride as a private war with God.⁷¹ Failure to address and resolve long-lasting negative experiences traumatizes people for their lifetime.⁷²

⁶⁸ Rom. 5:3.

⁶⁹ 2 Tim. 1:5.

⁷⁰ Kupelian, *How Evil Works*, 206.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 207.

Summarizing the Problem

Church leaders and theologians are believed to be in need of a way to transfer life-giving forgiveness and salvation information to ears that are open and willing to hear. The problem has been the same for many thousand years and is reiterated in Bible comments that include: “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”⁷³ The Holy Spirit only gives ears to hear and eyes to see based on what is in a person’s heart, and his or her sincere desire to know truth. Dwayne Jorgenson, retired Professor of Theology at the Moody Bible Institute, stated that people generally are not motivated to learn, see, or hear philosophies different from their current cultural paradigms unless they are in a state of transition.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, many main line denominations are succumbing to post-modern consumer cultural paradigms that are pounding the drum for a mystic spirituality (not orthodox) to win larger attendance, that thirty-five years ago would have seemed heretical. In fact, many churches today are being formed by the culture, rather than forming the culture. It appears that on the one hand people and church leaders seem to understand the spirit and the intent of the Biblical message, however on the other hand are so deceived by the self-fulfillment philosophy of the post-modern consumer culture that understanding is difficult to convert into action.

If one applies logic and careful consideration to scriptural evidences presented and the statistics that demonstrate God’s family of faith is in decline, a person can begin to comprehend that through the lens of culture, people appear to be deceived and misled by forces of the dark and demonic spirit world to a degree perhaps like no other in

⁷³ Ps. 115:6, 135:7; Isa. 6:10; Jer. 5:21, 6:10; Ezek. 12:2; Matt. 11:15, 13:9; Luke 8:8, 14:35; Acts 18:27; Rom. 11:8; 2 Tim 4:3; Rev. 2:7, 11, 29; 3:13, 22; and 13:9.

⁷⁴ Dwayne Jorgens, retired Moody Bible Institute Professor, interview by the author, Spokane, WA, March 20, 2016.

history. In consideration of these understandings, it seems that God does indeed work all things for good, including the evil generated by Satan and his minions.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Rom. 8:28.

CHAPTER SIX

SATAN, HIS AGENTS, AND THEIR RESULTANT EVIL ACTS

BRING GLORY TO GOD AND SALVATION TO HUMANKIND

Introduction

The ministry problem presented in Chapter One identified stresses and the strains placed on Christian church leaders often resulting from unawareness and being misinformed about the nature and character of satanic influences. These same leaders at times unfortunately become discouraged and fearful when faced with consequences of understanding, accepting, and teaching God's truths about satanic influences. The thesis responding to this ministry problem argues that Satan and his evil acts do not constitute an unfortunate thorn in God's side, but are indeed instruments helping to bring glory to God glory and salvation to humankind. Chapter Two presented biblical evidences substantiating this thesis. Chapter Three discussed cultural influences shaped by media and their promoted deceptions that draw people away from God to embrace a worldview of self-fulfillment and narcissism. Christianity in contrast, and in the eyes of post-modern consumer culture is regarded as a disease, a plague, whose time has come and gone. Vendors of post-modern consumerism promote satanic agendas shrouding God's wisdom, blinding people to His plan, that evil brings indeed even Him glory and salvation to humankind.

Chapter One referenced Lawless, who exposes dysfunctional personal and social characteristics revealing an underlying battle with satanic deceptions that appear to be cloaked in shroud of the post-modern consumer culture. Likewise, the ministry problem and its narrative vignette revealed satanic influences on people and churches yielding

eight primary consequences of congregational division, false teaching, family breakdown, hidden sin, transfer growth diversion, self-dependence, discipleship distraction, and finally hopelessness.¹ This sixth and final chapter offers a multi-step process designed to help overcome, manage and mitigate these satanic disorder consequences of unawareness and misinformation related to demonic influences. Lastly, a continuing educational program is recommended to expand awareness and learning of this subject.

The Mind: Highways of Neuropathways

A cornfield with interconnecting roadways throughout can serve as an analogy to the mind and its associated neuropathways. A cornfield can be accessed for the first time in a particular area where there was no traffic by simply driving through cornstalks, initially creating a primitive and undeveloped two-tire track pathway of crushed cornstalks. If this particular route is not frequently used, or not used at all, the cornfield overtakes the primitive pathway and the pathway is soon nowhere to be found. However, if this primitive path continues to be used on a regular basis, it can soon become a graveled road of sufficient width for passing vehicles and other improvements, making it more developed and passable. As frequent and regular use continues to increase, this roadway eventually becomes paved, with lighting, and signs with entrance and exit ramps, very similar to a freeway.² This analogy with the mind suggests that new neural pathways can be created and developed within the brain with regular use and practice of

¹ Chuck Lawless, "8 Ways the Enemy Attacks Churches," *LifeWay Christian Resources*, 2017, accessed July 1, 2017, <http://thomrainer.com/2014/08/8-ways-enemy-attacks-churches>.

² Dr. Lynn A. Fraley, PhD, July 24, 2017, personal interview by the author, Spokane, WA.

new life skills such as ethics, virtues and recognizing and understanding newly encountered truths.³

Mitigation of satanic influences causing personal and social dysfunctions begin with developing these new, highly traveled roadways in the “cornfield” or in the case of the mind; new neurologically developed pathways carrying regular and daily practices of virtues or ethics and truths. The author is suggesting a multi-step process focusing on renewing the mind to employ virtues and truths in lieu of reoccurring unrepented habitual sin is recommended to begin mitigation and management of satanic influences.

Step One: Education and Prayer: Processes to mitigate satanic influences and renew the mind begins with educating church leaders to understand the depth and breadth of the ministry problem addressed in Chapter One. Recognizing, confronting and embracing satanic influences with boldness and courage are the first steps. This we should do against the backdrop of the understanding that God intends evil for good. Recommended mitigations can then be employed to relieve life changing negative consequences and begin working toward building up and unifying God’s family. Step one of the transformation process commences with sincere and heartfelt prayer with openness to these issues. This posture surmises that nothing is more important in this life than walking with God,⁴ undergirded by sincere prayer and careful reading of Scriptures daily. Too many are deceived in believing this issue is not a top priority.

³ Ibid.

⁴ David Kupelian, *How Evil Works: Understanding and Overcoming the Destructive Forces that are Transforming America* (New York: Threshold, 2010), 210.

Step Two: We Are What We Think: “As a person’s mind thinks, so is he.”⁵

Post-modern consumer culture deceives people into thinking that as masters of their own destiny; they are fully capable of achieving their goals and aspirations without God’s help. This self-fulfillment-type thinking blinds people to Satan so that he knows people’s minds better than they do; he knows what they like and do not like and understands their insecurities, weaknesses, and fears. He knows what bothers them most and is willing to invest any amount of resources necessary to defeat them. Additionally, he exhibits great patience to accomplish his will, in people’s thinking, attitudes, and lives.⁶

Dr. Henry Malone cautions that people cannot afford undisciplined minds or thoughts as Satan works overtime to assault them and during times of assault, every thought should be brought into obedience to Jesus Christ. God’s Word exhorts people to take every thought captive and pull down every high and lofty thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.⁷ Paul provides guidance for reasoning: “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”⁸

Evil thoughts that constantly pass through the mind are not sin.⁹ Sin results when those thoughts are held, entertained, pampered, and encouraged in both the heart and

⁵ Phil. 4: 8–9.

⁶ Joyce Meyers, *Battlefield of the Mind: Winning the Battlefield in Your Mind* (New York: Faithwords, 1987), 7.

⁷ Malone, *Shadow Boxing*, 51.

⁸ 2 Cor. 10:4.

⁹ Malone, *Shadow Boxing*, 51.

mind.¹⁰ Continued entertainment of sinful thoughts—whether adultery, lust, self-pity, judgment, or jealousy—becomes sin.

Arguments and every pretension against the knowledge of God are demolished when every personal thought is chosen to be obedient to Christ. Deceptive thinking begins with the deceptive beliefs of the self-fulfillment philosophy that holds that life is ‘all about me’ and that people can indeed determine their own destiny. This type of deceptive thinking is similar to the thinking of many who are substance addicted. While embracing this worldview, obedience to God and to others seems offensive and again, people are not equipped to thwart every satanic attack unless personal obedience to God is complete.¹¹ Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”¹² Understanding these life principles is foundational to understanding post-modern consumer cultural deceptions that misinform and mislead the mind and thinking processes.

Step Three: Renewing the Mind with an open mind and heart focused on Jesus, commences understanding that the mind is where the real spiritual battle takes place. Hence, renewing the mind with regular and systematic employment of the virtues in daily life in lieu of entertaining sinful thoughts and practices is the next step. Deceit and deception often begin in the void wasteland of faulty reasoning in the mind, and the battlefield where engagement of satanic influences begins. In other words, the battlefield is within the mind, and as a result, thoughts generate actions; and thoughts and actions

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 2 Cor. 10: 4–6.

¹² John 8:31–32.

together exhibit people's character—people driven to pursue actions gratifying the flesh.¹³

Malone reinforces this concept by emphasizing that the battle does indeed rage in the mind between the Holy Spirit and Satan.¹⁴ While Satan struggles to control the mind, it is up to the individual to prevent this. God's word admonishes people to take every thought captive and pull down every high and lofty thing that exalts itself above God's knowledge. We read in Corinthians that:

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.¹⁵

Paul provides insights as to who the real enemy is and how to begin intentionally engaging with this spiritual battle. Engagement begins with knowing the enemy and then being armed with weapons not of this world. Paul writes: "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."¹⁶ This passage reveals the adversary's true character and reminds us of the satanic influences invading a person's mind. Paul reminds people that they misjudge others for sinful acts of aggression influenced by dark spirit forces. He then continues to enlighten people to what

¹³ Meyers, *Battlefield of the Mind*, 3.

¹⁴ Malone, *Shadow Boxing*, 50.

¹⁵ 2 Cor. 10:3–5.

¹⁶ Eph. 6:11–12.

weapons to use in this spiritual engagement with these dark and demonic spirit powers that live in spirit world: “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”¹⁷

Carefully note that Paul says, “When the day of evil comes,” not “if” it comes. So every Christian should indeed, expect, pray, and prepare for their day of evil. We read in Ephesians that:

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.¹⁸

These spiritual defenses are more necessary than any other defense. Faith is everything in temptation’s hour. Faith is evidence of things not seen and the substance of things hoped for.¹⁹

Step Four: The “Yardstick” of Learning Truth, Believing and Virtues: Ethics is a new term used today replacing the classical term “virtues.”²⁰ St. Augustine said: “We are too weak to discover the truth by reason alone.”²¹ Peter Northouse in, *Leadership Theory and Practice*, writes about the ethical importance, and the need of a system of

¹⁷ Eph. 6:13.

¹⁸ Eph. 6:16–18.

¹⁹ Heb. 11:1.

²⁰ Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue: Traditional Moral Wisdom for Modern Moral Confusion* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 64.

²¹ St. Augustine, “Augustine Quote,” *The Basics of Philosophy*, 2008, accessed January 1, 2018, http://www.philosophybasics.com/general_quotes.html.

moral principles governing appropriate personal and group conduct. Joseph Pieper writes, “Belief means to regard something as true on the testimony of someone else,” therefore, “We can only believe if we want to.”²² The Christian church, for over seventeen hundred years, has been diligent to establish a “yardstick” to determine how people are to live out their faith well and to establish a set of common values acted out by people of faith in every stage of life. This “yardstick” is called “virtues” or “ethics,” which are qualities of being of excellent moral character.²³ Virtues are the moral excellence of a person reflected in qualities of honesty, respectfulness, courageousness, forgiveness, and kindness. Virtues or ethics commit people to doing right, regardless of personal cost, and to perform acts consistent with established values and principles.

Pope Benedict XVI shares, “The world would do well focusing more intently on theological and cardinal virtues. The Catholic Church’s Catechism states: ‘A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do good, allowing people to perform good acts and to give the best of themselves.’”²⁴ Msgr. Romano Guardini, a German priest hailed by Pope Benedict XVI, says that virtue means motives, powers, actions and people’s being gathered at any given time into a characteristic whole by definitive moral values; a dominant ethic.^{25,26} Cultivation of virtues is important because they drive a

²² Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1997), 15.

²³ Achtemeier, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, 1,114.

²⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *The Virtues* (Charlotte, NC: Catholic Company Publishers, 2010), 9.

²⁵ Romano Guardini, *Learning the Virtues that Lead You to God* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute, 2013), 4.

²⁶ Dr. Richard J. Krejcir, “Why Virtue is Important and Needed,” *Discipleship Tools*, 2001, accessed January 2, 2018, <http://www.discipleshiptools.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=37086&columnid=4166>.

predominantly virtuous and habitual daily life.²⁷ Virtues or ethics are the same for everyone and are not a “living, breathing” set of arbitrary personal characteristics that can be interpreted individually to discern whether or not they should or should not apply to a person’s life. Virtues are in fact a commonality of understanding of how to love God and neighbor and are not open to individual definitions and interpretation as the post-modern consumer culture promotes. Since the first century, the Catholic (universal) church and later in the eighth century, the Eastern Orthodox Church used virtues, or lack thereof, as the “yardstick” measuring people and church’s adherence, or lack thereof, to spiritual wellness. It therefore can be argued that satanic influences provide the wedge between virtuous living and sinful living.

Forty years ago Max Scheler wrote an essay entitled “On the Rehabilitation of Virtue.” He pointed out changes that the word and concept of “virtue” had undergone in the course of history, until taking the wretchedly deficient character that clings to them today.²⁸ Although great discussion can be presented on many virtues and their benefits, “humility” and “forgiveness” rise to the top relating to satanic deceptions.

Humility. Perfection cannot be attained without the virtue of humility.²⁹ Cassian writes that people should first show humility to others (of the faith) and also manifest

²⁷ Virtues for Life, “What are Virtues?” 2010–2017, *Virtues for Life*, accessed June 21, 2017, <http://www.virtuesforlife.com/what-are-virtues>.

²⁸ Max Scheler, “On the Rehabilitation of Virtue,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 79, no. 1, trans. Eugene Kelly, winter 2005, accessed January 2, 2018, https://www.pdcnet.org/pdc/bvdb.nsf/purchase?openform&fp=acpq&id=acpq_2005_0079_0001_0021_0037.

²⁹ Cassian, 254.

humility to God in the depths of one's hearts. Cassian believed that perfection could never be reached unless action is taken in this manner.³⁰

Step Five: Forgiveness: Forgiveness is a complimentary virtue mitigating satanic influences. Forgiveness requires relinquishing resentments fueled by hostilities of anger, irritation, impatience, exasperation, annoyance, aggravation, bitterness, hurt feelings, hard feelings, and all other emotions masking a hatred, which lies at their origins.³¹ Forgiveness begins with recognizing personal flaws, then repenting and deeply forgiving others. Engagement in forgiveness is to be cleansed of sin. Much like humility, forgiveness is virtually impossible without God's help.

In conclusion, these suggestions may be considered as teaching and preaching outline tools. The purpose of such tools will be to enhance a fuller understanding of satanic influences in a postmodern consumer society. It is hoped that, in part, these steps will provide Christian leaders with affective tools to provide a defense of wisdom and discernment against the wiles of dark spirits. Although these steps seem simple and straightforward, they are difficult to engage in daily life.

When God fashioned humankind, He designed them so that the human heart would be open to him and to others to express and receive love, joy, and peace. These qualities were meant to bring freedom to a person's entire being, but all too often, a person's heart feel like a locked prison instead of an open door.³² When people do not forgive others, or if they do not forgive themselves, the human heart becomes a prison.

³⁰ Ibid., 267.

³¹ Kupelian, *How Evil Works*, 207.

³² Dr. Bruce Wilkinson, *The Freedom Factor: Finding Peace by Forgiving Others and Yourself* (Portland, OR: Zeal, 2016), xv.

The very same heart that should be open to God's joy, peace, and love is a locked prison that is a dark and painful place constructed by unforgiveness.³³ Pain and suffering is a universal reality that accompanies unforgiveness and it affects most people.³⁴ As seen above, Scripture warns that torture or suffering continues until forgiveness is acknowledged.³⁵ Satanic post-modern consumer cultural influences fuel pride, which inflicts pain and suffering, subsequently fueling unforgiveness. Damage mitigations are not possible without first repenting pride and unforgiveness.

Fr. Gabriele Amorth, Chief Exorcist of Rome, observes that ordinary activity or regular temptation is the most common and typical manifestation of demonic activity. It is at the heart of one's daily choices: to do what is right and godly or to do what is wrong and sinful.³⁶ Fr. Amorth also writes in his book *An Exorcist Explains the Demonic: The Antics of Satan and His Army of Fallen Angels*, in response to the world view of self fulfillment, that (post-modern consumer) principles of self fulfillment are seductive, especially for younger people, because they delude them into thinking that life is a beautiful holiday in an imaginary land of playthings, where everything is permitted and where your "I" does not recognize any limits regarding pleasure and enjoyment.³⁷ Fr. Amorth counsels that in order to help children disdain this perspective with its destructive nature, it is necessary to form them from an early age to cultivate a life of faith through

³³ Ibid., 5.

³⁴ Ibid., 13.

³⁵ Ibid., 18.

³⁶ Fr. Gabriele Amorth, *An Exorcist Tells His Story* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1999), 32.

³⁷ Fr. Gabriele Amorth, *An Exorcist Explains the Demonic: The Antics of Satan and His Army of Fallen Angels* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute, 2016), 31.

prayer, Mass, and association with various Catholic youth clubs and other similar organizations. These disciplines are needed to give them a sense of God and awareness of Satan and sin's efforts to deceive people into separation from God and therefore into death. These young people, then, as they become older, will hopefully have developed right attitudes about satanic strategies and practices. Fr. Amorth, aware of these conditions, condemns certain forms of education, because of the total absence of God's wisdom. Young people today are more exposed to satanic influences than ever before and when faith disappears, satanic influences direct people to superstitions and occultism.³⁸ Every parent should recognize Fr. Amorth's wisdom, collected from exorcism life experiences and his recommendations to establishment of wisdom-based Christian education programs. Unfortunately, a lack of true wisdom among many people in the post-modern consumer culture appears to have reduced all virtues to one: being nice and measuring Jesus by a person's individual standard instead of measuring a person's standard by Him.³⁹

What is the difference between being virtuous compared to being merely ethical?⁴⁰ Contrasting two sets of behaviors, Catholic theologian, Peter Kreeft offers guidance in the often bewildering process of discerning right from wrong in moving towards the shifting mores of the 21st century. There are only two roads, suggests Kreeft, that lead away from the edge of the spiritual abyss. They are the road of ignorance and the road of knowledge. The road of ignorance is the road of not knowing the facts about our spiritual archenemy and his plan to draw us away from the Creator and His love for

³⁸ Ibid., 30–31.

³⁹ Amorth, *An Exorcist Explains the Demonic*, 30–31.

⁴⁰ Kreeft, *Back to Virtue*, 16.

humankind. This road is closed forever. The only road then appears to be the road of knowledge: moral knowledge, knowledge of the moral virtues that would make it unthinkable to ever drift away from faith and belief in God and His commandments.⁴¹

Chuck and Nancy Missler parallel Kreeft's thesis in, *The Kingdom, Power, Glory: The Over Comers Handbook*. They suggest that one of God's purposes for calling people is "to be conformed to His image."⁴² Our calling to God is far more extensive in declaring salvation in that humans are able to rule and reign with Jesus in the millennial kingdom, and after that for eternity; and everything moves toward this goal.⁴³

D.L. Moody wrote, "I have an idea that we are down here in training, that God is just polishing us for some higher service."⁴⁴ These theologians highlight the importance of standing with Jesus, evidenced by actions and living life in every precious moment. This also means that every protection should be taken to not be deceived by overwhelming satanic influences of the post-modern consumer culture.

Evil Seems to Glorify God

Many theologians seem to automatically embrace the assumption that evil does not glorify God. However, it can be argued that Satan, his demons and fallen angels with their evil works do glorify God in that everything exists for the greater glory of God (*ad maiorem gloriam Dei*). Since evil also exists, it then follows that evil itself is a necessary

⁴¹ Kreeft, *Back to Virtue*, 16.

⁴² Rom. 8:29.

⁴³ Chuck and Nancy Missler, *The Kingdom, Power, and Glory: The Over Cover's Handbook* (Coeur d'Alene, ID: Kings Highway Ministries, 2007), 25–26.

⁴⁴ D.L. Moody, "External Foes," *Christian Articles*, 2016, accessed January 2, 2018, <http://articles.ochristian.com/article13214.shtml>. Also see: D.L. Moody, *The Overcoming Life* (Abbotsford, WI: Aneko, 2016).

element in creation, providing key components of the glory of God. If evil did not exist, then God's love, mercy, grace, justice, and compassion would not be fully known. In other words, God decrees and allows evil for eventual good, the eventual good being the redemption of humankind.⁴⁵ The Apostle Paul affirmed this moral principle as well: "And why not say: "Let us do evil that good may come? Their condemnation is just."⁴⁶ They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness."⁴⁷

Considering Evil as Part of God's Plan for His Glory and Humankind's Salvation

If God created Satan and evil is Satan's choice by his own free will, then Satan and Satan's choice to do evil must have a purpose in God's overall plan for man, the universe and the heavens. "See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work. And it is I who have created the destroyer to wreak havoc."⁴⁸

The biblical worldview of evil affirms that evil will finally be conquered as a result of Jesus' death on the cross. However, why evil is still there, and how God has and will deal with it, how it affects people here and now, are critical questions related to how God intends to reconcile all things to Him.^{49,50} Another viewpoint sees that within all of

⁴⁵ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 527–528.

⁴⁶ Rom. 3:8 (NASV).

⁴⁷ Heb. 12:10.

⁴⁸ Isa. 54:16.

⁴⁹ N.T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 17.

⁵⁰ Col. 1:20.

God's creation, it seems, forces of chaos are harnessed to enact God's judgment. Still yet another view of evil sees that evil is used as a discipline for learning and development of good judgment.⁵¹

Maximus the Confessor writes in his *Commentary on the Our Father* that: "Jesus affects the destruction of tyranny of evil, which has lorded over humans by trickery. Jesus conquers the flesh that had been overcome in Adam by brandishing it as an instrument against evil. Thus he shows how flesh, bruised first by the first death, captures evil and destroys life by natural death?"⁵² "Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you? In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."⁵³ Here God tells humankind that unless forgiveness is learned and to have mercy of heart, humankind will be tormented until they do so.

The only way to salvation and to defeat evil was through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, which in summary, was an extra-ordinary and breathtaking combination of theological, personal and cosmic themes.⁵⁴ Jesus identifies Himself with Jewish revolutionaries in their failing cause to bring the kingdom for which they had longed for to reality, but in a way they had refused to accept.⁵⁵ As a result of the revolutionaries'

⁵¹ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 88.

⁵² Maximus the Confessor, "Commentary on Our Father," 104.

⁵³ Matt. 18:33–35.

⁵⁴ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 88.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

failing cause, Jesus then took the task upon Himself, which was the direct result of the consequences of failures of God's people in their vocation.⁵⁶ In other words, where Israel was to be the light of the world—the city set on a hill—and to be God's people, displaying an attitude of “turning the other cheek,” “going the second mile,” and by not resisting pagans seeking to destroy lives.⁵⁷

Maximus also adds depth to this concept, in writing of deliverance from evil in his *Commentary on The Our Father*. He advises that “‘lead us not into temptation’ is Scripture’s way of clarifying how the one who does not perfectly forgive those who offend Him and who does not present to God a heart purified of rancor (resentment and bitterness) and shining with the light of reconciliation with one’s neighbor, will lose the grace of blessings for which he prays.”⁵⁸ “Moreover, by a just judgment, he will be delivered over to temptation and to evil in order to learn how to cleanse himself of his faults by canceling his complaints against another.”⁵⁹

Gregory of Nyssa speaks of evil in the form of an enemy of the spirit life manifested through envy, pride and pleasure,⁶⁰ Lastly, Wright cautions that the problem of evil and God's ultimate victory over it are deep and dark mysteries. He continues to comment however, that there is a sudden flurry of new interest in questions about evil, which many have not given much attention previously, let alone offering solid answers.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Ibid., 86.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 85.

⁵⁸ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 85.

⁵⁹ Maximus the Confessor, *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*, ed. John Farina (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 115–116.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 10.

⁶¹ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 17.

Summary

Based upon Scriptural evidences cited, God's plan was determined before creation, it is unchangeable, and it will continue to stand forever in an unchangeable state. Creation by way of an omniscient Creator presupposes that God has a plan formed before creation and an order for His created universe:⁶² "The Lord Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will happen.""⁶³ "This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?"⁶⁴

On the one hand, God's Plan also takes into account humankind's sinful acts and is illustrated in Scripture with the sin of Jacob's sons in selling their brother Joseph into slavery.⁶⁵ In this same way, God later brought about prejudices in the hearts of Egyptians toward the Israelites who were sojourning in their land prior to the Exodus. Also, the ultimate example of the Lord incorporating evil actions of humans into His own plan and purpose is seen by Jesus' crucifixion.⁶⁶ These examples demonstrate that God does indeed use Satan and his evil acts to bring Him glory and mankind salvation. On the other hand, as one of God's creatures, Satan's power is, nonetheless, not infinite and, he is only

⁶² Ted J. McDonald, "Romans 9:22 — Does God causes evil to glorify and magnify Himself?" *Christian Treasury*, February 2012, accessed February 15, 2017, <http://www.christiantreasury.org/search/node/does%20god%20cause%20evil%20glorify%20magnify%20himself>.

⁶³ Isa. 14:24.

⁶⁴ Isa. 14:26–27.

⁶⁵ Gen. 50:19–20.

⁶⁶ Acts 4:27–28.

powerful in that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. In this capacity, he cannot prevent the direction of God's plan, although many falsely believe that he can. Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and His kingdom of Jesus Christ, and although his actions may cause grave injuries of a spiritual and physical nature to many individually, and to society in general, Satan's actions are only permitted by divine providence that, with strength and gentleness, seems to guide humankind and cosmic history. The employment of Satan and his evil acts is a great mystery in that God, through His providence, should permit diabolical activity.⁶⁷ Substantiating this claim, as cited earlier is God's word: "all and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."⁶⁸ The postmodern consumer culture encourages people to consider that a belief may not be true if it is not understood. God in His infinite wisdom, and being aware of these false teachings declared: "all for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."⁶⁹

In summary, careful consideration of scriptural evidences presented indeed makes it clear that Satan, his demons, and fallen angels play an important and necessary role in God's plan in creation to bring Him glory and to redeem humankind. Christians often forget that people (flesh and blood) are not each other's enemies.⁷⁰ If Satan cannot defeat a person, it appears that he will often try to influence someone whose anger will impact

⁶⁷ The Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #395 (New York: Image, 1995), 111.

⁶⁸ Rom. 8:28.

⁶⁹ Isa. 55:8-9.

⁷⁰ Malone, *Shadow Boxing*, 52–53. See also Eph. 6:12.

another. Often, Satan tries to hinder or defeat a close family member or business associate and then in turn, uses emotional ties to people, whenever he can to cause a loss, disappointment, or setback in lives.⁷¹ Satan's work is still the same as it was in the beginning: to sever communications with God. Satan was successful in intruding into the lives of Adam and Eve, inducing them to break communion with God.⁷² The fight with Satan and evil is fixed, and as long as fighting, people win.⁷³ The war with Satan cannot be lost if resistance to him is persistent.⁷⁴ With these thoughts in mind, all things can be accomplished through Jesus' strength.⁷⁵

This study argues that Satan's deceptions, couched in the tenets of the post-modern consumer culture, create unawareness and misinformation concerning God's plan for humankind's salvation. As Christians, first and foremost, it must be decided in one's own mind whether to believe or not believe that there is a God, and that His truths remain relevant today. God confirms this understanding in writing that all scripture is God breathed, and suitable for teaching and rebuke.⁷⁶ This logical progression of thought and understanding was discussed in depth in Chapter Two.

The Bible writes God's philosophy about human life and its relationship to Him, and in doing so, God advises us to have faith in the Bible's supernatural authorship. The Bible further discusses the presence and conflicts in the world with Satan and his demons

⁷¹ Malone, *Shadow Boxing*, 53.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Malone, *Shadow Boxing*, 59.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Phil. 4:13.

⁷⁶ 2 Tim. 3:16.

and fallen angels as clearly evidenced by the scriptural references in this study. Satan's actions and influences on humans and on the earth are called evil. The Bible has much to say about Satan, the Prince of this world and darkness, and his evil actions as attempts to turn people against God and each other. Careful discernment of Scripture teaches that evil would not exist without God allowing it. On the one hand, it seems that God's plan for the employment of evil is to learn to endure suffering as a model of perfection and in many cases allow Satan and his forces to inflict pain and suffering until this is understood.⁷⁷ On the other hand, there is great environmental evil (natural evil) cast upon the earth and environment, which is independent of the torture for sustained anger and bitterness.⁷⁸

St Thomas Aquinas writes: "If there were no good in what is evil, then the evil simply could not be, since it can have no mode in which to exist, nor any source from which corruption springs, unless it is something corruptible. Unless this something is good, it cannot be corrupted, because corruption is nothing more than the deprivation of the good. Evils, therefore, have their source in the good, and unless they are parasitic on something good, they are not anything at all."⁷⁹ In the case of Job, St. Thomas Aquinas does not take Job's sufferings to cast doubt on God's existence, but he does note how they, and comparable sufferings, can be thought of as beneficial. Such sufferings, St.

⁷⁷ John Gill, "Matt 18:34-35, Commentary," *Bible Study Tools*, 2018, accessed January 13, 2018, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/matthew-18-34.html>.

⁷⁸ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 20.

⁷⁹ Kevin Knight, "St. Thomas Aquinas' Commentary on Evil," *New Advent*, 1920, accessed July 19, 2017, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1049.htm>. First, evil is not a thing, and not an essence in things. It is not a substance, but a privation of a good substance and cannot 'wholly' corrupt something. No matter how much evil be multiplied, it can never destroy the good wholly."

Thomas Aquinas says, leads people to acquire virtues of various kinds, like medications leading to better health. Eleonore Stump comments that it is not common to think in such terms. She notes how Aquinas is able to think about God and evil by noting beneficial effects of misfortunes that can lead to acquire various kinds of virtues.⁸⁰

Augustine argues that: “varying goodness makes for greater goodness of things as a whole, than if there weren’t such variety, and evil were not something fully real but only something dependent on that which is more real, as disease (which is an evil) can exist only in a body (which is a good). Thus God, as the source of all that is, is not in contest with positive beings or with an ultimate reality, which is evil and His equal or counterpart. Augustine’s ideas were bold and daring and they troubled many who could not reconcile them with sin’s existence.”⁸¹

As stated in Chapter Three, the community of the faithful can actively mitigate satanic influences by being increasingly aware of the root causes of community dysfunctions. Awareness begins with “having ears to hear.” Once there is an understanding to hear, then the community of the faithful can then become educated to understand how dysfunctional behavior brings division within God’s community of the faithful.

Satan and damnation continue to be popular in perceiving evil that is in some ultimate sense: good. The classic “problem of evil” is perceived to only exist in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam where evil is believed to be a single good, whereas,

⁸⁰ Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas and the Sufferings of Job, in Reasoned Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology in Honor of Norman Kretzmann* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1993), 356.

⁸¹ Gregory Koukl, “Augustine: On Evil-Commentary,” *Great Philosophers*, 2002, accessed July 19, 2017, http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/Philosophers/Augustine/augustine_evil02.html.

almighty God, and the problem of evil is absent in other world religions.^{82,83} N.T. Wright summarizes this discussion and states, “The problem of evil is not something we will ‘solve’ in the present world. Thus, our primary task is not so much to give answers to impossible philosophical questions as to bring signs of God’s new world to birth, on the basis of Jesus’ death and in the power of His spirit, even in the midst of the present evil age.”⁸⁴

Chapter One, presented the dissertation problem that Christian pastors, teachers and church leaders are unaware and not well informed on the nature, character and intent of satanic influences. Consequences of congregational division, false teachings, family breakdowns, hidden sin, transfer growth diversion, self dependence, discipleship distraction and hopelessness were presented as the results of satanic influences that are misunderstood as to their purposes from God’s perspective. It is also proposed that these conditions bring forth fear in teaching truth about God’s word on evil. Mitigations and countermeasures presented here in Chapter Six are intended to develop the toolbox and weapons needed to face these challenges with courage and faith as a discipline and test of faith from God.

In conclusion, regarding the problem of evil, Gregory of Nyssa may provide the best response yet: “For he who has truly come to be in the image of God and who has in no way turned aside from the divine character, bears in himself its distinguishing marks and shows in all things his conformity of the archetype; he beautifies his own soul with

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 11.

what is incorruptible, unchangeable, and shares in no evil at all.”^{85, 86} This character of living in the image of God, described by Gregory, does not internalize evil and pass it on to others in personality characteristics that drive relationship divisions, gossip, vengeance and other such evils.

On one hand, post-modern consumer culture appears to teach that a happy and successful life is one free of trials, pain, sufferings, and tribulations. Thus, people are free to choose those things and lifestyles that avoid pain and make them happiest. Pride of life and fleshly pursuits provide all the pleasures needed to enjoy life. The Bible anticipates this contemporary worldview and responds: “However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”⁸⁷ So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do well.”⁸⁸ Jesus’ own life was a testimony to His claim that humans will suffer, and that life on this earth for the follower of Christ will indeed be a life of pain and suffering, administered by Satan, his angels and demons. But that should bring people close to Jesus, as evil works discipline and obedience in us. The human mind so often suffers deception imposed by the post-modern consumer culture that teaches lives should be happy and rewarded with pleasures and comforts. From daily contacts in a person’s sphere of influence, on the one hand, it can be clearly seen that those who have pride of

⁸⁵ James Lannin, “Gregory of Nyssa, the Life of Moses,” *Christian Spirituality*, February 11, 2008, accessed, July 17, 2017, <http://spsseminarians.blogspot.com/2008/02/gregory-of-nyssa-life-of-moses.html>.

⁸⁶ Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Life of Moses* (New York: Paulist, 1978), 11.

⁸⁷ 1 Pet. 4:16.

⁸⁸ 1 Pet. 4:19.

life and worldly successes are too often, far from God. On the other hand, many who are close to God endure much pain and suffering. Witnessing this phenomenon, many ask why good people suffer and endure hardship while many evil people have many successes in life. Careful study of Scripture reveals that pain and suffering are parts of the human condition and are used by our Heavenly Father as a means of bringing us closer to Him. Pain and suffering in our lives is not an option but is a gateway to bring us closer to Him and to serve Him. Therefore, that is why Scripture reveals that pain and suffering is the narrow gate and path to perfection in the same way Jesus' life demonstrated.⁸⁹

What's Next?

This study reveals that in part, the problem we face in our Christian walk is that too little is known, understood, and applied to our theology about the nature and purpose of evil. In support of addressing this problem, and as a continuation of this study, further education and teaching administered through a designed spiritual formation track is recommended. Such a program could be administered over a sixteen-week semester that would focus class learning on Satan and evil as God sees them. The scope of study would be a development of a university-level practical theological course of study highlighting six steps of satanic influence management and mitigation. The course would include study of specific real-life examples of the ministry problem and what mitigating measures would be recommended. The scope of further study would include on study would include:

⁸⁹ 1 Pet. 4:12, 5:9; Heb. 2:10.

Two classes teaching basic fundamental elements of the post-modern consumer culture and how it dominates worldview and thinking about God and other people (neighbors). Dramatizations of real life social engagements demonstrating the power and influence of post-modern consumerism.

- Two classes teaching development of logical thinking and reasoning and how to recognize, know and understand truth and to uncover “behind the scenes” agendas within media that shapes public opinion.
- Four classes emphasizing personal and intimate communication, and developing a close, personal intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Teaching would emphasize God’s philosophy about human life and its relationship to Him and faith-based philosophies about the Bible’s supernatural authorship.
- Four classes teaching the skill of renewing the mind. Coursework would include exercises and demonstrations on how this skill can be put to work. One text used as a reference source for this portion of the class would be *The Battlefield of the Mind* by Joyce Meyers.
- Four classes teaching skills of virtuous living, improving relationships and how virtuous living expands life’s fulfillment in God’s eyes.

Required texts for course study would include:

- Kreeft, Peter. *Back to Virtue: Traditional Moral Wisdom for Modern Moral Confusion*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992.
- Kupelian, David. *How Evil Works: Understanding and Overcoming the Destructive Forces that are Transforming America*. New York: Threshold, 2010.
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- Malone, Henry. *Shadow Boxing: The Dynamic 2-5-14 Strategy to Defeat the Darkness Within*. Irving, NY: Vision Life, 1999.
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This dissertation, discloses great satanic influences embedded in the foundational tenants of the post-modern consumer culture. With constant daily bombardment through media, satanic influences have reshaped the Christian way of life. The church is simply not powerful enough to combat the overwhelming resources of dark spirit forces without the knowledge and prayers of discerning people of wisdom with clean and pure hearts and who are sensitive to these influences. As stated many times, the biggest problems in combating satanic influences are unawareness and misinformation and developing ears that are able to hear. This dissertation, coupled with classroom instruction and recommended texts are intended to further demonstrate too many the unawareness of satanic influences and their devastating effect on people and the church. Classroom instruction intends to employ dramatizations clearly showing how we are caught unaware and off guard by underlying satanic influences. Once the unawareness is corrected, it will seem like removing a veil that masks the true agendas behind what many do not believe.

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