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Contextualizing and Defending the Gospel for Gen Z: A Chastened Rationalistic Approach to Christian Apologetics

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

CONTEXTUALIZING AND DEFENDING THE GOSPEL FOR GEN Z
A CHASTENED RATIONALISTIC APPROACH TO CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Albert Thomas Edwards, who could not imagine anyone being a doctor who is not in the medical field, but never gave up on the hope that his son would someday be a doctor.

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G. K. Chesterton once said, “When it comes to life the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude.” I try to avoid taking things for granted and in this particular case, my academic journey terminating with this dissertation would not have been realized were not for the help and encouragements from so many individuals. I would like to thank my mother, Anna Laura Edwards and my grandmother, Leonila Ison for grounding me in the knowledge and fear of our Lord, for allowing me space to question faith matters, and encouragement to find answers to deep questions. When it comes to making Scripture come alive, memorable, and awe-inspiring for me growing up in San Juan, Philippines, I tip my hat to my aunt, Dulce Johnston (Tita Dul). My elementary and high school years at Christian Academy of Manila weren’t particularly exciting, but as principal, Tita Fe (another aunt) made sure I completed my homework on time and instilled in me the importance of education. She was doggedly after the truth in all subjects and did not hesitate to admonish the teachers under her care who didn’t share the same scholastic tenacity.

The professors at Biola University were influential in fostering a theological inquisitiveness that has become part of my DNA. I am eternally grateful for each of them. Richard Leyda introduced me to the field of leadership studies, JP Moreland convinced me Christians are the smartest people in the world, Rob Bowman stoked my love of Jesus, Scott Smith assured me I can *know* that, and Kevin Lewis did not think I was a crank for pointing out the weaknesses of Molinism.

As iron sharpens iron, so have my friends at Apologetics.com sharpened my thinking in theology, philosophy, and apologetics. Richard Park is a true friend and I

have spent an inordinate amount of time with him thinking of ways to change the world for Christ. Sam Welbaum, with his sprightly wit, took charge of our radio program for a time during a time when I couldn't. Christopher Neiswonger and John Snyder put us on the podcasting map when podcasting was not even a thing. They were the dynamic duo of cultural apologetics that is unmatched even today. Andy Steiger legitimized our apologetics activities, making us an international entity by hosting us in Canada. Lindsay Brooks is the consummate discussion partner in all things relevant and important in culture today, a case study in winsome persuasion. These friends not only make me look smarter just by being around them, they carry on with grace, humility, and confidence that make Christianity attractive.

To my current ministry partners Jon Noyes and Jason Gallagher, you have made hosting our weekly radio program a joy and a blast. It's an honor and a privilege sharing the hosting chair, defending the truth claims of Christianity on the airwaves of Los Angeles. Then there's the inner circle of the fourth Friday (technically it's Saturday) of each month: Lenny Esposito, a faithful ministry partner, always willing and able to cover my hosting duties when I'm indisposed, and Jacob Daniel who wondered why I didn't start my doctoral aspirations sooner.

I do not have a mentor, at least in a traditional sense. But Os Guinness has assumed a good surrogate for me, especially during a time when I was intensely searching for the links between beliefs and behaviors. Through his books, talks, both public and private, I have appreciated and come to understand some of the genealogy of ideas, how relevant sociology is to theology, and what it means to behave as a model of

civility in our time. Getting to know him personally emboldened me to pursue my doctorate.

The staff and faculty at Portland Seminary are partly responsible for the final outcome of this dissertation. Sarita Edwards, Jason Clark, and Clifford Berger, my esteemed dissertation advisors, made sure this project was fit for publication along with its attendant academic conventions. They deserve praise for helping me craft this rough written work into something laudable and useful for the church. Any errors are mine.

To my boys, Chase and Jonathan, for their ceaseless prayers to see their “Papa” complete this dissertation with excellence. To my dear and lovely wife, Minerva, for her invigorating support and staunch championing over the years, buoying me up until the day I finally cross the finish line of my doctoral journey. I could not have done it without family. Finally, to our Lord and Savior Jesus, the sine qua non of all that is true, good, and beautiful, and in whose presence I long to be.

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SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Jerry Cruz grew up in a loving Christian home in the suburbs of Los Angeles. He was an active member in the youth group, often leading Bible studies at the local Baptist church where he and the rest of his family regularly attended. After Jerry graduated from high school in the spring of 2018, he enrolled at UCLA where he majored in Biology. His professors, many of whom deny the existence of God, began challenging his faith. In one of his physical sciences classes, the professor taught that naturalistic evolution was the only rational position to take on the origin of life. Furthermore, the belief in a creator, much less the God of the Bible, would only bring scorn upon himself, casting doubt on his cognitive abilities, and impede his ability to distinguish between fact and fantasy.

In the spring the following year Jerry signed up for World Religions. During the course of the semester he learned that the New Testament was copied from thousands of manuscripts which are copies themselves, many of which contain large amounts of discrepancies. This was all his fragile faith could take and by the time the school year ended he jettisoned Christianity. His parents, distraught, sought to find answers and looked to their pastors for an explanation as to why this could happen to their son. Questions began to wash over them: Wasn't the Bible taught properly during their mid-week youth group meetings? Was he not involved in teaching those mid-week Bible studies? What about the short-term missions he led during the summers? Weren't those sure signs of being a committed, born again Christian? Did he not commit and re-commit his life to the Lord at one of the many church youth camps at Hume Lake he looked

forward to attending each summer? Jerry's parents remain strong in their faith through it all, resolved together with their pastors to seek new ways of evangelism and discipleship that help the new generation seek after God. This fictional account of a young man involved in church, who self-identified as a believer and from outward appearances was a genuine Christian who lost his faith is, unfortunately, not uncommon today.

Gen Z Is Increasingly Identifying as “None”

My research involves studying new Gospel-centric models of contextualization that Evangelical leaders, pastors, and educators can adopt to teach and disciple Generation Z Christians in the United States. This research will attempt to address a major claim of argumentation in my dissertation. The claim is that the increase in those who claim no religious affiliation among Gen Z¹, popularly known as the “nones,” is largely attributed to a gradual diminution of the historical-grammatical understanding of the Gospel. In other words, the claim, stated in a more positive way, asserts that a return to a more rational understanding of the Gospel is required to change hearts and minds of Gen Z, thereby restoring faith. These *nones* are not all atheists but rather a combination of atheists and those who at one time professed Christianity as their religion but no longer identify as Christians. There are forces that can be attributed to this phenomenon such as the forward movement of exclusive humanism, the engine driving secularization, and modernization. Christian leaders such as pastors and educators will tout simple willful

¹ Generation studies experts offer slight variations on the exact years that delimit this generation. I am defining Generation Z (also referred to as simply Gen Z) as anyone born between 1997 and 2015.

disobedience² of young people as the cause of backslidden faith. This may be the case. And, however important it is to consider the “willful disobedience” theory, this paper will focus more on the factors that have led Gen Zers to fall away from Christianity. One reason for this approach is simply because there are a myriad of resources available, both academic and popularly written materials, on the subject linking the decline of Christianity and a lack of belief.

It can be shown that the impetus of the evangelization movement that got its stride in the 1970s under the leadership of Billy Graham, Chuck Colson, Bill Bright and James Dobson, to name a few, has failed to secure a generation of believers today. This is not to say that their efforts were in vain. And anyone thinking that these men did more harm than good to advance the Gospel would simply be incorrect and an interloper from the enemy of the faith. These Evangelical leaders deserve praise and our respect. However, it appears that to the degree they had used a particular anthropology to advance the teachings of Christ, another was missed. What was missed was the equal emphasis of practice, action, and an inculcation of soul-making habits. A pure, propositional approach and proclamation of the Gospel, which has been the primary means of imparting knowledge since the Enlightenment, is only half of the project. Exclusive theory-based approaches to the Gospel are necessary but not sufficient in creating disciples who love God and his people.

This dissertation will touch on identifying and elucidating the missing half—the half missed by contemporary Christian leaders and educators today. The missing half of the faith is commonly known as orthopraxy; right practice, habit, action, and behavior.

² Romans 1:18-25.

This is important to understand because when a generation of young people growing up is taught that Christianity is more than merely a set of ideas to assent to, but also includes a set of behaviors that follow from beliefs, but these beliefs and behaviors conflict, then hypocrisy³ is a legitimate charge. This is one of the key factors in how we lose a generation of Christ followers, by not practicing what Christianity preaches. This is one of Christianity's greatest challenges today. Religion has become irrelevant, especially among the younger generation. In their new book *Back-Pocket God: Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of Emerging Adults*, researchers Melinda Lundquist Denton and Richard Flory this unfolding trend:

Religion doesn't really affect or benefit their lives in any direct, practical, everyday sense. Religion occupies a residual space for them, where it would "be nice" if religious claims were true, but most likely they aren't, so it is not worth the investment of time and energy to pursue.⁴

To demonstrate, I will attempt to ground the Gen Z view of the world, frame a birds-eye view of the effects Enlightenment and the resulting challenges thrust upon Christianity. Then, I will examine whether there are any beneficial and/or harmful effects resulting from Enlightenment ideas and how it has influenced Christian education, providing an explanation for the church's laissez-faire approach to discipleship. There are two goals for this project. The first is to identify some of the current problems and opportunities in the church in terms of Gen Z's religious penury. The second is to delve into some of the failed approaches to the problem, then offer solutions that will enliven a

³ Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines *hypocrisy* as behavior that does not meet the moral standards or match the opinions that somebody claims to have.

⁴ Melinda Lundquist Denton and Richard W. Flory, *Back Pocket God: Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 224.

new vision of faith that is attractive, compelling and worth living with truth, courage and conviction. Readers may sense a venerated indictment against the aims and purposes of the discipline of Christian apologetics. However, this is done only with the intent to strengthen, rather than weaken, its effectiveness among a new generation that continues to seek God-answers to their God-questions, and how to truthfully live out their faith. Before I touch on these, a survey of the secular milieu in which the church is situated is helpful in order to understand the opposition it faces.

Over the past few years Christians have been worried about threats of their faith's decline in the West, especially in the United States. Much of Evangelicalism's rise and influence, especially in the West, has been closely linked to historical Judeo-Christian values. It's these values, held by believers and non-believers alike, that have been passed on through generations and act as a preserver and bulwark of culture in our society. If these are rendered irrelevant in our post-Christian age, human flourishing will wane and Christianity will lose the fertile soil upon which it once thrived.

This grave concern prompted Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI to begin his remarks at the plenary meeting of The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on January 27, 2012:

As we know, in vast areas of the earth faith risks being extinguished, like a flame that is no longer fed. We are facing a profound crisis of faith, a loss of the religious sense that constitutes the greatest challenge to the Church today.⁵

This "profound crisis of faith" is also acutely observed by Rod Dreher in his book *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* to which he

⁵ Benedict XVI, "To Participants in the Plenary Meeting of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith," January 27, 2012, https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20120127_dottrina-fede.html.

wrote, “There are people alive today who may live to see the effective death of Christianity within our civilization. By God’s mercy, the faith may continue to flourish in the Global South and China, but barring a dramatic reversal of current trends, it will all but disappear entirely from Europe and North America.”⁶

What are these *current trends* Dreher is referring to? Is there a crisis in Christianity today? If so, what factors might be responsible for them? Specifically, what are the challenges *American Culture Christians*⁷ are facing in virtue of their understanding of faith and practice? But before we can give full attention to this, we must first identify the problems attenuating American Christians today. My objective in this section is to briefly focus on identifying the challenges affecting Evangelicalism using sociological and cultural⁸ analysis.

⁶ Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Sentinel, 2017), 8.

⁷ Ed Stetzer, researcher at Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College, defines the members of this group as people who believe themselves to be Christians simply because their culture tells them they are. They are Christian by heritage. They may have religious roots in their family or may come from a people group tied to a certain religion, such as Southern Evangelicals or Irish Catholics. This group makes up around one-third of the 75% who self-identify as Christians—or about a quarter of all Americans.

⁸ Any time culture is used in this paper I will refer to Ken Myer’s definition found in his book *All God’s Children and Blue Suede Shoes: Christians and Popular Culture*, 2d ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2012), 34. Culture is what human beings make of the world, in both senses—the things we make and the meaning we make of those things. “It’s not a person or an institution, like the church or the state or the family. It is instead a dynamic pattern, an ever-changing matrix of objects, artifacts, sounds, institutions, philosophies, fashions, enthusiasm, myths, prejudices, relationships, attitudes, tastes, rituals, habits, colors, and loves, all embodied in individual people (many of whom do not know they are associated), in books, in buildings, in the use of time and space, in wars, in jokes, and in food.”

The Challenge of Irrelevance

The Evangelical church today is no longer seen as a center for knowledge, arts and influence. There are reports that between 6,000 and 10,000 churches close⁹ their doors each year for a variety of reasons. Some deal with the challenges by renting out their spaces and turning them into multi-purpose rooms to accommodate unrelated church activities. Church attendance and membership are also down. In a recent study conducted by Gallup, U.S. church membership rose to 70% from 1937 through 1976 and persisted with little change through the 1990s. However, the past 20 years have seen a drastic drop, with a 20-percentage-point decline since then and more than half of that change occurring since the start of the current decade.¹⁰ A similar study was done by the Barna Group in 2018 with 59% of Gen Z members stating that “church is not relevant to me personally.”¹¹

This was not always the case. Up until the late 19th century, the local church was not only a place of worship, it was a place where the community obtained social capital. David Bebbington, in his seminal work *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, stated:

Respectability, however, was no mere preoccupation of the greater and lesser bourgeoisie. It was an element in the artisan culture, an outward expression of economic and intellectual independence that permeated the working-class

⁹ Jonathan Merritt, “America’s Epidemic of Empty Churches,” *The Atlantic*, November 26, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/11/what-should-america-do-its-empty-church-buildings/576592/>.

¹⁰ “U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades,” Gallup.com, April 18, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx>.

¹¹ Barna Group, *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2018), 72.

movements of the times. It encouraged the adoption of personal conviction and, frequently in consequence, alignment with some branch of organized religion.¹²

Historically, the local church once occupied the center of a community where goodness, truth and beauty were exemplified and enjoyed in public. Respectability of the church remained the loadstar¹³ through much of the nineteenth century. It is no longer viewed this way. The local church has abdicated its place in society and is now considered by our youth as irrelevant. For instance, education, which was once under the auspices of the local community, is now under the purview of the government. The Industrial Revolution in 18th century required more workers that the church felt ill equipped to supply. As a reaction, Great Britain, between 1900 and 1909, founded “red-brick” universities in Birmingham, Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield and Bristol, concentrating on “hand-on” courses such as science or engineering. These differed from universities such as Oxford and Cambridge which primarily taught less vocational and more traditional subjects such as history and the classics.¹⁴ As wages began to rise due to economic opportunities spurred on by capitalism,¹⁵ church leaders began to vacate their position in higher education because it was viewed as a capitulation to the broader culture. However, it is important to note that it was the church which first acknowledged education’s gentrifying role in society in addition to what was necessary to advance the

¹² David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 2005), 235.

¹³ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 235.

¹⁴ “Education during the Industrial Revolution,” BBC, accessed March 10, 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zvmv4wx/revision/4>.

¹⁵ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Pub., 2002), 17.

Gospel.¹⁶ Historians remind us that the founding of at least two-thirds of the colleges and universities in the 19th century had Calvinistic roots.¹⁷ Why such enthusiasm for Christian colleges among Calvinists? One reason is because Calvin himself loved the life of the mind. He believed that God created human beings in His image (Imago Dei). This image included the capacity to discover and communicate truth. And since God commanded his followers to love him with all their hearts, soul, strength, and mind (with every part of their being), the pursuit of gaining knowledge of God's good creation becomes a high priority. Cornelius Plantinga puts it this way:

The person who studies chemistry, for example, can enter into God's enthusiasm for the dynamic possibilities of material reality. The student who examines one of the great movements of history has moved into position to praise the goodness of God, or to lament the mystery of evil, or to explore the places where these things intertwine. Further, from persistent study of history a student may develop good judgment, a feature of wisdom that helps us lead a faithful human life in the midst of a confusing world.¹⁸

The project of education suffered under the church's purview in part due to the intellectual pressures from the thinkers in the 18th century. The Enlightenment was in many ways a renaissance of the mind. The Renaissance focused on the visual arts and the study of the humanities: grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, whereas the Enlightenment focused on the quest for certainty. Traditional values were challenged, and new ways of thinking emerged. However, to understand and appreciate the gravity of consequences some ideas can generate, one has to be familiar with the works of William of Ockham.

¹⁶ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 133.

¹⁷ Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging Gods World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), ix.

¹⁸ Plantinga, *Engaging Gods World*, xi.

William of Ockham¹⁹ was an English Franciscan friar in the 13th century who devoted his time to study. He is known for Occam's Razor, the problem-solving principle that essentially states that, all things being equal, simpler solutions are more likely to be correct than complex ones. What he is less known for is his pioneering work on nominalism. However, according to Scott Smith, nominalism, in general, is:

the belief that everything that exists is *particular*. That is, any given thing is *simple* – it is just *one* thing. Examples of particulars might be a given person (person₁), a particular red spot (red₁), a flower (flower₁), etc. Here, the number 1 is the particularizer, or individuator, in each example. So, in practice nominalists mean that that each particular is a particular *something*.²⁰

We get the word “name” from the Latin word “nomen.” Nominalism, in other words is reducing things to merely names. There are no essences in things, it is only what we make of them. According to Smith, this gave rise to scientism (the view that the only thing that exist are things that we can discern with our five senses), which later fueled secularism. What does this do to the pursuit of knowledge? It disconnects reality from meaning because assigning names to things just provides a placeholder for things to which we refer. So whatever thing we are referring to today may change tomorrow depending on the undulations of culture. What does this do to the pursuit of faith, namely Christianity? It relativizes the content and object of faith and our experience of it, which ineluctably pushes religion to the private sphere. This is one of the reasons more than a

¹⁹ Paul Vincent Spade and Claude Panaccio, *William of Ockham*, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, March 5, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ockham/#TheoKnow>.

²⁰ This was taken from an interview I had with him about his yet to be published book titled *Our Great Evangelical Disaster: The De-Supernaturalization of the Evangelical Church in the West, and What to do about It*. Scott Smith's published work on the subject of nominalism is the book titled *In Search of Moral Knowledge: Overcoming the Fact-Value Dichotomy*.

third of Christians say they can find answers to deep questions outside the church.²¹

Ironically, Ockham developed his ideas to protect God from the tendency by theologians to “put God in a box.” His fideism encouraged others to bifurcate faith and reason, divorcing science from divine revelation and rejecting all alleged proofs of God’s existence

Another challenge of irrelevance is the church’s silence when it comes to pressing issues of our day. The signers of the Evangelical Manifesto²² humbly admit of the myriad of issues they either failed to act upon or pursuing ends which resulted in harm. Some of these issues are at the forefront of culture today: race, poverty, hypocrisy in the church, etc. When it comes to race for instance, Shelby Steele contends that while race relations in America has improved since the Civil Rights Act of 1964 began, much of society has remained insensitive to blacks:

In the American language itself there are countless words and expressions that function as correlatives—‘you people,’ ‘bootstraps,’ ‘reverse discrimination,’ ‘colored people’ (interestingly ‘people of color’ is not a correlative), ‘black militant,’ ‘credit to his race,’ ‘one of my best friends...,’ ‘I never knew a black until college... the Army...’ and phrase or tone that condescends, damns with faint praise, or stereotypes either positively or negatively. Any generalization about blacks correlates with the practice of generalizing about us that led to our oppression.²³

Martin Luther King, Jr., once quipped "it is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning." Can this be said today in our churches? Just the other day, as I was having lunch with a church leader, some of

²¹ Barna Group, *Gen Z*, 72.

²² Os Guinness, *Renaissance: The Power of the Gospel However Dark the Times* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 167-170.

²³ Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 1998), 154.

these phrases were used in our normal conversation. When it comes to discussing these tough issues with teenagers today, only 14% of “engaged Christian” parents feel prepared according to the latest Barna report.²⁴ This is remarkable given that Gen Z (those born between 1996 – later) is the most racially, religiously and sexually diverse generation in American history according to the same study. How does one expect parents to guide their teens to understand their sexuality in a sexually charged and confused society if parents themselves do not address hot button topics such as same-sex attraction, same-sex marriage, LGBTQ and a host of other related personal identity issues prevalent today? Many young people today are leaving the church, precisely because they feel important issues like this are not addressed. The constant messaging of sex through TV, movies, devices, billboards, pop-up adds on the internet is numbing and yet the church in disproportionate ways is silent. It is hardly addressed in the pulpit, and still considered a taboo subject in small group settings at church.²⁵ This unintentionally communicates the idea that the Bible does not touch on real life issues, important matters and therefore irrelevant. This is unfortunate because the opposite is true—the Bible has a lot to say about human sexuality. Apologist Rebecca McLaughlin has a subversive, and yet relatable way to speak on this topic when she affirms that “People sometimes say that the Bible condemns same-sex relationships. It does not. The Bible commands same-sex relationships at a level of intimacy that Christians seldom reach.”²⁶

²⁴ Barna Group, *Gen Z*, 85.

²⁵ Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World’s Largest Religion* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2019), Loc. 3191, Kindle.

²⁶ McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Loc. 3209.

Stating it this way not only grabs one's attention, it forces the reader to consider intently what God has to say about relationships in general and sexual ones specifically. To be clear McLaughlin believes the Bible unequivocally teaches that sexual intimacy belongs exclusively to heterosexual marriage. However, for those who have a different view, she invites them to consider the idea and benefits of boundaries which are not uncommon concepts in everyday life. McLaughlin represents an up and coming crop of new Christian apologists who speak from a platform that is less dependent on a supposed particular kind of academic credential, but rather, grounded more on lived experience. McLaughlin is unique because she is a believer who has a predisposition toward same-sex attraction. While she herself is happily married with kids, she confesses that there is no guarantee that God could change her natural instinct to be drawn toward women. Apparently, sexual fluidity is more prevalent than initially thought and may persist over time in both men and women. Deploying new discoveries such as this helps lessen the stigma for whom homosexual tendencies is a struggle, allowing space for open dialog, transparency and counseling. This is helpful especially among 13 to 18 year-olds, only half of whom believe one's sex at birth defines one's gender; and one third says gender is "what a person feels like."²⁷

The Challenge of Modernity

The idea of modernity itself is challenging for several reasons. One of which is the confusion over which definition is right. Is it a set of ideas (the unquestioned role of

²⁷ Barna Group, *Gen Z*, 46.

truth), a movement (as in *internalized*), or a historical epoch (Industrial age to 1930s)?

Experts do not agree. Anthony Giddens states:

Modernity is a shorthand term for modern society, or industrial civilization. Portrayed in more detail, it is associated with (1) a certain set of attitudes towards the world, the idea of the world as open to transformation, by human intervention; (2) a complex of economic institutions, especially industrial production and a market economy; (3) a certain range of political institutions, including the nation-state and mass democracy. Largely as a result of these characteristics, modernity is vastly more dynamic than any previous type of social order. It is a society—more technically, a complex of institutions—which, unlike any preceding culture, lives in the future, rather than the past²⁸

There are three qualities of Giddens' definition that are worth noting and ties in directly to what I'm asserting are challenges for the church. These are: (1) a certain set of attitudes towards the world; (2) economic production; (3) complex and future. Let's take the first one. Sociologists have a particular way of explaining how a person comes to possess knowledge that is quite different from how a philosopher might explain the same process. Philosophers do not take anything for granted. However, the man on the street may not care so much how he has arrived at knowledge because he lives in the "reality of commonsense."²⁹ In our everyday lives we do not stop to carefully deliberate about our every thought before we act. There is a certain "taken for grantedness" in our actions. Some of these instinctual behaviors are helpful as in swerving to avoid running over an unsuspecting pedestrian stepping off the curb. Reacting without thinking in this case is good. However, can we claim that unreflective actions in general have resulted favorably in our experience? The answer is no.

²⁸ Anthony Giddens and Christopher Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making Sense of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1998), 94.

²⁹ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966), 20.

Another feature of modernity focuses on economic production. It would seem obvious that the challenge being identified is the unchecked excesses of the West which leads to materialism—the tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values. Although that is a challenge in the church what I’m referring to is far more pernicious because it has a shaping force that unwittingly forms the way we think and behave. Vincent Miller in his book *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* is helpful as he warns us about our religious beliefs being dismantled from traditions and practices, ready to signify whatever sentiments we need.³⁰ If we are not careful, according to Miller, we unconsciously end up superimposing our consumeristic behavior on to our religious practices. This is happening now. Seeker-sensitive churches employ current marketing strategies to attract new members, create “alternative” Christian things (like music, clothing, jewelry, etc.) to cater to everyone’s whim and fancy. In other words, we have commodified religion.

Modernity is anachronistically committed to the future. And so in a sense the modern period will always be present, even if some experts say we now live in a post-modern³¹ world. This is perhaps why historians and sociologists have a hard time demarcating the end of modernity. Today, technology appears to influence nearly all areas of our lives, such as education, commerce, entertainment, health, social media, news and other related media. Its reach feels limitless. However, it is prudent to temper

³⁰ Vincent Jude Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 98.

³¹ There is a profound misunderstanding in the usage of the following terms: *modern, modernity, post-modern and postmodernism*. Modern can simply refer to a historical period; modernity is what has been discussed in this essay; post-modern is an adjective typically referring to a rejection of objective truth and postmodernism is a broad movement that developed in the mid- to late 20th century across philosophy, the arts, architecture, and criticism and that marked a departure from modernism.

the desire to gravitate towards the latest cultural fads, gadgets and self-help resources, but instead focus on activities life-giving activities which promote genuine human flourishing.

The Challenge of Defining the Gospel

Abdu Murray, a highly sought-after apologist speaker at Ravi Zacharias International Ministries once said that often times the most effective Christian apologetic method is simply to explain the Gospel.³² Put another way, if one wants to defend or commend Christianity, it is best to begin by telling people what it is really all about. Many people have misconceptions³³ of Christianity and what the Gospel means that it simply gets in the way of their coming to faith.³⁴ But what is the Gospel? A general survey will reveal that the Gospel is defined so many ways³⁵, and more popularly, only in personal terms. Regrettably, the magnificent message of the Gospel has been reduced to *The Sinner's Prayer*.³⁶ The church is replete with programs designed to accelerate and measure personal conversions based upon the recitation of it. To highlight an extreme

³² Abdu Murray, "Contextualizing Apologetics for Cultural Influencers" (lecture, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, Alpharetta, GA, May 21, 2019).

³³ It is not difficult to get the Christian faith wrong. Doctrines such as the trinity and the dual natures of Christ have resulted in a proliferation of cults. Helping the seeker know the difference between a contradiction and a paradox will go a long way into ameliorating these misconceptions.

³⁴ Alister E. McGrath, *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers & Skeptics Find Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 130.

³⁵ Trevin Wax, "Gospel Definitions," The Gospel Coalition, September 14, 2009, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/gospel-definitions-2/>.

³⁶ A popular version is from Greg Laurie, a self-proclaimed evangelistic progeny of Billy Graham: "Dear Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I believe You died for my sins. Right now, I turn from my sins and open the door of my heart and life. I confess You as my personal Lord and Savior. Thank You for saving me. Amen."

application of this thinking, I have heard reports of an evangelistic program that was launched in Santa Monica, CA that encouraged its “missionaries” to coax people on the street to recite *The Sinner’s Prayer*. This example is extreme but not uncommon.³⁷ The thinking is that if a person simply utters the words “Dear Jesus, I repent of my sins and I believe in you,” that one is magically transformed into a child of God. So, with this strategy, the missionary would literally approach a bystander, have him or her recite the script, then quickly move on the next to do the same. The quicker one accomplishes that, the more are “saved.” There is no follow up, no invitation to attend church and no discipleship.

One hears this incomplete understanding of the biblical message enough on the radio, sermons and in prominent evangelistic events led by Christian leaders who ought to know better, that it is uncritically accepted in the Christian psyche. Careless statements such as “good news of the Gospel”³⁸ and other similar references betray the lack of understanding by the speaker. These challenges were present even during the 18th century when Christianity was burgeoning in modern Britain. The Gospel was equated with prosperity;³⁹ power,⁴⁰ social status,⁴¹ the state,⁴² et cetera; and it appears we have

³⁷ Amy Spreeman, “‘My Church Practices the ‘Sinner’s Prayer’,” Berean Research, August 25, 2017, <https://bereanresearch.org/my-church-practices-the-sinners-prayer/>.

³⁸ Literally translated “the good news of the good news” which sounds absurd.

³⁹ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 115.

⁴⁰ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 62-63.

⁴¹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 135.

⁴² Ross Douthat, *Bad Religion How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 122.

carried this on until our present moment. Confusion and a benighted understanding of the core message of the Gospel, as we will cover more in the next section, only leads to divisions⁴³ and deconversions.

The Challenge of Church Programs

Much of our church programming has an inordinate focus on teaching in ways that emphasize the cognitive acquisition of knowledge through traditional methods such as rote, memorization and so on. The idea is that if we are just taught and learn the right things, we will behave rightly. With the revitalization and resurgence of apologetics in the last 20 years, there is a wide assumption that belief equals behavior, right doctrine equals right doing, right orthodoxy equals right orthopraxy, and so on. Chad Meister, a philosophy professor wrote a book titled *Building Faith: Constructing Faith from the Ground Up* illustrates what he calls the *Apologetics Pyramid*.⁴⁴ He argues that if we start with truth, which is the base of the pyramid, then in an upward movement we come to worldviews, theism, revelation, resurrection and eventually arrive at the top with the Gospel. The only problem is that it does not work for the vast majority. Sociologist James D. Hunter made a good observation. He said that if the point of Christian education is to change hearts and minds, and even as late as the 1960s when only 2 percent of the

⁴³ Howard A. Snyder, *Global Good News: Mission in a New Context* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 21.

⁴⁴ Chad V. Meister, *Building Belief: Constructing Faith from the Ground up* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009), 12.

American population claimed not to believe in God, why is the slide to secularization ongoing to this day?⁴⁵

The problem lies in the fact that educators since the Enlightenment have viewed individuals as primarily thinking beings. We are not just “brains on a stick” according to philosopher James K.A. Smith. He adds that providing people with a Christian worldview is inadequate and that there are other ways of knowing contra the intellectualist view that assumes that what *I do* is the outcome of what *I think*.⁴⁶ Smith borrows much of his ideas from French phenomenological philosopher Merleau-Ponty who asserts that the body itself, not just the mind, can know things in ante-predicatively self-evident ways.⁴⁷ In other words, the body (like a sense organ) just knows, and it knows it in a pre-reflective manner.

Related to this is the church’s lack of appreciation for practice or habit formation. Some identify this as *spiritual disciplines* such as prayer, fasting, confession, solitude, Bible reading, meditation, serve and so forth. Although these are good practices and ought to be observed in our worship, both privately and collectively, I am referring to something less pietistic in nature and more basic. If Christians are expected to behave righteously, discursive knowledge is insufficient. Another kind of knowledge must be introduced, and that is the concept of *habitus*. According to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, our actions come from certain dispositions, a particular class of conditions that

⁴⁵ James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 19.

⁴⁶ James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 33.

⁴⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 129.

are durable and transposable, whose aims may be unspecified.⁴⁸ Take for example players in a sport.⁴⁹ They instinctively know the movements, rules and objectives not solely because they have studied a book or watched instructional videos. No, players are adept at their sport because they have repeatedly rehearsed it. British sociologist Anthony Giddens weighs in to say that:

What agents know about what they do, and why they do it—their knowledgeable ability as agents—is largely carried in practical consciousness. Practical consciousness consists of all the things which actors know tacitly about how to ‘go on’ in the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive expression.⁵⁰

This emphasis on *habitus*, practical consciousness, routinization, practice, and liturgy that was once a mainstay in religious observances is now lacking from our Christian education, worship, and church programs.

The Challenge of Misguided Solutions

One of the toughest and most important questions to answer in our pluralistic age is this: “How do we live peacefully with each other despite our deepest differences?” The progressives and primitivists today seem to want the same things. The former advocates

⁴⁸ Pierre Bourdieu and Richard Nice, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2014), 53.

⁴⁹ Cognitive scientists, Steven Sloman and Philip Fernbach, in their book *The Knowledge Illusion: Why We Never Think Alone*, have done extensive research on baseball players’ ability to “think” with their bodies. They have studied ballplayer’s use of gaze-direction to successfully catch fly balls on the field. Players do not go through a process of calculating parabolic trajectories, estimating a few parameters to solve quadratic equations to know precisely where the ball is going to land. Instead, an outfielder will move forward or backward so that his gaze, relative to the ground, is always increasing at a constant rate. What ball players and researchers have discovered is that the player’s gaze continues to lift even after the ball starts to descend.

⁵⁰ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Introduction of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xxiii.

for equality, care and fairness while the latter promote loyalty, authority and sanctity.⁵¹ These values are noble and can form common ground among a diverse population. However, the clash takes place when the methods to achieve them go counter to other values or completely go the opposite direction to achieve compromise; or right the wrong of the past using another form of injustice. Examples of these include our misguided views on tolerance, political correctness, multiculturalism, gender dysphoria, white privilege, affirmative action and so on. This atmosphere of unrelenting contention is what Deborah Tannen calls the *argument culture*.⁵²

The argument culture is now present in every major American institution such as education, both local and national government, and in other public spheres. The church is not exempt here, and in many cases has been a promoter of it. One only has to observe the kinds of vitriolic interactions between the pro-life and the pro-choice camps to be convinced of this fact. When it comes to politics, the faithful are not innocent. There have been studies that demonstrate the strong link between conservative Evangelicals and election results. The Republican party has mastered the art and science of communicating traditional biblical values and moral uprightness to solicit votes. The Democratic party has in recent years followed suit, realizing this advantage and has now employed the same tactics.⁵³ The church today is frenziedly embedded in politics, thinking this is the way culture changes. Take for instance, Robert Jeffress, an influential pastor of a 13,000-

⁵¹ Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), 150-179.

⁵² Deborah Tannen, *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 3.

⁵³ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 137.

member megachurch in Dallas Texas, said at the 2011 Values Voter Summit that it was “imperative to vote for a Christian.” But what brand of Christianity does he mean? Regrettably, when citizens hear the word “*Christian*” today, they equate it with oppression, intolerance and bigotry. This is one of the reasons Christian progressives such as Randall Balmer and Jim Wallis feel their faith has been stolen and it’s time to take it back.

Part of the problem in appreciating this challenge is the church’s lack of understanding of the tensional relationship between church and state. Stanley Hauerwas understands this tension and he said:

Of course what we fail to note is that the very state created to secure our rights is based on an irresolvable dilemma because it has to present itself in two prima facie incompatible ways. On the one hand, the democratic state modestly claims to be a mere means toward an end. On the other hand, the same state needs to convince its citizens that it can give them meaningful identity because the state is the only means of achieving the common good.⁵⁴

A responsible integration of faith and politics is not so much the issue. It is when believers put their faith solely in the latter rather than in the person of Jesus Christ.

The set of challenges I tried to describe are ones very rarely discussed, much less studied among Christian leaders. Evangelical pastors might identify one or two, but their assumptions and biases prevent them from seeing these as shaping forces that are present everywhere which continually transforms individuals unawares. These forces may be the same forces the apostle Paul talks about in Ephesians 6:12. It is worth noticing that the passages that warn us about “the rulers,” “the authorities,” “cosmic powers over this

⁵⁴ Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony: A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for People Who Know That Something Is Wrong* (Nashville: Abingdon Pr., 1999), 35.

present darkness,” “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” come right after discourses on the most important human relationships such as husband/wife, parent/child. These are the basic units of society. If there are weaknesses in the church, it is because the enemy has successfully targeted links that bind human beings together.

In light of this, a practical application that is appropriate and relevant at this stage of the dissertation is awareness. This is step one of the process—be aware of the shaping, often suppressed, ineluctable cultural forces that mold our thinking and behavior. Much of the discussion here sheds light on the effects of modernism. Speaking on this subject, Os Guinness states:

Modernity itself, not ideas... has done more damage to the church than all the persecutors put together, and yet many Christians don't even know what I'm talking about. If you recognize the temptations, you can resist them. If you don't recognize them, they can shape you unawares.⁵⁵

The antidote to being unaware is to be aware. To be unaware is like being the *frog in the kettle*. If one drops a frog in a kettle of boiling water, it instinctively jumps out. However, if the frog is dipped in tepid water, then increase the temperature ever so slowly until it reaches the boiling point, the frog eventually gets cooked without resistance. The frog in this famous metaphor dies because it did not realize it is being cooked alive.

Christians today are like the frog in the kettle and the boiling point of modernity will be the cause of death for them if they do not act. If Christians continue to ignore the shaping power of consumerism (not materialism), Christianity gets commodified. If

⁵⁵ Joseph Sunde, “The Challenge of Modernity: Os Guinness on the Church and Civilization,” *Acton Institute PowerBlog*, January 11, 2017, <https://blog.acton.org/archives/91110-os-guinness-on-the-church-and-the-challenge-of-modernity.html>.

believers ignore the power of *habitus* in our bodies, then they will fail in understanding and applying what it means to “present our bodies as living sacrifices.”⁵⁶ If the faithful fail to see the limits of secular education, laws, politics and other related exclusive humanistic institutions to change culture, then the church will miss out on Christ’s power to change culture.

⁵⁶ Romans 12:1.

SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Introduction

In the previous section I identified and described the shaping factors in the West, primarily in the U.S., that help mold a certain view of human flourishing. It is in this world Gen Zers find themselves. It is in this time and place a new generation comes of age. In this section I will start by laying out a case for contextualizing our communications in general and more specifically to Generation Z, explain what generations research is and the various ways experts have come to understand generation markers. Then I will relate this understanding to identifying the uniqueness of a population born roughly between 1997 to 2015 in the U.S.—a generation popularly known as Gen Z.

Prominent Christian apologist Greg Koukl, in a talk he gave on June 26, 2019 encouraging church members at Living Oaks Church to engage in apologetics, suggested that generational distinctions do not make a difference in how we defend the truth claims of Christianity.⁵⁷ He intimated that no matter what generation a person belonged to, young, old or middle-aged, regardless of ethnic background, that we all share many things in common—enough that tailoring the Gospel message to a particular audience is not necessary. Whether he was dogmatic about that or not, it is hard to say. Sometimes speakers use hyperbole to get their audience’s attention. However, in a time when generations research is beginning to collate data to aid our understanding of this current

⁵⁷ Greg Koukl, “Evangelism and Apologetics: Gardening Precedes the Harvest” (Lecture, Get A Grip Apologetics Conference, Living Oaks Church, Thousand Oaks, CA, June 26, 2019.)

generation, Koukl does raise an important question. Is it important to know the distinguishing traits of a generation to effectively engage in evangelism and apologetics? Ought a straightforward Bible preaching be sufficient to transform lives? Will knowing that Generation Z, for example, is more biblically illiterate than any other generation in U.S. history influence the words we say when we talk about Christianity? These are important questions to consider if followers of Jesus are going to take seriously the call to be witnesses to the good news.

Importance of Contextualization

Contextualization, as deployed in this dissertation, is defined as the attempt to present and embody an unchanging message within the changing contexts of the world.⁵⁸ Retail marketers understand the key role contextualizing their messages to consumers play and they use this knowledge effectively to persuade their audiences to purchase their goods and services. The products they sell are packaged, re-packaged and continually re-purposed to meet needs, felt or otherwise. This strategy works because the culture-forming forces that speak to the hearts and minds of individuals are strong enough to persuade anyone to purchase products and services. The period of the Enlightenment brought new ideas, most of which highlighted the primacy of reasoning in the human experience. Since then, the art and science of persuasion appealed exclusively to the mind. Ford Motor company in the 1900s, for instance, provided reasons why the Model-T was better than a horse. Today, the same company sells the Mustang in such a way as to

⁵⁸ Matthew Bennett, "Concerning Ecclesiology: Four Barriers Preventing Insider Movement Contextualization from Producing Biblical Churches." *Missiology* (April 2020). doi:10.1177/0091829620914268.

make the customer feel sexy and appeal to the ego to the exclusion of reason—and that is all it will take for that transaction to occur. After World War II all targeting was aimed at the heart.⁵⁹ Today, AI (artificial intelligence) systems crawl mounds of data of entire populations to create customer profiles used to predict future purchases.⁶⁰ The retail world understands the importance of communicating to an audience in ways that speak to their context. In the 1900s, the Ford Motor company appealed to their customer’s sense of reason (cars run faster than horses) because, up until then, forming sound conclusions led to wise buying decisions. In the post-modern world, reason no longer dictates buying decisions, emotions do. Thus, retailers such as the Ford Motor company, changed and repackaged their marketing strategy to appeal to a new audience in the twenty-first century.

In the same way, followers of Jesus must know their audience’s traits, characteristics and behaviors if they seek to connect deeply in meaningful ways. The New Testament provides an instructive model. The apostle Paul in the book of Galatians said: “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.”⁶¹ God in eternity past had the aforethought to enact his plan of salvation by choosing the right time and place to maximize its effect.⁶² In the first century there was relative peace, the roads were established so the message of the Gospel could

⁵⁹ Scott Galloway, *The Four: The Hidden DNA of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2018), 166.

⁶⁰ Galloway, *The Four*, 188.

⁶¹ Galatians 4:4.

⁶² Alistair Begg, “When? What? Why? (Part 1 of 3),” *Truth For Life*, aired December 12, 2019 on KKLA, 99.5 FM, Los Angeles (Salem Media Group, 2019).

travel far. Jesus' audience possessed a common language, sophisticated and cosmopolitan enough to provide the best chance of its message being understood by many possible.

Jesus himself sought to know his audience as evidenced in the story of the Samaritan woman at the well in the gospel of John. Jesus and the women had little in common, but he knew about her felt need, which was regular water. Utilizing that one piece of information about her he was able to advance the conversation to what she truly needed, which was living water. The simple object lesson in water acted as a bridge between the woman's felt need, which was to quench her thirst, and her actual need, which was quenching her spiritual thirst for salvation. Another good example of the importance of contextualizing a message for an audience is found in the Acts 17 narrative when the apostle Paul encounters the Athenians. He could have stood in the midst of the Areopagus⁶³, with a prophetic loud voice, proclaimed Old Testament passages demanding his listeners to repent and worship the one true God. He did not do that. Instead, he quotes pagan poets and philosophers of their day, authorities recognized by his audience, to support his message about human nature and the true living God. New Testament scholar Dean Flemming affirms this:

Paul, however, can recognize the common ground with the writings of the pagans, using them as bridges to his audience, without sanctioning the belief system to which they originally belong. In short, in Acts 17 we see Paul at his rhetorical best, utilizing whatever persuasive weapons are at his disposal in order to effectively engage the Athenian worldview and culture.⁶⁴

⁶³ Interestingly, this is the same place about four centuries earlier where Socrates was tried, convicted and sentenced to death for both corrupting the mind of the youth of Athens and not believing in the gods of the state.

⁶⁴ Dean Flemming, "Contextualizing the Gospel in Athens: Paul's Areopagus Address as a Paradigm for Missionary Communication," *Missiology*, 30 no.2 (April 2002): 202. SAGE Publications.

This “bridge” to get to the gospel message across to listeners is noted by Paul Gould in his lectures and his latest book *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in the Disenchanted World*. In it he highlights six helpful observations from Paul’s *praeparatio evangelica*⁶⁵ speech in Acts 17: 22-31, providing an instructional model for effectively contextualizing the good news for a pluralistic audience.

First, we are worshippers. The apostle Paul had ventured a thousand miles from home to reach the most important city in Greece, Athens, which was the cultural, religious, and intellectual center of the ancient world. It was home to the very first university, Plato's Academy. It was the home of notable thinkers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Zeno. It had produced famous playwrights such as Menander, and Aristophanes, as well as significant historians such as Thucydides. During Paul's time, Athens' golden age had passed. As one commentator said, Athens was in her late afternoon of her glory. Corinth, where Paul was headed next, had replaced Athens as the most important political and commercial center in Greece. Still, Athens was a very significant intellectual and cultural center of Greece. Paul observed the Athenians to be very religious. One man living around the same time as Paul said, "It is easier to see a god or goddess on the main street than to meet a man."⁶⁶ Athens at the time had close to ten to twenty thousand citizens. God and goddess statues numbered at least thirty to forty

⁶⁵ F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introductory and Commentary*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 379.

⁶⁶ *Cultural Apologetics Video Lectures: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World*, lessons by Paul Gould (Zondervan, 2019), DVD.

thousand that lined every street, building and marketplace in the city. It is no wonder Paul was greatly distressed⁶⁷ as he walked the streets of Athens.

Second, Paul was a student of the culture he sought to reach. The phrase "walked around and look carefully" in verse 22 gives the clear impression that Paul did not just happen to notice the objects of worship in the marketplaces and throughout the city. Rather, he intentionally visited the places, examining them very carefully. The sense in the Greek is that he did his homework and meticulously studied the static images. Unlike a casual observer, such as a tired, disinterested tourist, Paul looked for them. Paul also would have known that a deadly plague ravaged the city 500 years earlier, wiping out a third of the population. Citizens of Athens tried to appease the gods they knew by name. Epimenides, a religious leader at the time, instructed them to erect a statue to the unknown god and offer sacrifices to it to stop the plague. It worked and the plague ceases. Paul knew about the history behind the unknown God, studied their culture and related it to his speech so that the gospel could get a fair hearing. Paul was not just acting morally virtuous by informing them of the true God, he was equally intellectually virtuous as well since he took the effort to be well versed in the philosophy of his interlocutors.

Third, Paul affirms what he can affirm in the Athenian culture. Paul, as he stood up in his opening address says, "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious," congratulates them on their piety, albeit misplaced. Some scholars suppose that Paul was ascribing to his listeners the negative sense of the word "religious" to

⁶⁷ The Greek word here used for distress may mean "intensely angry" or pity for the failings of polytheism. It probably is the case that Paul feels both a sense of indignant anger as he sees the image of God deformed by idols, and mercy as he views the Athenians' ignorance.

denote the ridiculous lengths a person goes through to obtain protection (or to avoid punishment) from the gods.⁶⁸ However, this is unlikely given the fact that Paul was invited back to the Areopagus to speak to them.

Fourth, Paul outflanked the thinking of the Athenians, showing them that the God they worshipped as unknown was actually true and knowable.⁶⁹ Paul infuses his talk with language that resonate with his listeners, but repurposes it to give it fresh meaning. At the same time, he demonstrates his knowledge of Greek philosophy that asks the fundamental questions about ultimate reality but exposes its insufficiency to satisfy curiosity. For example, Paul urges his Athenian audience to consider the fact that their “unknown god” is indeed knowable:

^{23b}So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. ²⁴“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’⁷⁰

Whereas ancient Greek philosophy taught that the cosmos had no beginning, Paul taught that in the beginning God created the world and everything in it. Whereas the gods of the Athenians were utterly transcendent, Paul proclaimed that the true living God was immanent. Whereas the Greek gods were capricious, Paul spoke of the God of the Bible

⁶⁸ Osvaldo Padilla, *The Acts of the Apostles: Interpretation, History and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 178.

⁶⁹ Paul Gould, *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 26.

⁷⁰ Acts 17: 23-28.

who cared about humanity. New Testament scholar Osvaldo Padilla offered this insightful observation about Paul's approach:

By extracting the Greek philosophical statements from their original contexts, Paul has, as it were, taken out the poison from pagan thinking. Only when put in contexts do words have the vitality to mean and persuade. By using a biblical framework Luke has taken the words of the poets and put them in a different context. Thereby the pagan philosophical baggage that came with the words has been cut off. Now placed within the biblical movement from creation to consummation, the phrases of the Greek poets can serve as communicative bridges for Paul, without sliding into affirmation or equivalence with Greek thought. In short, Paul is practicing ad-hoc apologetics.⁷¹

Fifth, Paul confronts idolatry. Paul moves the conversation into the Biblical orbit.

The Athenian worldview is inadequate and so Paul introduces the God of the Bible who matter. Paul takes them out of the realm of the Greek world, which was familiar, and begins to advance the conversation into a distinct Biblical worldview. Paul continues:

²⁹Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. ³⁰In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.⁷²

Having affirmed the spiritual hunger behind the abundance of the idols, Paul now teaches that their idols are inconsistent with a personal creator god. Looking anywhere else short of the true God is idolatry and is an empty pursuit. He introduces them to the idea of moral wrong-doing about which their own philosophies are quite fuzzy, to be accountable to God for their own behavior. He challenges them to repent, to change their mind, to abandon one worldview and adopt another. Finally, he introduces the one who

⁷¹ Padilla, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 185.

⁷² Acts 17:29-31.

stands at the center of the Christian faith, Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead, a claim that stood at direct odds with the Athenians.

The sixth and last observation is that there were mixed reactions to Paul's speech. Some sneered and mocked; some wanted to hear more; and some believed. Some commentators consider Paul's mission to Athens as unsuccessful because not all of the Areopagites expressed saving faith. If the assertion is true, it would be curious to know why Luke include this in his account? Does this show that Paul's speech was a failure as some commentators suggests? On the contrary. Luke included this pericope to instruct his readers, not only as a guide for contextualizing the gospel for a particular audience, at a particular time and place, but to also remind them of realistic expectations.

In light of these observations, the importance of properly understanding an audience's peculiarities, unique thoughts, culture, and behaviors before presenting them with a message becomes paramount. With regards to Generation Z, Sean McDowell and J. Warner Wallace are emphatic about this when they write "Here is the bottom line: if we are going to genuinely reach young people, we must have an accurate understanding of what they think, see, and how they feel about the world."⁷³

So, contextualization then applied to Gen Z is to accurately and responsibly understand what they think, see, and how they feel about the world before the message of the Gospel is shared.

⁷³ Sean McDowell and J. Warner Wallace, *So the Next Generation Will Know: Preparing Young Christians for a Challenging World* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2019), 51.

What is Generations Research?

In order to understand Generation Z, it is important and beneficial to first comprehend the field of generations research. Delineating where generations begin and end is very difficult because it involves complex and sometimes overlapping factors. Put simply, generations research is the art and science of identifying a unique set of characteristics of human cohorts within a time span in history. Sometimes it is more art than science as this paper will show. Generational researchers sometimes face pressures from stakeholders to publish their research when generational cut-offs are fuzzy. Consider David Kinnaman, president and majority owner of *Barna Group*, a research firm focused on the intersection of faith and culture. At the time that he authored *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church... and Rethinking Faith* he was surveying 18 to 29 year-olds in 2011 and labeled them ‘Mosaics’ (popularly known as Millennials or Gen Y) because of their eclectic relationships, learning styles, cognitive processes, among other factors. Kinnaman used the now outdated year span of 1984-2002⁷⁴ to mark them, which is, in my opinion, approximately 5 years off. The oldest of the Millennials would have no enduring memory of historical events that are potential shapers of a generation such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the invention of the Gameboy, both occurring in 1989. Furthermore, if a person’s worldview is established by the age of 13⁷⁵, a claim the Barna Group supports, again, it would be difficult to identify

⁷⁴ David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 246.

⁷⁵ “Changes in Worldview Among Christians over the Past 13 Years,” Barna Group, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://www.barna.com/rsearch/barna-survey-examines-changes-in-worldview-among-christians-over-the-past-13-years/>.

a set of circumstances contributing to a person's formation during that time period. However, in the fall of 2018, Barna Group released the results of their generations research and used the year span of 1999-2015,⁷⁶ adjusting his previous claim and now aligns with most research⁷⁷ available today. This underscores the challenge in labeling generations. Any premature decision to settle on a label and generational in and out points may be a result of financial motivations. In an interview with the *New York Times* on January 23, 2018, Malcolm Harris, author of *Kids These Days: Human Capital and the Making of Millennials* said that those most interested in naming generations are just trying to sell things to that cohort.⁷⁸ He may be right about that. According to Forbes, Generation Z is on track to spend \$143 billion in direct spending by 2020, more than any previous generation at the same stage of life.⁷⁹

A Primer on Generations Research

One of the challenges in generations research is identifying the unique characteristics of a cohort that make up a generation. What sets each new generation apart? What criteria is used to demarcate their birthdates? Currently there are five living

⁷⁶ Barna Group, *Gen Z*, 10.

⁷⁷ Much of the research in this paper which support this period comes from the following generations researchers: Laura Graham, Sean McDowell, J. Warner Wallace, Michael Dimock, T.C. Reeves, Eunjung G. Oh, Jean M. Twenge, Anita Black, Dana Asadorian, Hannah Dunnett, Maria Torocsik, Krisztian Szucs and Daniel Kehl.

⁷⁸ Jonah Engel Bromwich, "Tell Us What to Call the Generation After Millennials (Please)," *The New York Times*, last modified January 23, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/23/style/generation-names.html>.

⁷⁹ Jeff Fromm, "How Much Financial Influence Does Gen Z Have?" *Forbes*, last modified January 10, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jefffromm/2018/01/10/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-financial-impact-of-gen-z-influence/#b21800e56fc5>.

generations who are active in America's economy and workforce: Silent Generation (1928 – 1945), Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965 – 1980), Millennials (1981-1996), Generation Z (1997-2015).⁸⁰ Each of these groups have distinguishing characteristics, traits, values, and behaviors that identify them. Generations researchers T.C. Reeves and Eunjung Grace Oh suggest using their 12 criteria to describe each generation: Level of trust, Loyalty to institutions, Importance, Career goals, Rewards, Parent-child involvement, Having children, Family life, Education, Evaluation, Political orientation, and The big question.⁸¹ For example, in assessing the criterion of 'Parent-child involvement' Gen Xers grew up being the least parented generation in U.S. history while the generation following them, the Millennials, have parents that are too involved (i.e., 'helicopter parents' which connotes the idea of parents hovering around their children). In the preceding example, it is clear that parents possess significant cohort effects on their children. Thus, values, ideas, traits, and behaviors, in general, are passed on from the older generation to a newer one. This is a legitimate method of classifying generations.

Researchers today now consider three main factors in determining generational cohorts: Life Cycle (or Age Effect), Period Effect and Cohort Effect.⁸² Life Cycle refers

⁸⁰ Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins," Pew Research Center, January 17, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>

⁸¹ T.C. Reeves and Eunjung Grace Oh, "Generational Differences," in *Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology*, 3rd ed., ed. J. Michael Spector, et al. (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 295-303.

⁸² This view was a result of the work of Walker Smith and Ann Clurman and can be found in their book *Rocking the Ages: Yankelovich Report on Generational Marketing*. New York: Harper Business, 1997. Pew Research Center has adopted this understanding and explain it here: "The Whys and Hows of Generations Research," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, December 14, 2015, <https://www.people-press.org/2015/09/03/the-whys-and-hows-of-generations-research/>.

simply to age difference in the population (i.e., young, middle-aged and old). This is the traditional way of understanding generations, typically with 15-20 years separating them. An example of this age difference shows in how disproportionately the older generation express themselves politically by showing in greater number at the polls compared with younger people. The reason is simple, political leaders and laws are perceived as having a more direct impact on middle-aged and older individuals more than on teens. Plus, teenagers are just at a stage in development when they are just beginning to understand the realities of life. Thus, a common sense understanding of generational difference may lie in the mere fact that older generations have more experience in life than younger ones.

Period Effect refers to outsized effects (effects that appear disproportionately greater than its cause) of significant events and circumstances such as wars, social movements, economic prosperity or poverty, scientific or technological advancements that have lasting effects on entire populations. The 1960s, for example, were turbulent years for the United States. The assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, plus the unpopular war in Vietnam eroded trust in government. The Civil Rights movement and the constant protests in universities caused a generation to look inwardly to deeply held values. These events have left an indelible mark on Boomers⁸³ who had come of age during that period, shaping their worldview.

Finally, there is the Cohort Effect. This is similar to the Period Effect in that it also impacts a population caused by an outsize effect such as the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Where they are different is in the unique circumstances of an event and the effect it has on a population who are at a life-stage in which they are in the process of forming

⁸³ Individuals born between 1940 and 1964.

opinions. These kinds of events are rare. A popular example of a Cohort Effect is 9/11. One researcher writing in 2014 suggested this new generation be known as “Homeland Generation”⁸⁴ in reference to 9/11, the War on Terror, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, and a sense that the “homeland” was no longer safe. However, that label did not stick because the years that followed were mired in politics over whether or not the invasion of Iraq was justified. So 9/11 did not satisfy that criteria. It failed in sustaining the outsized effect.

A prime example of a Cohort Effect is the technology boom in the 2000s. In the generations research community, this period appears to provide a clear example of a tectonic shift in attitudes and behaviors brought on by a singular cause: technology. Researcher Bruce Tulgan of RainmakerThinking, Inc. said “Looking at technology alone, the acceleration from the 90s to 00s—wireless internet ubiquity, tech integration, and the rise of handheld devices—amounts to historic change.”⁸⁵

The tsunami of technological change in the last year has affected an entire generation, all at once, completely and thoroughly, and in ways researchers are just now beginning to understand. This is no exaggeration. Before Apple introduced the iPhone in 2007, there had been only 715,000 smart phones sold in the four and half years prior to its launch, representing 6% of U.S. mobile phone sales by volume. That changed when Apple sold 1.12 million units in first full quarter availability and its market share has

⁸⁴ Neil Howe, “Introducing the Homeland Generation (Part 1 of 2),” *Forbes*, October 27, 2014, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/neilhowe/2014/10/27/introducing-the-homeland-generation-part-1-of-2/#703e113d2bd6>.

⁸⁵ Bruce Tulgan, “Meet Generation Z: The Second Generation Within the Giant ‘Millennial’ Cohort,” Rainmaker Thinking, last modified 2013, <http://grupespsichoterapija.lt/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Gen-Z-Whitepaper.pdf>.

nearly doubled each year thereafter. Now, according to a 2015 marketing survey⁸⁶, two out of three US teens owned an iPhone. To put this in perspective, it took regular landline telephones about forty-five years to move the adoption rate from 5% to 50%. In contrast, smartphones went from 5% to 40% in about four and a half years, despite an economic recession.⁸⁷ More will be said about this later, but just to underscore how sudden and disruptive the introduction of this piece of technology is, computer science professor Calvin Newport writes:

These changes crept up on us and happened fast, before we had a chance to step back and ask what we really wanted out of the rapid advances of the past decade. We added new technologies to the periphery of our experience for minor reasons, then woke one morning to discover that they had colonized the core of our daily life. We didn't, in other words, sign up for the digital world in which we're currently entrenched; we seem to have stumbled backward into it.⁸⁸

When Steve Jobs in 2007 unveiled the iPhone and announced to the audience that people can now have a thousand songs, maps and basically the internet in their pockets, he most likely did not foresee the myriad of social media apps⁸⁹ that would take residence on his platform. And yet there is no single individual in recent memory who has done more to bring technology to the world, thereby ushering a new ethos of connectedness,

⁸⁶ Aaron Smith, "U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015," *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, last modified May 30, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2015/04/01/us-smartphone-use-in-2015/>.

⁸⁷ Michael DeGusta. "Are Smart Phones Spreading Faster than Any Technology in Human History?" *MIT Technology Review*, last modified December 30, 2013, <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/427787/are-smart-phones-spreading-faster-than-any-technology-in-human-history/>.

⁸⁸ Calvin Newport, *Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2019), 6.

⁸⁹ It is a curious thing that Apple, being the most successful technology company, did not have an Apple branded social media app. It is possible that Steve Jobs, with all due credit, either did not imagine the opportunities in social media was or did not think it was significant enough to pursue.

and, for better or worse, instantly identified an entire cohort to a device, than Jobs. So overpowering and far-reaching were the ripple effects of the iPhone that generations researcher Jean Twenge contemplated giving this generation its namesake: iPhone Generation.⁹⁰ This, indeed, is an archetypal example of a Cohort Effect.

Who Is Generation Z?

According to the Pew Research Center, Generation Z includes individuals born after 1996.^{91,92} One of the distinctive challenges in this paper was locating academic sources because much of the research is on-going, bearing in mind the youngest of the Gen Zers are too young to gather meaningful data about themselves. To that end I was mindful of the publication dates of my sources. Publication dates typically do not factor in philosophical and theological research. In this case, however, later ones are to be preferred since the field of study expands over time and is built upon or directly contradicts previous research. Further research over time may change this but after distilling the data from the work of many authors cited here, there have been no new significant published information. The following are summaries of five unique characteristics of Generation Z: Digital Natives, Diverse, Fluid, World Changers and Entrepreneurs, Anxious and Mental Health Sufferers.

⁹⁰ Jean M. Twenge, *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood and What That Means for the Rest of Us* (New York: Atria Books, 2017), Loc. 57, Kindle.

⁹¹ Kim Parker and Ruth Igielnik, “What We Know About Gen Z So Far,” *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project*, last modified May 15, 2020, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/essay/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far/>.

⁹² I have summarized in chart-form as much information about the set of characteristics that define Generation Z from experts (see Appendix A).

Digital Natives

I start with this characteristic for two reasons: (1) All of the experts in this research agree that being immersed in technology, particularly the smartphone is what sets this generation apart from the others; and (2) many of the other traits described here are a result of the rapid rate of technological advancements in the last few years. These are individuals who were born in the mid to late 1990s who have not known a world without an ‘always-on’ internet. Accessing information about anything is easily and quickly obtained with a few flicks of the finger. One observer said Gen Z ought to be called “Thumbies” in reference to the manner in which they interact with their devices. Ruth Jackson, editor of *Premier Youth* and *Children’s Work* magazine claims that teenagers today absorb, on average, 9 hours⁹³ of media a day on their smartphones. Typical teens of prior generations who might have spent their afternoons at the mall, now devote their attention Snapchatting each other with silly photos of themselves. YouTube has replaced regular television. Google has even replaced God⁹⁴ in a sense because teens rely on it for answers, anticipating their needs even before they ask (like praying). Their queries are like confessions to a priest, rabbi or best friend.

⁹³ Ruth Jackson, “The Frontline of Youth Work,” (Lecture, Unbelievable? Conference, Costa Mesa, CA, October 12, 2019).

⁹⁴ Galloway, *The Four*, 124-129.

Diverse

According to researchers Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace, Gen Z is not just the most racially diverse generation to date as a whole,⁹⁵ but also has more members of this generation than any other that have a positive opinion about the U.S. becoming more diverse.⁹⁶ McDowell and Wallace claim Gen Z are the last generation in which most of the American population will be Caucasian.⁹⁷ Of those born between 1995 to 2012, which number 74 million (some estimates are at 90 million making Gen Z the largest generation in U.S. history), one in four is Hispanic, and nearly 5% are multiracial, making non-Hispanic whites at a bare majority of 53%.⁹⁸ As one writer for the *Bloomberg News* put it, they may be the first generation to be genuinely “bigotry-proof” since they are growing up in a culture for which diversity is a natural concept.⁹⁹ Members of Gen Z went to school starting in kindergarten when in 2016 ethnic minorities made up a majority of students, and whites the minority.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace, *Generation Z Goes To College* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 6.

⁹⁶ Seemiller and Grace, *Generation Z Goes To College*, 39.

⁹⁷ McDowell and Wallace, *So the Next Generation Will Know*, 55.

⁹⁸ Twenge, *iGen*, Loc. 222.

⁹⁹ Leonid Bershidsky, “Generation Z Pushing Back against Today’s Technology,” *Charlotte Observer*, November 18, 2014, <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/op-ed/article9233846.html>.

¹⁰⁰ Barna Group, *Gen Z*, 34.

Fluid

With ethnic diversity being the norm, Gen Zers are prone to be exposed to other diverse ideas. This naturally leads to being accepting and inclusive in their thinking about important values such as sexuality, morality, sense of justice, etc. When it comes to things like gay marriage and transgender rights, the majority of Gen Zers have no problem supporting this growing movement. Barna Research reports that around one in eight of all 13 to 18 year-olds identify their sexual orientation as something other than heterosexual.¹⁰¹ Seventy percent of Gen Zers do not see a problem with the idea of being born a particular gender and feeling like another. Sexual orientation and identity are fungible things. According to Stephanie Davies-Arai, there have been a 1000% increase of adolescents being referred to the Tavistock gender clinic in London.¹⁰² Treatments there often are pursued based on political pressure to conform to the prevailing progressive idea that gender is whatever one feels. And if gender is indeed a matter of personal choice, then no one or no organization has the right to stop transexuals from obtaining disfiguring surgeries and lifelong hormone regiments. It is too early to ascertain the effects of undergoing these treatments, but common sense tells us that there ought to be regulations in place to prevent its misuse. Transgender Trend, an international group of concerned parents, asserts that the public should have serious concerns, “that practices of transgendering children involve the use of puberty suppression, cross-sex hormonal

¹⁰¹ Barna Group, *Gen Z*, 46.

¹⁰² Stephanie Davies-Arai, “The Transgender Experiment on Children,” in *Transgender Children and Young People: Born in Your Own Body*, ed. Heather Brunskell-Evans and Michele Moore (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2018), 16.

medication that harms children’s reproductive capacity, their bodily integrity and future physical and psychological health, and possible surgery involving the amputation of penises and breasts that cannot be re-attached.”¹⁰³

When it comes to politics, however, there appears to be conflicting reports. Seemiller and Grace reports Gen Zers leaning moderate to left,¹⁰⁴ while Twenge reports a leaning toward independents and Republicans.¹⁰⁵ Party affiliation, in general, is becoming passe. Their voting choices rely on individualistic reasons and not necessarily on party alignments. For this generation, reasons are obtained by googling¹⁰⁶ current issues on their smartphones and getting educated about them, instead of being dictated by either Democrats or Republicans.

World Changers and Entrepreneurs

A study conducted by Northeastern University in 2014 in which they polled more than 1,000 teenagers (16 to 19 year-olds) revealed that 42% of them expect to work for themselves.¹⁰⁷ They want to succeed, but not like the Millennials who preceded them

¹⁰³ Heather Brunskell-Evans, “Gendered Mis-Intelligence: The Fabrication of ‘The Transgender Child,’” in *Transgender Children and Young People: Born in Your Own Body*, ed. Heather Brunskell-Evans and Michele Moore (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2018), 50.

¹⁰⁴ Seemiller and Grace, *Generation Z Goes To College*, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Twenge, *iGen*, Loc. 3641.

¹⁰⁶ The word “google” which has its origins in the Google Search application, a proper noun then, is now a regular verb that was added to the *Oxford English Dictionary* on June 15, 2006 and to the *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* a month later due to its widespread usage.

¹⁰⁷ Greg St. Martin, “Generation Z and the Future of Higher Education,” Northeastern University, November 19, 2014, <https://news.northeastern.edu/2014/11/19/generation-z-and-the-future-of-higher-education/>.

whose main measure of success was accumulating wealth.¹⁰⁸ The oldest of the Gen Zers experienced seeing their parents go through financial hardships during the 2008 recession, which helped to form their attitudes toward money. They have witnessed their parents and older siblings lose jobs, seen changes in the way their friend's families, including their own, tighten their budgets forcing an adjustment to a more meager lifestyle. They value obtaining a traditional college education, convinced this will open up opportunities to get ahead in life, although they worry about rising cost associated with higher education. Students at Northeastern University were polled¹⁰⁹ and a pragmatic approach to college turns out to be an important guiding influence, viewing it as the best path to a good-paying job.

Anxious and Mental Health Sufferers

Arguably the most pernicious impact of the smartphone, along with its concomitant support of social media apps is seen in studies measuring particular human traits, such as happiness, life satisfaction, loneliness, meaning and other similar moral values. These studies show drastic changes in the outlook of life among teens, all pointing to an all-time low sense of self. Twenge says teens today are “on the verge of the most severe mental health crisis for young people in decades.”¹¹⁰ Teens on social media carefully craft their image and portray themselves as happy even when they are not, creating fantasy versions for themselves. This fuels peer-pressure to post fake happy

¹⁰⁸ Anita Black, Dana Asadorian, and Hannah Dunnett, “8 Key Truths About Generation Z,” *Research World* (2017): 12-14. doi:10.1002/rwm3.20587

¹⁰⁹ St. Martin, “Generation Z and the Future of Higher Education.”

¹¹⁰ Twenge, *iGen*, Loc. 1318

versions of themselves, often feeling inferior because they actually are not happy all the time.¹¹¹ This activity is more pronounced in girls since they spend more time on social media. Researchers have discovered a correlation between adolescents who spend more time-consuming new media and their likelihood to report mental health issues such as depression and suicide.¹¹² The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that the suicide rate for people aged 10 to 24 increased by 56% between 2007 and 2017. Suicide is now the second leading cause of death among members of Gen Z. Studies show drastic changes in outlook of life among teens, all pointing to an all-time low. The current pandemic of 2020 that has paralyzed the world has not helped and only exacerbated the challenges mental health sufferers experience. The latest data from the CDC reports that nearly 11% of adults said that they had seriously considered suicide in the previous thirty days as the coronavirus pandemic has taken a toll on American's mental health. According to the researchers from the Department of Health and Human Services, this is more than double the 4.3% of adults who reported doing so in 2018. The new numbers, from the CDC survey of 5,412 adults conducted between June 24 and June 30, 2020, were even more striking for young people. Among those 18 to 24 years old, 25.5% reported having seriously considered suicide in the last 30 days.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Donna Frietas, *The Happiness Effect: How Social Media is Driving a Generation to Appear Perfect at Any Cost* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 14.

¹¹² Jean M. Twenge, Thomas E. Joiner, Megan L. Rogers, and Gabrielle N. Martin, "Increases in Depressive Symptoms, Suicide-Related Outcomes, and Suicide Rates Among U.S. Adolescence After 2010 and Links to Increased New Media Screen Time," *Clinical Psychological Science* 6 (2017): 3-17. doi:10.1177/2167702617723376.

¹¹³ Jennifer Calfas and Allison Prang, "New Cases Tick Up Again in the U.S.," *Wall Street Journal*, August 14, 2020.

Gen Z and Religion

According to Barna, irrelevance is a key theme when it comes to Gen Z attitudes regarding faith, truth, and church.¹¹⁴ That is mainly due to the philosophical influence of relativism that fuels the growing sense among teens that what is true for someone else may not be “true for me.” For a substantial minority of teens, sincerely believing something makes it true. Consequently, self-identifying as an atheist no longer carries the stigma it once did years ago since belief in God is a private and personal pursuit. The percentage of teens today who identify as such is double that of prior generations.

More than half of Gen Z says that church is not important and feel like they can find God elsewhere. Surprisingly, three out of five churchgoing teens feel the same way.¹¹⁵ However, despite having a low view of traditional church and a distorted concept of truth, a majority of Gen Zers still maintain the belief that the Bible is the actual word of God and should be taken literally, word for word. Barna reports:

Looking at two key Bible metrics—its perceived authority and its relevance for people’s lives—we find that teens and Gen X report similar beliefs and attitudes (for example, seven out of ten believe the Bible is God’s word), while Millennials are more likely to be skeptical.¹¹⁶

It may be too early to assess how Gen Zers respond to the Gospel. But based on reports by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, it is unlikely through traditional

¹¹⁴ Barna Group, *Gen Z*, 74.

¹¹⁵ Barna Group, *Gen Z*, 71-72.

¹¹⁶ Barna Group, *Gen Z*, 66.

“altar calls” when only two percent¹¹⁷ of those responding to invitations to accept Christ become Christians during the sermon. The others who turn to faith convert only after follow-ups and counseling sessions. For teenagers, follow-ups and counseling sessions suggest their preference for community and relationships. When asked to describe their ideal church, Gen Zers (81%) were drawn to the idea of community.¹¹⁸ David Odom, professor of youth ministry at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, exhorts church leaders to focus on relationships and to integrate teenagers into the church.¹¹⁹ These two outreach models are generational preferences that will aid to engage teenagers today in their search for God and become disciples of Jesus.

Practical Advice for Leaders

Some of what was mentioned above appear to be alarming trends that can be observed coming out of this generation. But there are positive ones as well. It is tempting to be naïve so as to cast blame on Gen Z, keeping in mind that older generations tend to blame the one coming after them for an unjustified proportion of social ills. Instead, the fair stance is to stop classifying change as either good or bad, at least initially, but to seek ways to understand how culture changes over time, pursue commonality before judgement. It is very important to ask the question, “Now what?” now that we know who

¹¹⁷ Karl Dahlfred, “The Sinner's Prayer in Animistic Cultures: Problems and Solutions - OMF: Missions to East Asia's People,” OMF, September 2, 2020, <https://omf.org/blog/2020/04/03/the-sinners-prayer-in-animistic-cultures-problems-and-solutions/>.

¹¹⁸ Barna Group, *Gen Z*, 72-73.

¹¹⁹ David Odom, “Three Ways to Reach Generation Z,” NOBTS, accessed March 14, 2021, <https://www.nobts.edu/geauxtherefore/articles/2018/ReachingGenerationZ.html#>.

Gen Zers are, their attitudes and behaviors. The following are practical insights to help Gen Zers flourish amidst the challenges of their time.

First, leaders such as youth pastors and educators must recognize the damage social media and the electronic devices they are constantly on has done to this generation. Parents, teachers and pastors ought to acknowledge the addictive¹²⁰ properties it has over young people and find ways to restore them to a good state of good mental health. Nine hours of looking at a screen is not normal human behavior. Young people need physical human connection. Humans were not created to be alone in a virtual world. When human relationships are broken, the basic innate human need craves to connect with each other. Cognitive science supports this:

It is worth remembering that humans’ neural architecture evolved under conditions of close, mostly continuous face-to-face contact with others (including nonvisual and nonauditory contact; i.e., touch, olfaction) and that a decrease in or removal of a system’s key inputs may risk destabilization of the system.¹²¹

Second, pastors, (especially youth pastors) counselors, educators, parents and anyone who cares for the wellbeing of a Gen Zer must find a point of connection between their behavior and what they truly desire. This is key. For example, studies show that part of the reason why young people today experience high levels of anxiety is the pressure to always appear happy. Gen Z expert and college professor, Donna Frietas, calls this the “happiness effect” and devotes an entire book on this new phenomenon afflicting teenagers. The “happiness effect” according to her is the requirement to appear happy on

¹²⁰ Newport, *Digital Minimalism*, 15-17.

¹²¹ Twenge et al., “Increases in Depressive Symptoms, Suicide-Related Outcomes, and Suicide Rates Among U.S. Adolescence After 2010 and Links to Increased New Media Screen Time,” 4.

social media regardless of what a person actually feels.¹²² This explains why it is rare to find posts on social media depicting true to life experiences of young people on Instagram and TikTok. A casual Google search on how to look happy on social media nets over two billion results. Another relevant point of connection Gen Zers can get behind is their concern for social justice. James White, a seminary professor, writing on Gen Z says “the doctrine of humanity, is, by far, the most pressing doctrine of our day in regard to culture.”¹²³ By connecting their genuine desire for a benevolent future, a culmination of all that is true, good and beautiful with the proper understanding of the Imago Dei at the bottom of humanity, young people may become open to another way to ground their social justice activities.

Third, influencers must capitalize on this. On the one hand extol the value of happiness, justice, meaning, and other related virtues and on the other, point to the true source from which these values have their origin. By ‘pointing’, I mean in the vein of what sociologist Peter Berger calls “signals of transcendence.” He defines this as “phenomena that are to be found within the domain of our ‘natural’ reality but that appear to point beyond that reality.”¹²⁴ These ‘natural phenomena,’ incidentally are the very things Gen Zers seek. Community leaders must help them with their search. This strategy is good because it minimizes potential pushback that might come from a secularist since this finding was not obtained through religious study. In summary, leaders must first be

¹²² Frietas, *The Happiness Effect*, 251.

¹²³ James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching The New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 19.

¹²⁴ Peter L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2011), 52.

educated about the potentially damaging effects of spending inordinate amounts of time on devices and social media, then mentor and disciple teens to help them discover (via theology, philosophy or sociology) what they are truly seeking.

SECTION 3: THESIS

Church Activity is Up, But Church Influence is Down

As mentioned earlier, Evangelical leaders such as Graham, Colson, Bright and Dobson have not been lax in their efforts to win converts. Each of them has had great successes in their respective ministries. It is extraordinary what some of these leaders have accomplished. For example, both Bright and Graham were involved in organizing Explo '72,¹²⁵ an evangelistic conference drawing more than 200,000 in the summer of 1972 in Dallas Texas. A few years earlier a grassroots movement made up of hippies ignited an Evangelical revival: The Jesus Movement. This movement grew in numbers and was responsible for launching new global church denominations such as Calvary Chapel, Vineyard Churches, and set in motion what is now known as contemporary Christian music. It is not an overstatement to say that Graham and others have afforded a certain long-lasting positive effect on church attendance and culture still prevalent today. However, despite this favorable development, there is a contemporary religious malaise that has been observed by sociologist James D. Hunter. In his book, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, he writes:

Consider, first, the fact that communities of faith have been a dominating presence in American society for the length and breadth of its history. There is some evidence that suggests that there are even more Americans who are worshipping as part of a congregation today than in the past. As late as 1960, only 2 percent of the population claimed not to believe in God; even today, only 12 to 14 percent of the population would call themselves secularists. This means that in America today, 86 to 88 percent of the people adhere to some faith commitments.

¹²⁵ Billy Graham called it the “Christian Woodstock.”

And yet our culture—business culture, law and government, the academic world, popular entertainment—is intensely materialistic and secular.¹²⁶

Given the high number of self-professed Christians currently in the United States one would expect a church that is healthy and active, helping its adherents grow in Christ and help their communities thrive. Instead, what is revealed by Hunter is a church that has lost its saltiness and a dimmed light, impeding the knowledge of all things true, good and beautiful. Hunter's observation is not unique. Seminary professor John Cionca in his book *Solving Church Education's Ten Toughest Problems: An Experienced Educator Offers Sound Advice*, notes a similar trend in a Gallup Poll which indicates a 6% growth in church attendance between 1970 and 1990,¹²⁷ affirming the notion that numbers alone mean little in guaranteeing the growth of a believer, much less successful outreach in the community.

On the surface, this trend of upward religious activity in terms of numbers is not discouraging because it acts as a buffer against the pernicious effects of modernization¹²⁸ and secularization. What Cionca and Hunter have discovered is a fit example of a repudiation of *secularization theory*¹²⁹ that was popular until the late 1980s.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 19.

¹²⁷ John R. Cionca, *Solving Church Educations Ten Toughest Problems* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990), 97.

¹²⁸ James K.A. Smith and Charles Taylor are correct to note that modernity is not a necessary condition for secularity. A case in point, Christianity emerged from a pluralistic society. For a good summary of Taylor's thoughts on secularization theory, see Smith's *How Not To Be Secular*, 79-90.

¹²⁹ *Secularization Theory* claim that societies become less religious as they modernize.

¹³⁰ Peter L. Berger, "Further Thoughts on Religion and Modernity," *Society* 49 (2012), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12115-012-9551-y>.

While a healthy church attendance, numerically speaking, does not necessarily equate to a healthy church, these numbers are not unimportant nor insignificant. They signal something. A self-professed Christian, even a mundane one, does not profess Christianity for nothing. It requires some level of commitment, with all its attendant rituals, such as attending church services, serving in the soup kitchen, going to short term missions abroad and similar other activities. It is difficult to gauge church goers' motivations for attending religious services, but clearly, they are not the kind that transforms them into genuine lovers of God and lovers of others. So, there must be other vicissitudes undergirding Hunter's (et al.) observations. Are self-professed Christians hoping for something better to emerge in their faith? What is their understanding of the nature of the church, the Gospel and salvation in general that compels church attendance? Does *understanding* here necessarily denote an intellectual assent or is it an *effective* way of understanding sufficient? What does faith have to do with everyday life? Are these even questions that enter their minds? These questions will help frame how we understand the interaction between beliefs and behaviors and why a particular philosophical system perniciously has affected Christianity.

What Is the Gospel?

To understand how Gen Z relates to the gospel, it is appropriate to define what *gospel* means first. Not only is this proper, it is also required in order to establish a starting point to show how the meaning of the word changed over time. So what is the gospel? For starters it is helpful to enumerate what the gospel is not: it is not just a set of propositions, not just believing, not identical to Scriptures, not the "sinner's prayer"; and it is not identical to the four Gospels in the New Testament. Christians sometimes define

the gospel as a summary of their beliefs, connected to phrases like, “God loves you” or “Jesus died for your sins.” Over time, religious words, such as *gospel* can lose their power and meaning by becoming too familiar. These phrases are elements of the gospel, but they are not identical to the meaning of the word. Conflating these perpetuates confusion. Popular evangelist and pastor Greg Laurie on the radio habitually invites people to “accept Jesus as personal lord and savior” to which he equates this with the gospel.¹³¹ He does this routinely at his annual Harvest America¹³² events that packs football stadiums over several days.

If the gospel is not “easy-believe-ism,” however, then what is it? The word gospel comes from the Old Testament Hebrew verb “bisser” (ביסר)¹³³ and the noun “besorah.” (ביסורה)¹³⁴ The Greek New Testament equivalent is “euangelion” (Ευαγγέλιον)¹³⁵—which is a compound word: “eu” means good, and “angelion” means announcement or news. For the Hebrew people during the reign of King David, they would have heard such an announcement as a royal announcement with generous pomp such as when the Israelites

¹³¹ There is no doubt that Greg Laurie understands the gospel. This is not meant to disparage his ministry or integrity. I’m merely highlighting the fact that with cultural pressures, a salesmanship approach and a “taken-for-grantedness” approach to the gospel, he may unconsciously perpetuate a preaching of it that is sorely incomplete.

¹³² Greg Laurie, “Harvest America 2018 with Greg Laurie (Classic Crusades),” June 10, 2018, YouTube, 1:17:59, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYyj6IGWrBg>.

¹³³ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on The Prophecies of Isaiah* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1867), 145.

¹³⁴ Strong's Exhaustive Concordance: Hebrew 1309. בְּשׂוּרָה (besorah) -- tidings, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://biblehub.com/strongs/hebrew/1309.html>.

¹³⁵ Messie2vie, “Ευαγγέλιον - Euangélion [Yoo-Ang-Ghel'-Ee-on],” Messie2vie, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://www.messie2vie.fr/bible/strongs/strong-greek-G2098-euangelion.html>.

defeated their enemies¹³⁶ or when a new king is coronated.¹³⁷ After Solomon's death followed many bad kings whose corruption led their nation into self-destruction. This is the reason the prophet Isaiah proclaimed the good news that one day the God of Israel would come as the cosmic king to restore order and reign over all nations. When Jesus comes on the historic scene, he continued Isaiah's gospel by going around announcing the *euangelion* of God's Kingdom. He claimed he was the God written in the Law and the Prophets. Jesus demonstrated this by giving sight to the blind, healing the lame, restoring hearing to the deaf, raising the dead, healing the leprous and proclaiming the *euangelion* to the poor—a direct refence to Isaiah's prophecy. His *euangelion* required a response. That is why he took his *euangelion* to Jerusalem to confront the evil kingdoms of his day. With great love, he challenged the earthly rulers, pointing out their hypocrisy and corruption. They in turn mocked him as a fake king before killing him on a cross. While he hung on the cross, he demonstrated true royal authority by forgiving his tormentors. Three days later everything changed. Jesus rose from the dead as the true king, whose love is stronger than death. He appeared to hundreds of his followers and told them to spread the *euangelion* that all authority in heaven and earth belong to him. The reality of Jesus' kingdom is an “upside down” one where the first are last, leaders are servants and the poor are rich. The great news is that we are all invited to be part of this kingdom by placing our trust that Jesus is God who has the power and authority to make us citizens in his everlasting kingdom—a kingdom where its subjects live in the presence of the King, the source of all that is good, true and beautiful.

¹³⁶ 2 Samuel 18:31.

¹³⁷ 1 Kings 1:42.

Ask a seminarian to define the gospel¹³⁸ today and one will get a variety of answers, most not approximating the description above. To understand how the meaning of the gospel has changed from a narrative imbued with timeless messianic ethos to merely a set of propositions, we must examine a segment of history which gave rise to what Charles Colson calls evangelical drift.¹³⁹

Idealism to “Idea-ism”

Until the 17th century people in the West took God’s existence for granted. In other words, the belief that God exists did not require a preliminary explanation. It was perfunctorily assumed. The fact that God existed provided a basis for life’s meaning, purpose and an observed order in the cosmos. To a fault, and devoid of any natural causes, people prior to the age of Enlightenment viewed God as the primary cause of everything. In a panentheistic way, there was little distinction between God and his creation in that everything that moved, breathed and had being was a direct result of God’s meticulous and careful “gaze.”¹⁴⁰ The worldview at the time made room for the

¹³⁸ I found it rather surprising during my research that I found scant academic resources in the library that defined the word “gospel.” There were many more on the gospel books: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; but hardly anything covering the ultimate good news found in Scripture. For example, Philip W. Eaton, Seattle Pacific University president emeritus, neglects to cover what the gospel is in the chapter titled “The Gospel and Cultural Engagement” in his book *Engaging the Culture, Changing the World: The Christian University in a Post-Christian World*. Another example is David Wenham’s scholarly book *From Good News to Gospel: What Did the First Christians Say About Jesus?* One would think a title like this would surely have material on the “good news”—it says it in the title. If it’s there, it was not obvious.

¹³⁹ Charles Colson and Anne Morse, “Evangelical Drift,” *Christianity Today*, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/april/27.112.html>.

¹⁴⁰ This concept is connected to the idea of God’s provision. In Latin, the word is *provisio*, which means to foresee or to attend to. The word “provision” is also closely related to the word “providence.” Sharing the same Latin variant, it means foresight, precaution, foreknowledge, to look ahead, prepare, and supply.

transcendent. Supernatural possibilities were within the framework of thinking prior to the Enlightenment. “At that time,” writes Charles Taylor, “non-belief in God was close to unthinkable for the vast majority; whereas today this is not at all the case.”¹⁴¹ The drift away from belief in God happened when leading thinkers began to question God’s love and providence over his creation following natural disasters such as the Lisbon earthquake of 1755.¹⁴² The Lisbon earthquake, (also known as the Great Lisbon earthquake) registering 8.4 on moment magnitude scale, hit Portugal on November 1, during the Feast of All Saints, causing fires and tsunamis, killing an estimated 60,000 people.¹⁴³ Slowly and unwittingly, society became disenchanted with the world.¹⁴⁴ It is into this world that the age of Enlightenment emerged and took root. The Enlightenment was an intellectual and philosophical movement that dominated Europe between the 17th and 19th centuries. Championing the way were Francis Bacon, for his work on empiricism and scientific method; Isaac Newton, for his work on physics; and John Locke, for his reason, empiricism, and liberal politics.¹⁴⁵ There were counter-Enlightenment movements that soon followed, eschewing the primacy of rationalism and empiricism, but the new ideas of Bacon, Newton and Locke were enough to frame the notion that knowledge can only be gained exclusively through the mind (or brain for a strict naturalist). According to

¹⁴¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 556.

¹⁴² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 317.

¹⁴³ Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Lisbon Earthquake of 1755,” Last modified January 29, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Lisbon-earthquake-of-1755>.

¹⁴⁴ Gould, *Cultural Apologetics*, 37-39.

¹⁴⁵ Stephen Hicks, *Explaining Postmodernism: Skepticism and Socialism from Rousseau to Foucault* (China: Ockham’s Razor Publishing, 2011), Loc. 847, Kindle.

this view, in general, all knowledge is determined insofar as the mind is able to constitute reality. This paved the way for human understanding and perception to be coterminous with ideas themselves.

Hunter is unwavering about his analysis of Western thought. Although his project in *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* is not to disparage the revitalizing accomplishments of the West, he responsibly points out this specific blind spot that sidetracks evangelicalism. He asserts that idealism is the real problem:

The real problem of this working theory of culture and cultural change and the strategies that derive from it, originate from a tradition deep in Western thought. This tradition reaches back to Plato, though it finds its most modern and powerful articulation in the German Enlightenment. In a word, “idealism.”¹⁴⁶

Plato’s Philosophical Contribution to “Idea-ism”

The history of Western thought began in the sixth century BC among Greek-speaking people in what is modern day Turkey. This intellectual movement flourished in the centuries that followed, particularly in Athens where philosophical giants such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle began their foundational work. Plato, (429-347 B.C.) is renowned for exploring the noetic structure of human rationality. He questioned whether subjects actually perceive things as they really are. In *The Republic*, Plato tells a fictitious story of human beings bound in a cave since childhood. They are prisoners, chained, facing a wall and their field of vision is narrowly constrained. Behind them is an opening where other people are walking, talking, and going about daily activities. Further back in

¹⁴⁶ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 24.

the cave is a fire to keep the cave inhabitants warm. The flickering flames casts shadows of the people on the wall which is the only phenomenon the prisoners have ever known. The prisoners hear voices and assume they are coming from the moving shadows. Indeed, their only perception of reality comes from the shadows.

As a thought experiment, Plato asks what would happen if one of the prisoners were released to explore the cave. First, having been immobile for years he would find walking painful. Then, not being accustomed to light, he would find the glare of the fire blinding, not being able to see clearly. Furthermore, what if he is dragged out of the cave and experiences the world outside the cave. Plato said that it would be too distressful, and the prisoner would be inclined to return to his customary position and confine his glance to the familiar shadows. Moreover, if he were to relate his experience to the other prisoners, they would think he was crazy, ridicule, and even kill him.¹⁴⁷

This parable illustrates Plato's vision of reality in that he makes a clear distinction between what is perceived (shadows) versus what is real (objects behind the shadows). Later, he develops this understanding to posit that the world is made up of two things: ideas (or forms) and matter. Ideas being what is metaphysically real, while matter is what we perceive with our senses and experience. Matter functions as receptacles (or containers) of ideas. For example, I am currently experiencing the sensation of sitting on a chair as I type the words on this page. My direct experience of it is undeniable. However, in Plato's mind, the chair really exists primarily in the realm of ideas and is only instantiated by its physical form when I experience it. In an ideal world a perfect

¹⁴⁷ This perhaps was a clear reference and indictment against the authorities of Athens when they sentenced Socrates to death for "corrupting the minds of the youth."

chair exists (form of “chairness” in the spiritual realm), but each time I sit on it, I am only interacting with an imperfect copy¹⁴⁸ of the real thing. This is true of all objects such as tables, its form is “tableness;” pencils, its form is “pencilness;” and every other substance that exists in the physical world.

Moreover, William Hocking interprets Plato to mean that ultimate reality in the universe is “such stuff as ideas are made of rather than such stuff as stones and metals are made of.”¹⁴⁹ In this view, ideas interpret reality. Hocking said that “idea-ism” is a more fitting label to describe Plato’s theory of knowledge than “idealism.”¹⁵⁰

This, according to Plato, through the process of *recollections*, is how we come to know what a chair is when we see one. After all there are many of them, all different from one another. Furthermore, we have not seen all chairs of the past, present and future, and yet there would be no difficulty in identifying one should it be presented to us.

According to Plato, we are able to identify such objects, like a chair, because “chairness” is inherent in the mind. All we have to do is recall it. The theory of recollection is Plato’s contribution to the philosophical field of epistemology.¹⁵¹ According to R.C. Sproul:

This concept of the relationship between form and matter, idea and receptacle, lies at the heart of the Greek view of the inherent imperfection of all things material, which led inevitably to the denigration of physical things. This negative view of physical reality influenced many Christian theologies.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ In Philosophy this is also known as *accidens*: a property that may or may not belong to object, without affecting its essence.

¹⁴⁹ William E. Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Scribner’s, 1959), 152.

¹⁵⁰ Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, 3rd ed., 152.

¹⁵¹ Epistemology is the theory of knowledge that investigates and determines what is justified true belief as opposed to a conjecture.

¹⁵² R.C. Sproul, *The Consequences of Ideas: Understanding the Concepts That Shaped Our World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 36.

It is not difficult to see why Plato's thought has had so much profound and lasting influence in both sacred and secular philosophical traditions. So prodigious was his contributions to Western thought that twentieth-century philosopher, logician, and mathematician Alfred North Whitehead memorably said that "the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."¹⁵³

Whitehead's statement is no exaggeration. It is not difficult at all to situate Plato's enduring epistemology into the thinking of thinkers that followed him. One sees this in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. For example, Democritus defended atomism¹⁵⁴ on the basis of reason, even though he recognized that it went contrary to our experience of the natural world.¹⁵⁵ Philo of Alexandria, a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher was the first to synthesize Jewish thought as found in the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophy. His major philosophical influence was Plato.¹⁵⁶ The thread of Platonism extended through the

¹⁵³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1929), 63.

¹⁵⁴ Democritus, as well as Epicurus, use of atomism sought to explain why death was not to be feared because humans upon death cease to "hold" together and disperse into indivisible particles called "atoms."

¹⁵⁵ C. Stephen Evans, *A History of Western Philosophy: From the Pre-Socratics to Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 98.

¹⁵⁶ Evans, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 123.

Church Fathers,¹⁵⁷ through the Middle Ages¹⁵⁸, in Muslim philosophy¹⁵⁹ and in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. It is not an understatement to credit Plato for having one of the profoundest influences in the world of philosophy and having laid the foundation for rationalism.

Rene Descartes Contribution to “Idea-ism”

Rationalism did not reach its apotheosis until Rene Descartes in the 17th century in his quest sought to eliminate all doubt. Descartes realized that much of what he accepted as true as a child were falsehoods. As a result, he thought it was necessary to start afresh, to begin establishing precepts upon which everything in reality can rest. Ironically, for Descartes, this “start” to obtaining knowledge was through doubt. His famous quip “cogito ergo sum” (Latin for “I think, therefore I am) promotes the idea that while everything may be viewed as dubious in its existence, the “I” that is doubting is indubitably linked to reality. The proposition “I exist” according to Stephen Evans, is one that Descartes immediately knows to be true whenever he is conscious. This is a truth he knows without any argument or evidence.¹⁶⁰ Descartes commitment to the preeminence of the mind as a “thinking thing” is evident when he wrote “As long as one stops oneself taking anything to be true that is not true and sticks to the right order so as to deduce one

¹⁵⁷ Augustine of Hippo was famous for concatenating Platonism and Christianity.

¹⁵⁸ As mentioned earlier, William of Ockham in the 14th century was a notable exception who challenged Plato’s universals.

¹⁵⁹ Avicenna is generally regarded as the greatest and most influential Muslim philosopher of the Middle Ages who came up with the idea that creation was caused by “emanations” from the “celestial spheres.”

¹⁶⁰ Evans, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 260.

thing from another, there can be nothing so remote that one cannot eventually reach it, nor so hidden that one cannot discover it.”¹⁶¹

“I think, therefore I am” was so certain for him that it became the foundation for his whole philosophical system.¹⁶² This is a devastatingly high view of rationalism—that absolutely nothing is undiscoverable or explained by unaided reason. This brief philosophical sketch of how Plato’s ideas have shaped the world of philosophy is not an indictment against rationalism per se. Rather, it is the unbalanced predilection of the commitment that it is exclusively through the cognitive faculties that learning takes place.

Chastened Rationalism

To develop a more balanced view of the nature of rationality, say in learning for instance or Christian discipleship, I would like to offer two provisos. First is to be aware that knowledge and ethics gained through pure rationality is specious at best, but also has its limits and is insufficient to promote virtue. Simply knowing a thing does not produce the desired moral action. Descartes himself was aware of this: “The greatest minds are capable of the greatest vices as well as the greatest virtues.”¹⁶³ One need not look that far back in history to know that intelligence is no indicator of how well humans behave. Take for instance the Great Recession of 2008. It was the Ivy League business schools such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton that trained many of the leaders who were at the

¹⁶¹ Rene Descartes, *A Discourse on Method*, trans. and intro. by Ian Mclean (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 18.

¹⁶² Rene Descartes, “Discourse on the Method,” in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (New York: Dover, 1955), 101.

¹⁶³ Descartes, *A Discourse on Method*, 5.

helm of their companies when the economic ship ran aground. George W. Bush, Hank Paulson, and CEOs of General Electric and Procter & Gamble received their MBAs from Harvard.¹⁶⁴ These corporate leaders, driven by greed, fueled the practice of lending subprime mortgages, financing much of the housing in the United States between 2004 and 2006 with attractive risk ratings from credit rating agencies. This created a housing bubble with borrowers getting approved with no credit checks. This eventually led to mortgage delinquencies, tanking investments that relied on them. That is just one example. There are many more that challenge that the idea of rationality going beyond its intended function, but space, time, and the purposes of this writing preclude me from citing them.¹⁶⁵

Second, and perhaps more important and less known in Evangelicalism today is that the outcomes we expect from learning is not exclusively attained through our cognitive faculties. In other words, there is more than one way to learn anything. A traditional intellectualist will insist on teaching methods that incline toward having a student memorize facts and regurgitate them on an oral or written exam. To elucidate this claim, consider this counter example. Political theologian William Cavanaugh asks a provocative question: “How does a provincial farm boy become persuaded that he must travel as a soldier to another part of the world and kill people he knows nothing about?”¹⁶⁶ Cavanaugh is asking what in human nature compels us to act. It is an

¹⁶⁴ Anthony Brooks, “Business Schools Mull Over Blame in Financial Crisis,” NPR, last modified May 17, 2009, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103719186>.

¹⁶⁵ For more examples and a good treatment on the subject, I refer the reader to works of cognitive psychologists Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber in their book titled *The Enigma of Reason*.

¹⁶⁶ William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Christian Practices of Space and Time* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 1.

important question once we stop and consciously think about what motivates us to do certain things. Does knowing what and how to do things make one do it? How about raising the stakes and ask ourselves this: “If we know what and how to do important things (i.e., organize personal finances early to minimize stress during tax season), are we more compelled to do it?”

The answer to this is at the heart of why many new year’s resolutions fail. People know the data and facts about the health benefits of diet and exercise. There is no lack of knowledge on how to start and maintain a healthy regiment of diet and exercise, but it is simply not acted upon. Then people spend the rest of the year nursing their self-doubt, convinced that mustering more will power yields a better result the following year.

Philosophy of Action

Going back to Cavanaugh’s question, what could possibly persuade a provincial farm boy to enlist as a soldier to do things he normally would not, such as killing another human being? On its own merits, it’s difficult to imagine what might persuade “Cavanaugh’s soldier.” Was it a pamphlet or some info session he attended that convinced him? Did he take a class or read a textbook on the philosophy of soldiering to incline his will to enlist? I doubt it. This silly thought experiment exposes the unwitting assumptions we have surrounding whether our actions are solely activated by our minds. James K.A. Smith provides a chiding and instructional reminder that our philosophy of action has been fixated on the “Christian mind.” Smith insists that:

We have spent a generation thinking about thinking. But despite our ‘folk’ accounts and (deluded) self-perception, we don’t *think* our way through to action; much of our action is not the outcome of rational deliberation and conscious choice. Much of our action is not ‘pushed’ by ideas or conclusions; rather, it grows out of our character and is in a sense ‘pulled’ out of us by our attention to a

telos. If we are going to be ‘prime citizens of the kingdom of God’ who act in the world as agents of renewal and redemptive culture-making, then it is not enough to equip our intellects to merely think rightly about the world.¹⁶⁷

Smith is correct on this. His analysis on why the gospel in modern times appears to have little impact is because its messengers have ignored the causal connection between belief and behavior. Belief does not always entail a behavior. Smith helps us to imagine what it would look like for a person to be faithfully and wholeheartedly be engaged in a cause or activity. In his three-volume work on “cultural liturgies”¹⁶⁸ (*Desiring the Kingdom, Imagining the Kingdom, and Awaiting the King*) he carefully lays out his solution to awaken a lethargic church that has drifted from its mandate. Take for instance the familiarity of a mall. As soon as shoppers enter the premises, they are greeted by piped in music that soothes the senses, they are wrapped and lost in the sights and smells that invite them to try the newest bottled fragrances. They look over to their left and are consumed by the latest fashion, trying on anything with that is marked “sale” or “discount.” They move toward the far end of the mall and their stomachs growl as they approach the food court, ready to sample bite-sized delicacies. This “temple” like countless others “offers a rich, embodied visual mode of evangelism that attracts us. This is a gospel whose power is *beauty*, which speaks to our deepest desires and compels us to

¹⁶⁷ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 6.

¹⁶⁸ Smith’s project is to teach us in Augustinian fashion that we are what we love. We are defined by our desires and longings. To be human is to love. But our loves are shaped, primed, and directed by the practices we are immersed in. These practices are not neutral. This is how Smith defines “liturgies.” Cultural or secular liturgies do not train us to think. They shape what we love; and ultimately, we love what we worship.

come not with dire moralisms but rather with a winsome invitation to share in this envisioned good life.”¹⁶⁹

This is true of sporting events and musical concerts (especially the rock kind) as well. Attenders of these events instinctually raise their hands in adulation or dance together to the beat of the drums as if choreographed. None of these behaviors are planned or calculated in advance, nor entered into after cognitive deliberations. On the contrary, these behaviors are unconscious, pre-cognitive, and pre-reflexive responses that have been habituated in an individual through repeated and consistent practice.

Gen Z and Education

Much of Enlightenment ideas, especially intellectual idealism, have become a mainstay in the broad Western educational system. From program learning outcomes (PLO) to various creative pedagogical methods, idealism is the foundation undergirding these outcomes. A narrow focus on subject-matter content to the exclusion of life outcomes is what is harming the educational process today, especially for Gen Z. This narrowness of subject-matter, the time and resources it takes for educators to teach students in a traditional classroom setting no longer works for Gen Z learners. Why? Because subject matter or content is very easily accessed on laptops, tablets, smartphones and other mobile devices. Having been born in the mid to late 1990s, Gen Z have not known a world without an “always-on” internet. Accessing information about anything is easily and quickly obtained in a few flicks of the finger or by simply audibly asking Siri

¹⁶⁹ James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 21.

or Alexa on devices that are centerpieces of current culture. With the ubiquity of the iPhone, Twenge even suggested that Gen Z may be labeled simply “iPhone.”¹⁷⁰ College students today do not feel the need to listen to classroom lectures when they can effortlessly “google” the subject matter on their devices. Often their searches yield better information since results have been curated by world experts who have made their materials available online. This is evident as seen in the proliferation of free online education, also known as MOOCS.¹⁷¹

Educators today have supported various other contemporary philosophies of education, each with their strengths and weaknesses. One of them, idealism, was covered in the section above. In direct opposition to idealism is naturalism. This philosophy of education asserts that only things that can be tested by the five senses are real. Nothing outside the realm of nature exists or can be known. It holds that nature alone is real, that all reality is physical or material.¹⁷² Some of its adherents include David Hume, Charles Darwin and more recently Carl Sagan who is famous for this quip “The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.” In contrast to idealism and naturalism, another approach to education is pragmatism, as promoted by John Dewey in the first half of the 20th century. In this view, knowledge results from hands-on experience. However, for Dewey, education was merely a tool in the political process to prove oneself useful in society. A member of society was only as good as his or her contribution to it. That was the ultimate

¹⁷⁰ Twenge, *iGen*, Loc.63. Kindle.

¹⁷¹ MOOC is an educationally accepted acronym that stands for “massive open online course.”

¹⁷² Michael L. Peterson, *Philosophy of Education: Issues and Options*, ed. C. Stephen Evans (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 31.

purpose and aim of education for Dewey.¹⁷³ While this paper is not meant to exhaustively lay out a comprehensive history and philosophy of education, it is important to note Dewey's significant influence in American education. Richard Leyda writes "Probably no individual has influenced the course of education in America as has John Dewey, often called the "father of progressive education movement." Dewey is responsible for promoting the "scientific method" in the classroom,¹⁷⁴ wholly accepted in academia today, including Christian education.¹⁷⁵ According to him, everything is in flux and ethics and values are determined in new and unique situations. They are not discovered, universally true for all time, rather depend on the status quo of society's existing norms and values.¹⁷⁶ He also advanced the self-stultifying idea that nothing is absolute. Dewey's approach to education has merits as well as demerits and might provide a foundation for reform in education. Educators must adopt his hands-on, practical outcomes strategy in the educational transformation of a student; but must reject the means (e.g. scientific method is insufficient to ground knowledge) to get there. Also, his idea that the *telos* of education is to activate a student toward political aims is hopelessly myopic.

The challenge for Christian leaders and educators today is how to deliver a distinct education that targets the whole person: mind, intellect, emotion and character.

¹⁷³ Henry T. Edmondson, *John Dewey and the Decline of American Education: How the Patron Saint of Schools Has Corrupted Teaching and Learning* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), 8.

¹⁷⁴ Kenneth O. Gangel and Warren S. Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1983), 293.

¹⁷⁵ Mark Noll adroitly explains in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* how Christian education, from the founding of Harvard to the present institutions of higher learning in America, succumbed to a naturalistic approach to education even against the prevailing religious background that was antithetical it.

¹⁷⁶ Richard Leyda, "Dewey, John," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 203.

Regrettably, and far too often, Christian education is indistinguishable from a secular one.¹⁷⁷ The philosophy of education, as noted earlier, swings like a pendulum. In one era, the emphasis is on ideas, whereas in another it may be naturalism or pragmatism. Whatever form Christian education takes, it cannot be based solely on idealism, naturalism or pragmatism.

Education in the U.S. primarily has centered around idealism—the transmission of ideas from teacher to student. It is predominantly a one-way process, especially in K-12 and secondary grade levels. This has caused serious issues for discipleship and evangelization, especially for Gen Z who have a much higher capacity for managing information, compared to previous generations, and yet feel academically bankrupt in the classroom.

There appears to be hope, however, especially among educators in the higher education setting. A 2018 study was commissioned by the Georgia Institute of Technology¹⁷⁸ to profile Gen Z, and the pedagogy that best suits their learning styles. The following are the findings:

1. A blend of traditional face-to-face, digital, and online learning comports well with college-aged Gen Z students, who don't believe technology has unlimited potential in the academic setting.
2. Independent and collaborative work are both important for Gen Zers in a learning setting, giving some control over their options and learning outcomes.

¹⁷⁷ Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction: The Conflict of Christian Faith and American Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 235-37.

¹⁷⁸ Jeffrey J. Selingo, *The New Generation of Students: How Colleges Can Recruit, Teach, and Serve Gen Z* (Washington, D.C.: The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2018), 25.

3. Applying concepts is vital to Gen Zers, who value experiential learning, such as research projects and internships.
4. Soft skills are in demand in the labor market, and Gen Z is especially interested in entrepreneurship.

This is encouraging because educators are now paying attention to a changing world in which, for Gen Z, “a college education for them needs to teach not just content, but skills and habits of mind.”¹⁷⁹ Educators are realizing that Gen Z values are not limited at receiving credit for a course but include “whole-person skills that emphasize meta-cognition, communication, synthesis, drive, persistence, and other character values.”¹⁸⁰ Many universities across the U.S. are beginning to implement pedagogies that focus on practical experience and “immersive learning” in which students collaborate with others and a faculty mentor on an interdisciplinary project to solve a problem or create a product with a community partner. These researchers have also discovered that while advising is crucial to student’s engagement and retention where technology is a tool, it is not a solution. An increasing number of colleges are deploying technology to help students choose courses and to provide them with early alerts of academic progress or trouble. But more than half of today’s Gen Z students say they prefer to receive coaching in person, in one-on-one sessions according to a survey conducted by the Center for Generational

¹⁷⁹ Selingo, *The New Generation of Students*, 25.

¹⁸⁰ Selingo, *The New Generation of Students*, 26.

Kinetics along with Civitas Learning.¹⁸¹ Only about one in ten like online advising or receiving texts when they need help.

Potential Hazards of Idea-ism to Discipleship and Evangelization

As mentioned earlier, a felt obligation to promote *idea-ism* in interpreting Scripture may hamper spiritual growth, especially among members of Gen Z who embark on a spiritual quest and whose worldview is formed by age 13.¹⁸² How does a young believer ground his or her faith when some of the basic tenets of Christianity is peddled as “easy-believism?” Take for instance, in the area of discipleship, the word “godliness” which is found fifteen times in the New Testament, nine of them in Paul’s letters to Timothy, is often misconstrued in its daily usage. Bible study leaders routinely interpret the word to mean something like “piety.” Scholars have debated the term’s meaning, but there simply is no good English equivalent of the Greek word *eusebeia* (ευσέβεια). It appears to me that modern translators have decided to input “godliness” instead as a poor proxy for prejudicial reasons. According to William Barclay, this word, as originally understood by the Greeks may mean “religion,” “piety,” “loyalty” or “reverence.” A Platonic understanding would define it as “right conduct in regard to the gods.” The Stoics defined it as “knowledge of how God should be worshipped.”¹⁸³ To Sophocles

¹⁸¹ “One Quarter of Current College Students Believe It Will Be Difficult to Graduate; Cite Anxiety, Non-Academic Responsibilities as Top Barriers to Completion,” Civitas Learning, last modified May 20, 2020, <https://www.civitaslearning.com/one-quarter-of-current-college-students-believe-it-will-be-difficult-to-graduate-cite-anxiety-non-academic-responsibilities-as-top-barriers-to-completion/>.

¹⁸² Barna Group, *Gen Z*, 44.

¹⁸³ William Barclay, *New Testament Words* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1964), 107.

eusebeia was the greatest of all virtues.¹⁸⁴ A variety of these translations, when deployed in a manner more faithful to the original meaning help the reader gain a better understanding of the text than an unhelpful word substitute. So when the apostle Paul writes to Timothy, his son in the faith: “Train yourself for godliness;”¹⁸⁵ Here, Paul is admonishing Timothy to establish a regiment that will produce habits to aid Timothy in church leadership. The word “train” comes from the Greek verb *gymnazo* and the noun *gymnasia*, and it requires no knowledge of the Greek to recognize his reference to gymnastics and gymnasium. Furthermore, a proper translation of 1 Timothy 2:2 (NKJV) would be less awkward when Paul writes “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” If “godliness” is “reverence” then one could easily spot the redundancy in this text. Is this a difficult text requiring more scrutiny? Or is more likely that the translators of the NKJV and Bible scholars such as John Stott¹⁸⁶ and John MacArthur,¹⁸⁷ had prior commitments to *idea-ism* that skewed their reading of the text?

In the area of Bible hermeneutics, for example, a commitment to idealism carelessly interprets the phrase “image of God” (*imago dei*) as pure rationality to the exclusion of everything else or the creation account in Genesis as a complete scientific account of origins and other interpretations as seen through the lens of science. This indiscriminate focus on idealism has overlooked the possibility that the “image of God”

¹⁸⁴ Barclay, *New Testament Words*, 108.

¹⁸⁵ 1 Timothy 2:7.

¹⁸⁶ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus: Guard the Truth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 117.

¹⁸⁷ John MacArthur, *1&2 Timothy: Encouragement for Christian Leaders* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 19.

phrase in Genesis might be closer in meaning to something like God’s charge to have man exercise “responsible” dominion over creation. This makes more sense given the context of God being a creator. Similarly, a strict *concordist*¹⁸⁸ view of the creation account might overlook the possibility of understanding the passages in Genesis as a kind of framework that emphasizes God bringing order out of chaos, rather than a detailed naturalistic explanation of how the cosmos came to be.

Another troublesome example of a text prone to an idealist interpretation is found in Romans 6:11-13, 19. Understood properly, this set of verses spells the difference between experiencing fullness and anxiety, wholeness and brokenness, freedom and guilt and a whole range of experiences that matter in a believer’s faith journey.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.¹⁸⁹

Where does sin reside? Does it reside in one’s thought life? Does it reside in a person’s emotions or in the will? Not according to these verses. Rather, sin resides in the body. Scripture, through the Apostle Paul is telling followers of Jesus that in order to get rid of sin, a significant part of the process must include the physical “members” of our

¹⁸⁸ The word “concordist” is not found in the Oxford English Dictionary, but concord means agreement or harmony between things, which provides the general key to its meaning.

¹⁸⁹ Romans 6:11-13, 19.

bodies through which sin is committed, to undergo being re-habituated or retrained to perform good activities instead.¹⁹⁰

The gospel was not meant to be relegated to a set of propositions that demand assent or a wooden list of “dos and don’ts,” that have nothing do with a loving relational heavenly father who seeks our devotion and companionship. Regrettably, the Gospel has been downgraded to a mere transfer of information. James K.A. Smith says that the gospel has become informative rather than formative.¹⁹¹ Church leaders focus primarily on the *effective* means to an end, in this case the Gospel, rather than its *affective* attributes. This simplistic and consumeristic view of the Gospel cheapens it and bypasses the ultimate significance of the message it brings.

Conclusion: Reorientation, Recalibration and Praktognosia

Let us imagine, how much richer our appreciation and understanding for discipleship and mentoring would be if we considered our faith to be more than just an idea? If we set aside our “cognitivist confidence”¹⁹² in our church programming education, how much more effective and attractive would our discipleship and evangelistic programs be? In one of my field research interviews,¹⁹³ sociology professor Brad Christerson and J.P. Moreland effusively praised Young Life, an organization whose mission is to introduce adolescents to Jesus Christ, as a vibrant model for

¹⁹⁰ JP Moreland, “Finding Quiet: Freedom from Anxiety and Depression.” Living Truth Christian Fellowship, April 27, 2020. YouTube video, 38:05, <https://youtu.be/t-wgVRvWkqU>.

¹⁹¹ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 27.

¹⁹² Smith, *Awaiting the King*, Loc. 2126, Kindle.

¹⁹³ Brad Christerson, interviewed by Harry Edwards, La Mirada CA, March 11, 2020.

discipleship and evangelization. The organization's success is primarily attributed to creating and maintaining meaningful relationships with young people. Some of the key words found in their methods include: "building personal relationships," "earning the right to share the Good News" and "working in community."¹⁹⁴ Moreover, my research indicates that Gen Z long for meaning and long-lasting relationships. In most Christian settings, Gen Z do not pine for more information about their faith. They already have enough. What they are searching for is how to put faith into action, a formation which leads to transformation.

So far I have identified and argued that one of the most significant problems in the church today is that Gen Z is increasingly identifying as "none" in their religious affiliation. That "none" in this case may mean that they once identified as a Christian but no longer do, or they are simply agnostic or atheist with respect to the faith. Furthermore, this alarming trend is happening at twice the rate of the previous generation against the backdrop of high church activity. Gen Z are looking for answers but are not finding them in expected places or settings such as the church. Ill equipped, many of these leaders think the solution is in increasing theological study grounded in Enlightenment rationalism. I have shown that unadulterated rationalism is insufficient and that there are complimentary ways of knowing with an ultimate aim toward godliness or as Merleau-Ponty puts it, *praktognosia* (know-how).

Christian Apologetics is traditionally defined as an area of theological study that seeks to rationally defend the truth claims of Christianity. This discipline typically has

¹⁹⁴ "About Young Life," Young Life, accessed July 31, 2020, <https://www.younglife.org/About/Pages/default.aspx>.

been taught and learned in didactically propositional methods, especially in the last 20 years. Craig Hazen, Director of the M.A. in Christian Apologetics at Biola University says, “apologetics is a growth industry.” I concur and believe this field of study will continue to grow. However, I sense that for Gen Z, this growth will not only have to suit their particular learning styles, but must deploy a proper stewarding of the education process which was discussed above—a focus both on theory and practice. There is currently a promising trend of apologists who are beginning to see the inadequacies of a strict rationalistic approach to Christian apologetics and instead have adopted a more balanced view, or what I call a “chastened rationalism” model of apologetics. This is reflected in the relatively recent published books such as *Paradoxology: Why Christianity Was Never Meant To Be Simple* by Krish Kandiah, *Apologetics Beyond Reason: Why Seeing Really Is Believing* by James W. Sire, *Telling a Better Story: How To Talk About God in a Skeptical Age* by Joshua D. Chatraw, *Why Believe? Reason and Mystery as Pointers to God* by C. Stephen Evans, and *Winsome Persuasion: Christian Influence in a Post-Christian World* by Timothy Muehlhoff and Richard Langer, to name a few. These authors do not yet possess the influence nor the following in apologetics circles compared with apologetics celebrities such as Ravi Zacharias or Lee Strobel. But time advances and as such, there will be a new crop of apologists who will take their places and speak to a new generation of seekers. The question is, will these defenders of the faith be attentive to the contextualized needs of their audiences?

It is appropriate here, as I conclude, to quote the apostle Peter’s second letter as he emboldened the church: “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to

life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.”¹⁹⁵ We lack nothing as Christians. We only lack doing.

¹⁹⁵ 2 Peter 1:3.

SECTION 4: ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

Os Guinness years ago once shared with the staff at Apologetics.com, Inc., that we were “doing it.” He later elaborated what he meant. He sadly observed that there are many who are knowledgeable or teach Christian apologetics but that they do not actually engage in apologetics. This was his way of expressing delight and admiration for the actual practical work we do, which is defending the truth claims of Christianity on the web, radio, conferences and other related activities. Guinness made it clear that his riposte was, at the same time, a rebuke to others who have gone on to get degrees in apologetics but never actually do it.

The artifact is a 2-unit Christian Apologetics masters level course designed with the idea that to be effective Christian apologists, specifically to reach GenZ, one must train in the discipline of Christian apologetics. It is not enough to merely be proficient with apologetics knowledge. The student must also engage in the activity of apologetics. This course will be offered over the length of a traditional semester (14-16 weeks) at an Evangelical seminary or a private Christian University with an existing strong Christian Apologetics programs such as Biola University or Houston Baptist University. The title of the course is Practical Christian Apologetics. In keeping with the findings, I will design the course with a face to face, in-classroom modality. The artifact that I will submit will contain a syllabus, grading rubric, slides and handouts, and committing to the pedagogical best practices found in the 2018 study by the Georgia Institute of Technology¹⁹⁶ that matches Gen Z’s learning style.

¹⁹⁶ Selingo, *The New Generation of Students*, 25.

SECTION 5: ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

The goal of this artifact may be understood in two ways. The first is to teach Apologetics Practicum to masters level students (may be be modified to a bachelors level) in a Master of Arts in Christian Apologetics program at a private Christian university such as Biola University, California Baptist University or Houston Baptist University. I would conform the learning outcomes based on the pedagogy of equal time and effort spent on theory and practice. So for a 2-unit class, given that about 45 hours of teaching and learning is spent per unit, 45 hours would be spent on theory¹⁹⁷ (standard in-classroom lectures supported by handouts and outlines of Christian doctrines, series of slides demonstrating the effective use of illustrations, dialog and stories to engage skeptics and seekers) and the remaining 45 hours would be spent on practice (honing specific skills outside the classroom). Another option is to teach students at an M.Div. or M.A. in Christian Ministries program on how to teach Christian Apologetics to Gen Z

¹⁹⁷ By way of theory, I will be incorporating a series of lectures simply explaining Christian doctrine in the classroom. Many expert apologists today will scoff at this approach, preferring to only use logical arguments as defeaters to skepticism. I am fully aware that some of my apologist friends will label me as postmodern, I reject it wholeheartedly because their assessment is simply flawed. One of the significant markers for a postmodern thinker and practitioner is his or her denial of objective truth. Even the moderate ones might be sympathetic to the idea that objective truth is unknowable to make its study futile. I reject these two claims. This is the reason my research has led me to develop this approach which I call “Chastened Rationalism.” This is not a new claim, but unfortunately not many have realized its persuasive and transformative power. Alistair McGrath in *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers and Skeptics Find Faith* argued: “Until quite recently, the dominant trend in apologetics was to use arguments in a reasoned defense of the Christian faith. Yet this was largely a response to a strong rationalist culture, which saw conformity to reason as a criterion of truth. The use of arguments, as we shall see, remains an integral part of Christian apologetics and must never be marginalized. However, the waning of rationalism in western culture has made this less important than it once was, and created a context in which other aspects of the Christian faith need to be recognized—above all, its powerful imaginative, moral, and aesthetic appeal.” McGrath later advocates that the “gateway” to apologetics or faith is simply its explanation. In one sentence McGrath reveals step one: “The best defense of Christianity is its explanation.” (McGrath, 127-130).

students. This would require a bit of retooling in my approach and content if the second goal is to be achieved.

The need to focus on the practical side of actually engaging seekers and skeptics using the tool of apologetics cannot be overstated. J. Warner Wallace, one of the most popular apologist today once asked a class of masters level students what their primary reason for obtaining an M.A. in Christian Apologetics was. Most of the students responded with either silence or that the degree was for personal enrichment. Only a few were committed to doing the work of apologetics. Once I petitioned the director of the program to make some form of an apologetics practicum course to be a requirement in order to graduate. He said only a few would sign up for such a class, implying that the program would cease to be an attractive option for prospective students.

A lot of the theory will be covered through standard in-class lectures, discussing content from Apologetics books and authors, some of which have been mentioned earlier. On the practical, hands-on assignments which may count as a touchstone project in the class, the following tasks are suggestions a student may undertake.¹⁹⁸

- Host a live radio show. This is doable since Apologetics.com, a ministry I lead has a weekly one-hour slot at KKLA, 99.5 FM in Los Angeles, every Friday at midnight. A student would host by selecting a topic, outlining it, and assigning two other members of the class to provide the main content.
- Video live-streaming on Facebook. Similar to what has been described above, the only difference is that this particular activity may have a totally different set of listeners and or viewers given the time of day.

¹⁹⁸ This will be specifically described on the syllabus.

- Weekly blog. Students will write a weekly blog of about 600 to 750 words per entry, about an apologetics topic that bear some relevance to Gen Z issues of the day. Topics here may comport with “common ground” issues that people in general relate to, such as hope, justice or what Peter Berger calls “signals of transcendence.”
- “Man on the street” type interviews. This activity is not meant to “bait” people on the street into an impromptu debate. The purpose of this activity is to engage in civil discussion about ultimate questions such as “What is the meaning of life?” What may result from this activity is that the interviewer learns about what issues are important and how it is addressed by people in their context and community.
- PechaKucha presentations. Each student creates and presents a pecha kucha presentation in class. Just like in the D.Min., LGP program at Portland Seminary, each student offer tips and suggestions after each presentation. Another idea is a few of them organize a Pecha Kucha conference where they invite the public to listen to their pechakuchas, followed by a time of Q&A. PechaKuchas accomplishes two things: (1) helps an apologist develop a concise and compelling presentation for a generation whose attention span is severely limited; (2) helps the student develop presentation skills through practice and gaining feedback from their peers.

These are just some of the activities, coupled with theory, that students can choose to serve as touchstone projects in the course. Other ideas may be culled from the creative minds of students in the class. Requiring students to intentionally devote their

time and energy on these kinds of practical exercises in the study of Christian apologetics will be a unique, indispensable, and if executed properly will be an attractive feature of the course.

SECTION 6: POSTSCRIPT

The ideas, observations, and resources for this dissertation were drastically different when this project started more than two years ago. The world is currently managing a COVID-19 pandemic, giving rise to global economic disruption, a U.S. election season having results fraught with suspicion and conspiratorial angst, and an ideologically divided nation dangerously close to a point not seen since just before the civil war. Evangelicals are not exempt from this division. Evangelical leaders such as John Piper have weighed in on who to vote for, while John MacArthur continues to defy the state government on “safety” measures not all can agree with. Believers are choosing sides and questioning each other’s commitment to Christianity.

It is not an overstatement to say American culture has changed or is in the middle of a significant shift in values, beliefs, and behaviors. We may be living in the throes of a cultural revolution, one not seen since the 1960s. Many experts already bemoan the fact that people continue to long for the day when things go back to “normal” again when the social media-driven curators of culture say that things will never return to normal; that we need to get used to a new reality, even when the coronavirus is vanquished. This is the reason anxiety and suicide are on the rise, especially among Millennials and Gen Z¹⁹⁹. There is so much uncertainty about the future. Jobs, relationships, religious worship, educational pursuits, human flourishing and anything traditionally that provides meaning is currently on hold.

¹⁹⁹ Olga Khazan, “The Millennial Mental-Health Crisis,” *The Atlantic*, last modified June 15, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/06/why-suicide-rates-among-millennials-are-rising/612943/>.

In the section above that describes and explains the determining factors shaping a generation, Period Effect and Cohort Effect will undoubtedly exert added pressure on Gen Z's formation. The following are subjects that did not make it in this dissertation that deserve further research as they will assuredly further refine and mold the values, beliefs, and behaviors of Gen. Z: effects of the 2020 pandemic, modality of education, and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Each of these subjects alone can fill a significant portion of any research project. Regrettably, these will have to be someone else's project.

It has been an eventful, unsettling past twelve months: A deadly virus struck without warning and claimed almost half a million (as of writing) American lives; a lockdown demolished personal routines and left us gasping for normality; a sudden, deep recession snatched newfound prosperity from many families; and now an uncertain presidential election result leaving many to wonder whether there will be a smooth transition of power or a rash of riots on U.S. city streets. The lockdowns, the pandemic's greatest effect, has changed the look and feel of what it means to live in society. It is not difficult to observe the outsized effects of the "safety" measures authorities have placed on society at the onset of the COVID-19 crises. Social distancing, masks, restrictions on worship, "safetyism," curtailing of events such as going out to the movies and concerts will continue to stretch comfort levels and ideas of what it means to live in a free society. Mask wearing will not only continue to provoke our common human sensibilities, but challenge whether virologists and government officials had enough information to warrant a worldwide lockdown in the first place.

The lockdowns have had a severe impact on education, especially on how teaching and learning are deployed. Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, in-

classroom instruction across the nation has been suspended. There are already anecdotal reports that grade school children are not absorbing content delivered exclusively through watching hours of videos on computer screens. Studies are showing that normal socialization is impeded, affecting the child's development. I asked my two college-attending boys if anything changed in their assignments since their college closed for in-class lectures. They reported that assignments were simply discarded. Granted, the pandemic left many professors and other educators ill-equipped to handle a global calamity, but the point still stands—education has been watered down. For many, the questions will be: what is the point of education? what kind of education will prepare my child for success? since modality of education is now online, what makes college X so special that it warrants cost Y?; should my son or daughter take a gap year? what kind of education will prepare my child for future jobs that are yet to be created in the “new normal”? and other such questions plaguing parent's and student's minds.

Another issue Gen Z will have to grapple with is how Critical Race Theory is allowed to be part of their social fabric. As mentioned above, Gen Z is the first generation to grow up in which whites are no longer the majority. But this fact will push against the claims of those who continue to perpetuate segregation based solely on skin color. According to Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay, “Critical Race Theory holds that race is a social construct that was created to maintain white privilege and white supremacy.”²⁰⁰ White privilege, white supremacy, and all its attendant features may gain little traction for a new generation that does not see what all the fuss is about, but rather

²⁰⁰ Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay, *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything About Race, Gender, and Identity and Why This Harms Everybody* (Durham, NC: Pitchstone Publishing, 2020), Loc. 1775, Kindle.

consider diversity something to be naturally embraced and celebrated. Obviously, there is much more to be said about these three subjects and its potential for further shaping the characteristics of Gen Z, but this project will have to wait for a revised edition of this dissertation should the opportunity arise.

APPENDIX A: COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF GEN Z

The following is a list of Gen Z character traits by experts organized to show the spread of common traits.

Sean McDowell & J. Warner Wallace (2019)	Ruth Jackson (2019)	Anita Black, Dana Asadorian & Hannah Dunnett (2017)	Maria Torocsik, Krisztian Szucs & Daniel Kehl (2014)	James White (2017)	Jean M. Twenge (2017)	Corey Seemiler & Meghan Grace (2016)
Digital natives	Post Wifi	Digital Natives	Digital Natives	Digital Natives (always on)	Internet: always on	Digital Natives
Researchers	Visual	Daily Discoverers	Researchers			Motivation/Motivators
Visual Multitaskers		Communicate in images	Media driven			
Impatient		Curators/Creators	Curators			
Racially Diverse	Multi-racial		Truly Global	Multiracial	Inclusive	Open-minded
Fluid	Sexually Fluid			Sexually Fluid	Indefinite	
Social Justice Oriented	Deeply Tolerant	Rise up to challenges			Independent	Compassionate & Thoughtful
Pragmatic	World Changers	Can Do attitude	Pragmatic	Entrepreneurial	Income insecurity	Career minded/Determined
Lonely	Lonely				Insecure	
Overwhelmed			Trust peers; socialization is about acquiring knowledge		Insulated but not intrinsic	
Individualistic	Pro-family	In Community	Belong to cliques, but they like to express their individuality		In no hurry	Loyal; Not like me at all; Me, but not you.

			(ego centric).			
Transparent	Post Recession	Chill			In person no more	Responsible
Post-Christian	Post Christian			Post Christian		
						Interactivity trumps physical activity

APPENDIX B: ARTIFACT

**Apologetics Practicum****COURSE NUMBER: CSAP 694****Fall, 2021****COURSE DESCRIPTION**

CSAP 694, Apologetics Practicum is designed for graduate students in the Christian Apologetics program to hone their apologetics skills through developing a habit of engaging seekers and skeptics in the art and science of defending the truth claims of Christianity using methods that are primarily aimed at Gen Z. While this class will heavily concentrate on the practical application involved in doing actual apologetics work, much of the in-classroom content will cover material that highlights the importance of using methods that properly translate into the learning style of the next generation.

This class will physically meet at the dates, times and location indicated below. If you have administrative questions, please contact Megan Stricklin at megan.stricklin@biola.edu

PROFESSOR/CLASS INFORMATION

Harry Edwards, D.Min.

Title: Apologetics Practicum

Dept. Website:

Term: Fall 2021

www.biola.edu/apologetics

Location: Business Bldg. 105

Office Phone: 888.332.4652

Office Hours: Tue, 12:00 – 4:00

E-Mail: harry.edwards@biola.edu

University Website: www.biola.edu

Course Code/#: CSAP 694

Class Days/Time: Thu, 1:00 to 3:00

Credit Hours/Units: 2 Units

Office Location: Biola

Professional Bldg.

Meetings with Professor:

Make appt via email by contacting

office

Admin Assistant: Megan Stricklin

DISABILITY SERVICES

Disability Services exists to assist any student who thinks he or she may need such assistance. Students desiring accommodations for this class on the basis of physical learning, psychological and/or emotional disabilities are to contact The Learning Center that houses both learning assistance and disability services. The Learning Center is located in the Biola Library, Upper Level, Room U-137, and this department can be reached by calling 562.906.4542 or by dialing extension #4542 if calling from on campus.

BIOLA UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT

TRUTH. TRANSFORMATION. TESTIMONY.

The mission of Biola University is biblically-centered education, scholarship, and service; equipping men and women in mind and character to impact the world for the Lord Jesus Christ.

SCHOOL OR PROGRAM MISSION/VISION STATEMENT

The Master of Arts in Christian Apologetics degree program is designed to help students from all academic backgrounds to contend for the faith. You will learn to:

- Better understand the Christian faith
- Answer perennial arguments offered to discredit the Christian faith
- Correct misconceptions about historical Christianity
- Build an intellectual framework useful for responding to future challenges
- Confidently make the case that it is reasonable to place one's faith in Christ
- And, of course, to grow personally in devotion to Christ and service to His Church

COURSE ALIGNMENT WITH PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

This graduate-level course is a core course elective for all graduate students in the Christian Apologetics program. Successful completion of this course will prepare students to demonstrate Intermediate proficiency toward the accomplishment of PLO #1: **Critical Thinking** - Students will identify and explain a problem or issue, recognize and evaluate concepts and assumptions from multiple perspectives, ask relevant questions, analyze appropriate sources, and articulate logical, well-organized, and innovative conclusions; PLO# 2: **Character Transformation** – Students will develop habits that demonstrate Christ-like character as they engage others in the defense of the gospel; and PLO# 3: **Written Communication** – Students will produce well-organized and clear writing, supported by strong, diverse evidence and precise explanation, applicable to its audience and consistent with the conventions of appropriate genres.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The student learning outcomes for students in this course is in two parts. The first part is through practicing the art and science of defending the truth claims of Christianity in the public arena and in popular electronic social media. The second is to move the student from being an apologist apprentice to a master in the sense that he or she is able to translate general apologetic methods into a form that helps Gen Z be persuaded of the truth claims of Christianity.

By the completion of this course including class participation, class assignments (referred to as "Tasks"), class readings and group interaction, the following objectives and learning outcomes will be assessed and demonstrated:

IDEA Objective #1: Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends) (Essential emphasis).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES - The learner will demonstrate that he or she has satisfactorily fulfilled IDEA Objective #1 by being able to:

1. Become general reflective apologetics practitioners:
 - a. By writing weekly 750-word blogs (hosted through www.apologetics.com) that connect apologetics subjects (i.e., problem of evil, etc.) with lived-in experiences of others. (Task #1)
 - b. By having students engage with each other in the classroom on relevant apologetics topics, employing a discerning disposition that constantly punctuates engagement with “I wonder....” (Task #1 and Task #3)

IDEA Objective #8: Developing skill in expressing oneself orally and in writing (Important emphasis).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES - The learner will demonstrate that he or she has satisfactorily fulfilled IDEA Objective #8 by being able to:

1. Become specialized reflective apologetics practitioners to Gen Z:
 - a. By developing a habit of engaging others in winsome and cogent online discussion using a variety of social media outlets such as blogs, vlogs and other similar digital platforms. (Task #1)
 - b. By engaging Gen Z stakeholders (members of Gen Z, youth pastors, professors and other people whose interests lie in the wellbeing of Gen Z) in a deeper way to motivate the learner to consider practical teaching methods with apologetics material aimed at trends related to Gen Z. (Task #2)
 - c.

REQUIRED TEXTS & STUDY RESOURCES

Required Textbooks, Web sites, other media and technology sources (Each of the following texts and/or study resources are required and will be used in this course):

- Book #1: Randal Rauser, *The Swedish Atheist, the Scuba Diver and Other Apologetic Rabbit Trails* (IVP Books, 2012).
- Book #2: James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Baker Academic, 2009).
- Book #3: James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Baker Academic, 2013).
- Book #4: Barna Group, *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (Barna Group, 2018).
- Book #5: J.P. Moreland and Tim Muehlhoff, *The God Conversation: Using Stories and Illustrations to Explain Your Faith* (IVP Books, 2017).
- Book #6: James W. Sire, *Apologetics Beyond Reason: Why Seeing Really is Believing* (IVP Academic, 2014).

Optional Textbooks (Each of the following books are optional and may be used as supplemental resources)

- Book #1: Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Open Road Media, 2011).
- Book #2: William Edgar, *Created and Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture* (IVP Academic, 2016).

ONLINE AND OTHER COURSE RESOURCES

Throughout the academic term, any number of hard-copy documents or various other resources (electronic or otherwise) may be made available to students registered for this course. Those resources may be presented in class or could alternately be posted on Biola's Canvas system or in the electronic reserves area of the library's catalog for viewing and download. It is the student's responsibility to make himself or herself aware of such materials, and to electronically save, physically print, archive, read, reference, and bring such items to class as necessary or required.

These course resources may include, but are not limited to, syllabi, rubrics, worksheets, protocols, and the like. Prior to and after the beginning of the term, students should take responsibility to periodically check the course site on the university learning management system. This will ensure he or she is in possession of all necessary items for the successful completion of course objectives. If failing to have such items on hand affects the student's participation in class, s/he should anticipate that reality impacting her/his participation score and, potentially, final grade. To access online materials that may be available, log on to canvas.biola.edu.

In addition, [Biola Library's website, library.biola.edu](https://library.biola.edu), provides access to thousands of electronic books and journal articles for your research.

LEARNING TASKS (Assignments) & ASSESSMENT (Grading)

Description and weighting of assignments: The following tasks are not necessarily in sequential order.

Task 1: Weekly Blogs

Due Date: Wednesdays

Weighting: 30%

Description: Write approximately a 750-word blog each week that connects an apologetic topic or principle with a lived-in experience. For example, compare and contrast the philosophical “problem of evil” with the existential “problem of evil” approach with the person harmed and how practically someone was helped by the encounter. The writing quality must be somewhere between academic and middlebrow. The tone must reflect civility and respect. Cite at least two sources from the required reading list. The student is also required to post thoughtful replies to at least five others in the class. Blogs will be hosted at www.apologetics.com in each of the students personal account.

Assessment: Consistency and posting on time counts toward getting a good grade on this task. Points will be deducted for poor grammar and tardiness.

Task 2: Field Research

Due Date: December 10, 2021

Weighting: 40%

Description: Identify, create, and engage a stakeholder focus group (i.e., a group of persons who are regularly engaged in teaching, engaging and influencing Gen Z from all important perspectives to better understand and define the current ministry trends aimed at the next generation).

Prepare a 2-4 hour session plan, in-person or online, to facilitate the conversation, including location, date, sponsor, rationale. Develop leading questions, schedule, and a process for recording insights.

Content:

- Title of research experience and dates attended.
- Listing of dates, hours, and activities spent on the field research. Hours of in-person learning engagement time should total 15 hours for the experience
 - Web site URL (if applicable)
 - A summary of the field research experience (approx. 200 words)
 - Outline of the methodology and research objectives (approx. 200 words).
 - A critical analysis that debriefs the learning experience and applies it to the student's research topic. The analysis should touch on alternative perspectives (approx. 750 words).
- Include any works cited in a bibliography at the end of the document.
 - Note: Format, including footnotes and bibliographic citations must follow the guidelines given in Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations, 9th Edition*.

Assessment: Students will be graded on the quality of in-person learning and engagement time, critical analysis of the various viewpoints offered by subjects, and a thoroughly clear synopsis of learning experience that includes

date, location, in-person learning engagement time, key participant names and titles, and a summary articulating sound methods employed for arriving at research objectives and conclusions.

Option in lieu of Task #2: Interview Two Apologists

Description: Students are to personally interview one youth pastor and a professional Christian apologist who actually utilize apologetics in some fashion or another in their ministry to students. You can interview in person (preferable), by phone, Skype, or email. Ask the following questions:

- Why do you teach apologetics to students?
- How do you teach apologetics uniquely to students? (This is a question about methodology)
- How frequently do you teach apologetics, and in what way?
- How do you motivate students to care about apologetics?
- Do you also focus on equipping parents? If so, how?
- What barriers do you run into when trying to teach apologetics? How do you address them?
- What mistakes have you made when teaching apologetics?
- What resources do you use when preparing an apologetics-focused message?
- What are the biggest questions youth leaders need to address to equip students?
- What does your teaching scope and sequence look like for a particular year, or on a multiple-year plan? How do you incorporate apologetics into your bigger plan for developing students?

Content must include name of interviewee, date, time, place and whether the interview was held in person or by other electronic means (i.e., over Skype or phone, etc.).

After collating the responses from your interviewees, add a 750-word summary, comparing and contrasting each of their teaching philosophies and methods employed in their role as teachers.

Task 3: PechaKucha

Due Date: December 13, 2021

Weighting: 30%

Description: (Japanese: ペチャクチャ, IPA: [petɕa kuɕtɕa],[1] chit-chat)

is a storytelling format where a presenter shows 20 slides for 20 seconds of commentary each (6 minutes and 40 seconds total). At a PechaKucha event, individuals gather at a venue to share personal presentations about their work. The PechaKucha format can be used, for example, in business presentations to clients or staff, as well as in education settings. This task trains students to keep arguments short, impactful and persuasive to an audience increasingly challenged by a short attention span. The finished product will be presented live in class followed by a short evaluation from others in the class. A recorded version must be posted on YouTube to be shared on social media.

Assessment: Presentations will be graded on how well presenter logically and soundly threads skeptic's and seeker's doubts with popular solutions, and students' own thesis for solving apologetics related problems, all within the limits of 20 slides for 20 seconds of commentary each.

CLASS INFORMATION

Class Attendance and Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend all classroom sessions in the semester, except for emergencies. Excessive unexcused tardiness and absences will result in a .5% percentage point per occurrence.

Assignments:

- All assignments should be typed with 12-size font, Times New Roman, Turabian formatting, and should be original to this class. Plagiarism of any sort will automatically result in a zero on the assignment. Assignments must all be turned in on the due date (according to the time zone in which you submit the assignment). Late assignments will result in a penalty of 1% per day to the particular assignment.
- All assignments are to be submitted through Canvas, unless otherwise noted. Students should make arrangements to ensure they have online access by the due date so they can submit assignments on time. Contact the Biola Apologetics main office for details on how to access and use Canvas.

Incomplete Grade:

A temporary mark of "IN" (Incomplete Grade) will be issued in special cases when approved by the Associate Provost of Academic Administration for students or the dean of the respective graduate school. "IN" grades course assignments are normally completed no later than five weeks after the end of the term. In the event of the inability of a student to complete the coursework by the approved deadline, the Office of the Registrar will assign the grade which the student has earned by the end of term.

To read more about Biola's policies and procedures regarding absences, view <https://studenthub.biola.edu/undergraduate-student-handbook-absences-attendance>.

Academic Honesty:

Biola University is committed to ethical practice in teaching, scholarship, and service. As such, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please see the undergraduate/graduate student handbook and/or the departmental/program/school policy on academic honesty. It is imperative that you present all written, oral, and/or performed work with a clear indication of the source of that work. If it is completely your own, you are encouraged to present it as such, taking pleasure in ownership of your own created work. However, it is also imperative that you give full credit to any and all others whose work you have included in your presentation via paraphrase, direct quotation, and/or performance, citing the name(s) or the author(s)/creator(s) and the source of the work with appropriate bibliographic information. To do otherwise is to put oneself in jeopardy of being sanctioned for an act or acts of plagiarism that can carry serious consequences up to and including expulsion from the university.

To read more about Biola's policies and procedures regarding academic integrity, view <https://studenthub.biola.edu/undergraduate-student-handbook-academic-integrity>

Another helpful resource is <http://plagiarism.org/plagiarism-101/overview/>

Non-Discrimination Policy:

As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable and prejudice free. Good writing and speech do not make unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, sex, or sexual orientation. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the Biola community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of invitation.

Avoid the use of stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, language or national origin. Avoid drawing attention to irrelevant identifiers of race or gender. Avoid gender-specific language when referencing people in general. Avoid terms that assume the universality of human experience, and in particular presume the normativity of the socially dominant group.

Confidentiality and Sexual Misconduct:

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. I also have a responsibility in my role as a faculty member to share information I hear regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and gender/sex-based

discrimination with the Title IX Coordinator and/or the Campus Safety Response Team. Confidential resources available to students on campus include the Biola Counseling Center (562-903-4800) and the Student Health Center (562-903-4841). Both the Title IX Coordinator and the Campus Safety Response Team understand the sensitive nature of these situations and can provide information about available on and off-campus resources, such as counseling and psychological services, medical treatment, academic support, university housing, safety measures and other forms of assistance. More information about confidential resources on and off-campus, additional resources, and the University's Sexual Misconduct Policy is available at <https://www.biola.edu/title-ix>.

General Requirements for Written and Oral Projects:

Biola University desires to maintain the highest standards with respect to the composition of all (written /oral/performed/etc.) work. As such, any student wishing to excel or improve in their writing skills may seek the assistance of the Biola Writing Center which is located on the middle level of the Biola Library. All written work in this course should follow Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations, 9th Edition*.

Professional Courtesy:

Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of courtesy and professionalism to the professor, classroom guests, and fellow collegians. This includes the employment of institutional and academic titles when addressing faculty, administrators, and other university personnel or classroom guests. Classroom dress,

proper grooming, behaviors, and hygiene should be such that they are not distracting or offensive to classmates or dishonoring to the Lord Jesus Christ and this institution.

Respect for Divergent Viewpoints:

In Christian higher educational institutions, it can be assumed that each believer-learner is at a different place of personal maturity and educational preparedness. For these reasons, it is requested and expected that each student exhibit mutual respect, even when divergent viewpoints are expressed in the classroom. Such respect, even when it results in a student's frustrated silence, does not require or imply agreement with or acceptance of any such perspectives.

Technology Use and Classroom Etiquette

Students should refrain from behaviors that negatively affect the teaching environment or its facilities. This includes any potentially distracting action that could inhibit the primary purposes of the classroom— namely, learning and personal transformation. Students should conduct themselves as professionals who give, and are worthy of, a high level of respect. Material presented in the classroom represents the intellectual property of the professor and of others who may have contributed to the professor's perspectives. Class meetings may not be recorded by audio and/or video without the express consent of the professor.

The use of items like laptops, pagers, cell/mobile phones, mp3 players, and all other electronic or digital devices are matters that are strictly governed in academic environments such as this.

Neither the professor nor one's classmates should expect to endure buzzing, vibrating, ringing, singing, or other intended/not intended but nevertheless distracting noises from your device(s). With the exception of laptops (which are to be used solely and strictly for educational purposes directly related to what is happening moment by moment in this class) and other similar note-taking devices, students are expected to take the initiative and choose either not to bring such devices or to fully power down each of these items prior to the beginning of class and to keep them off until class is dismissed. Students who fail or forget to turn off communication devices and who receive such communications should expect to be reproved by the professor during class. Incidents like these are frowned upon and cannot be tolerated for the integrity of the learning atmosphere.

In addition, students are expected to avoid participating in distracting activities such as e-mailing, web-surfing, instant messaging, and computer gaming during class. The professor is alert to such disturbances and if/when such activities are discovered, the student should expect to be confronted and asked to leave for the remainder of the immediate class session (morning/afternoon, or until a break, etc.), and then counted absent for that time period while not in class. Appropriate deductions will be taken for any missed class participation or required course work due during that period of time.

Simply put, under no circumstances will the professor excuse a student's inappropriate behavior, academic apathy, or general indifference to subject matter that this institution considers necessary for effective vocational preparation—nor will the professor allow other students interested in being equipped to endure a disinterested, distracting university student.

The professor uses the most powerful language possible about these matters due to the egregious nature of these distractions. If the spirit or the letter of these guidelines is violated by students, the professor reserves the right to completely restrict the use of all electronic and battery-powered devices, including laptops/computers, during class, however unfortunate that would be.

Additional University and/or Department Policies:

All university and departmental policies affecting student work, appeals, and grievances, as outlined in the university catalog and/or Department Handbook will apply, unless otherwise indicated in this syllabus.

Computation of Final Grade:

Assignment	Percentage
Task #1: Weekly Blogs	30%
Task #2: Field Research	40%
Task #3: PechaKucha	30%

Assignment	Percentage
Total Points:	100%

Grading Scale for the Course:

Final grades will be awarded on the following point system (any grade below a 70% is a failing grade).

Grade	Percentage Range
A	94-100%
A-	90-93%
B+	87-89%
B	84-86%
B-	80-83%
C+	77-79%
C	74-76%
C-	70-73%

Weekly Blog Post Rubric

Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Unacceptable	Grade
Timely Posting	Always posts by deadline of 23:59 Sunday (PST).	Posts 75% of the time prior to 23:59 Sunday (PST).	Posts 50% of the time after 23:59 Sunday (PST).	Consistently posts after 23:59 Sunday (PST).	_/40 pts
Engagement and Analysis	Post interacts with assigned materials (by citing at least three of them in posts) in a fair-minded, sophisticated, and insightful manner; sustains a well-focused position; engages alternatives points of view; offers evidence to support claims. Replies and responds thoughtfully and respectfully to at least 5 others in the class.	Post reflects fair-minded and thoughtful engagement with assigned materials (by citing at least two of them in posts); acknowledges important alternative perspectives; supports claims. Replies and responds thoughtfully and respectfully to at least 4 others in the class.	Post sometimes engages in unfair characterizations of assigned materials (by citing only one of them in posts); offers superficial analysis; sometimes ignores or dismisses important alternative perspectives; often fails to support claims. Replies and responds thoughtfully and respectfully to at least 3 others in the class.	Post interacts with assigned materials in a biased or convoluted manner; ignores or dismisses reasonable alternative perspectives; does not substantiate claims. Student does not reply or respond to other's posts.	_/20 pts

Apologetics Application	Post soundly connects apologetics principles with lived-in everyday experiences.	Post connects apologetics principles with lived-in everyday experiences.	Post loosely connects apologetics principles with lived-in everyday experiences.	Post misses the point of the exercise by waxing eloquently about theory with no practical application.	_/20 pts
Grammar/Style	Makes fewer than 2 grammatical and spelling errors per post; expresses opinions and ideas in an artful, well-organized, and concise manner; tone appropriate to the medium.	Makes 2-3 grammatical and spelling errors per post; opinions and ideas are clearly expressed; tone appropriate to the medium.	Makes 4-6 grammatical and spelling mistakes per post; expression of opinions and ideas sometimes confusing, lacking organization, or unnecessarily verbose; tone too academic or too casual for the medium.	Makes more than 6 spelling and grammar per post; expression of opinions and ideas often confusing, lacking organization, or unnecessarily verbose; tone too academic or too casual for the medium.	_/10 pts
Length	Meets requirements of approx. 750 words.	Within 100 words of length requirements.	Within 200 words of length requirements.	Deviates more than 200 words from requirements.	_/10 pts
Total					_/100 pts

Field-Research Experience Rubric

Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Unacceptable	Grade
In-person learning engagement time	15 hrs	11-14 hrs	8-10 hrs	Fewer than 8 hrs	_/30 pts
Participation and depth of learning engagement	Engages more than 6 individuals; considers alternative viewpoints; draws nuanced conclusions for semester research focus.	Engages 5-6 individuals; identifies and analyzes key alternative perspectives; draws clear conclusions for semester research focus.	Engages 3-4 individuals; identifies and analyzes obvious alternative points of view; draws basic conclusions for semester research focus.	Engages fewer than 3 sources; fails to identify important alternative perspectives or hastily dismisses relevant counter-arguments; draws trivial or no conclusions for semester research focus.	_/30 pts

Research Summary and Methodology	Offers clear synopsis of learning experience that includes date, location, in-person learning engagement time, key participants, session titles (where applicable), and brief summary; articulates sound methods for arriving at conclusions and research objectives.	Includes adequate synopsis of learning experience; articulates defensible methods for arriving at conclusions and research objectives.	Includes a synopsis of learning experience, but lacks some essential details; articulates inadequate methods for arriving at conclusions and clear research objectives.	Fails to include a synopsis of the learning experience; does not articulate a methodology or research objectives.	_/20 pts
Grammar, spelling, conformity to Turabian	1 or fewer distinct citation errors according to Turabian; skillfully employs vocabulary and	2-3 distinct citation errors; vocabulary and sentence structure are adequate for the topic, discipline, and	4-5 distinct citation errors; vocabulary and sentence structure are barely adequate for the topic, discipline, and	More than 6 distinct citation errors; simplistic word choice limits description and/or expression;	_/10 pts

	<p>sentence structure for the topic, discipline, and intended audience. Fewer than 3 spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors.</p>	<p>intended audience; includes 4-5 spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors</p>	<p>intended audience; includes 6-7 spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors.</p>	<p>greater than 7 spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors.</p>	
Word count	1250 words.	Deviates by 150 words.	Deviates by 250 words.	Deviates by more than 250 words.	_/10 pts
				Total	pts _/100

PechaKucha Rubric

Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Unacceptable	Grade
Timing	Each slide received exactly 20 seconds worth of spoken words. The whole presentation ended precisely at 6 min. and 40 seconds.	Each slide more or less received 20 seconds worth of spoken words. The whole presentation ended with a minor deviation in time.	There were at least 5 awkward pauses and the presentation either ended or went over by 10 seconds.	There were at least 7 awkward pauses and the presentation either ended or went over by 15 seconds.	_/20 pts
Objectives, Analysis, Content, and Conclusions	Clear, strong, and concise statement of objectives. Transitions between slides are tight and smooth. Exhibits logical connections between concepts and ideas in the slides. Even flow mixed with expert	A fair statement of objectives is stated at the beginning. Transitions are generally fair between slides and the development of ideas flows reasonably well. Presentation has acceptable	Objectives are poorly confusing and fails to achieve it at the end of the presentation. The ideas are biased and does not engage multiple perspectives. Transitions miss the point and logical	No objectives are stated. Transitions are missing or feels jumpy. Contains unsound logical connections and the whole presentation feels more like a rant rather	_/20 pts

	<p>citations. There is a strong apologetics application offered in the end.</p>	<p>number of expert citations. There is a satisfactory mention of a practical apologetics application offered in the end.</p>	<p>connections ad hoc and weak. Contains only 1-2 expert citations and practical application at the end is unrelated to subject matter.</p>	<p>than a persuasive or informative discourse on an apologetics subject. Lacks a practical application at the end.</p>	
<p>Presentation Skill</p>	<p>Speaker looks confident. Makes eye contact with audiences. Presenter is intentional about inflection points appropriate to structure of argument. Comfortable with physical gestures while presenting.</p>	<p>Shows some nervousness but overcomes it quickly. Makes some eye contact with the audience. Some inflection in the voice but has a tendency to be monotone.</p>	<p>Shows some nervousness and has a hard time overcoming it. Makes little eye contact with audience. Shows no emotion in his or her voice.</p>	<p>Presenter is jittery the whole time. Makes no eye contact. Reads the entire speech without looking up at audience. Voice is monotone and faint.</p>	<p>_/20 pts</p>
<p>Grammar/Style</p>	<p>Makes fewer than 2 grammatical and spelling errors per post; expresses opinions and</p>	<p>Makes 2-3 grammatical and spelling errors per post; opinions and ideas are clearly</p>	<p>Makes 4-6 grammatical and spelling mistakes per post; expression of opinions and</p>	<p>Makes more than 6 spelling and grammar errors per post; expression of opinions and</p>	<p>_/20 pts</p>

	ideas in an artful, well-organized, and concise manner; tone appropriate to the medium.	expressed; tone appropriate to the medium.	ideas sometimes confusing, lacking organization, or unnecessarily verbose; tone too academic or too casual for the medium.	ideas often confusing, lacking organization, or unnecessarily verbose; tone too academic or too casual for the medium.	
Slide Quality	High res images. Uniform in dimensions and contains no slides with words. Images appear to be thematic.	Mostly high res. Images. Some slides have more than 5 words. 30% of the slides appear disconnected from the rest.	Mixed between low and high res. Images. Paid little attention whether slides had words. Most slides appear haphazardly put together.	Mostly low-res images with mixed dimensions. All the slides where haphazardly put together. Presenter did not have 20 slides	_/20 pts
Total					_/100 pts

Handouts/Outline for In-class Lectures

Atonement

Definition:

Atonement is the work of Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation.²⁰¹ The doctrine of atonement is very significant because it is here where we transition from the objective to the subjective aspects of our faith. Leon Morris wrote, *“The atonement is the crucial doctrine of the faith. Unless we are right here it matters little, or so it seems to me, what we are like elsewhere.”*

Some Background Information (Context)²⁰²

The Nature of God - God is not just love; he is holy and just

Status of the Law - something of a transcript of the nature of God.

The Human Condition

Christ - 100% man, 100% God

The Old Testament Sacrificial System - “to cover” Lev. 1: 3-4 & Is. 53

New Testament Teaching

John 3: 17; 6: 38; 10:36 - We get a clear sense that Jesus was sent by the Father to do His work--the work of propitiation.

Jesus saw his life as a clear fulfillment of Is. 53 (Lk. 22:37); that he was to suffer (Mk. 2: 19-20; 8:31, Matt. 9:15; 17:12); as a ransom (Matt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45); as a substitute (John 15:13); and as a sacrifice (Jn. 1: 29; 17:19)

Paul’s writing - 2 Cor. 5:14,19; Rom. 5:8; 8:3, 32; Eph. 5:2; 1 Cor. 5:7;

The Cause of the Atonement

God’s Love & Justice

John 3:16

Romans 3: 25-26

²⁰¹ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), p. 248.

²⁰² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology, 2d Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), pp. 820-821.

The Necessity of the Atonement

Was there any other way for God to save human beings than by sending his Son to die in our place?

2 Pet. 2:4 - we could've suffered the same fate as the angels

Matt. 26: 39

Luke 24: 25-26

Hebrews 2:17

Theories of the Atonement

Example Theory: The real value of Jesus' death lies in the beautiful and perfect example of the type of dedication we are to practice.²⁰³ Jesus demonstrates total love for God that we must display if we are to experience salvation. His death also gives us inspiration.

Biblical support: 1 Peter 2:21

1 John 2:6

Some features:

1. Pelagian view of the human condition
2. Emphasis on love rather than justice
3. Emphasis on human rather than the divine

Moral-Influence Theory: Unlike the Example Theory, however, which emphasizes the human nature of Christ and regards his death as an example of the love we are to show for God, the moral-influence theory sees Christ's death as a demonstration of God's love; it emphasizes Christ's divine dimension.

Biblical support: Luke 19:10

John 18: 37

2 Cor. 5:19

Some features:

1. All of the above except #3
2. Healing souls is the real work that Jesus came to do.
3. Provides humanity an openness to God, an inclination to respond to his call to repentance.

²⁰³ Erickson, p. 801-802.

4. Conviction of sin.
5. Inspiration.

Governmental Theory: This theory emphasizes God's role as an administrator of the divine laws. It doesn't deny His love for humanity; he can forgive sin but he also takes into consideration the interests of his moral government.

Proof text: none (some use Is. 42:21)

Some features:

1. Atonement is not a form of punishment, rather a demonstration of God's hatred of sin.
2. Punishment vs. deterrence.
3. Emphasis on the seriousness of sin.
4. Christ's death was a satisfaction sufficient to uphold moral government, and thus God was enabled to remit sin in such a way that there were no adverse consequences for humanity.

Ransom To Satan Theory: The Christ paid to redeem us was paid to Satan, in whose kingdom all people were by virtue of sin.

Biblical support: 1 Cor. 6:20

Matt. 20: 28

Mark 10: 45

Some features:

1. Lots of drama
2. Resurrection is necessary
3. Lots of support from the church fathers

Satisfaction Theory: We picture God as a feudal overlord who, to maintain his honor, insists that there be adequate satisfaction for any encroachment upon it. This view comports well with God's nature, namely his love and justice; his relationship to the law, Christ's human and divine nature; the OT sacrificial system and the condition of man.

Biblical support: Gen. 2: 15-17; Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23; Gal. 4: 4-5, 6:8, 23; Lev. 1: 3-4; Is. 53

Some features:

1. Enjoys myriad Biblical support
2. Logical

3. High view of God

Doctrine of Man

The Creation of Man

- Why did God create us?
- How did God make us like himself?
- What does Scripture mean by “soul” and “spirit”?

The Use of the Word Man to Refer to the Human Race²⁰⁴

- Some people object to ever using the word man to refer to the human race in general (including both men and women), because it is claimed that such usage is insensitive to women.

- gender neutral terms are to be preferred: humanity, humankind, human beings, or persons.

- There is a theological bias for maintaining the use of man to refer to human beings:

- Gen. 5: 1-2 “When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.”

- Hebrew term for Man is “adam”; the same term used for the name of Adam, and the same term that is sometimes used of man in distinction from woman (Gen. 2:22, 25; 3:12, Eccl. 7:28).

²⁰⁴ Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, 187.

- The argument: (1) Biblically consistent = use man to refer to human beings; (2) and it originated with God himself.

Why was man created?

I. For His Glory

A. There was perfect love and fellowship among the members of the Trinity (Jn. 17: 5, 24)

B. We are truly important to God.

II. What is our purpose in life?

A. To glorify God

“God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him”

- John Piper

B. John 10: 10 - abundant life

C. Ps. 16:11 - pleasures for evermore

D. Psalm 27:4 - behold the beauty of the Lord

E. Life of rejoicing - Rom. 5: 2-3; Phil. 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6, 8)

F. God rejoices in us - Is 62:5; Zeph. 3:17-18

“When we realize that God created us to glorify him, and when we start to act in ways that fulfill that purpose, then we begin to experience an intensity of joy in the Lord that we have never before known. When we add to the realization that God himself is rejoicing in our fellowship with him, our joy becomes “inexpressible and filled with heavenly glory (1 Peter 1:8)”

Man in image of God

I. Meaning of “image of God.”

A. Hebrew word for image and likeness are *tselem* and *demur* respectively.

B. Both simply refer to the something that is similar but not identical to the thing it represents or is an “image” of. The meaning of the words can also be used of something that represents something else.

C. Some theologians have attempted to specify what characteristic the image of God is; but there is no one property of man the image of God is primarily seen.

D. Gen. 1:26 - “Let us make man to be like us and to represent us.

1. Specific Aspects of Our Likeness to God:

- a) Moral
- b) Spiritual
- c) Mental
- d) Relational

II. The Fall: God’s image is distorted, but not lost

A. Even after the Fall, God affirms the original image of God in us - Gen. 9:6

B. The New Testament gives confirmation to this when James 3:9 says that men generally, not just believers, “are made in the likeness of God.”

III. Redemption in Christ: A progressive recovering of more of God’s image

A. We have a new nature that is “being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” - Col. 3:10

B. We’re growing into greater likeness of God - 2 Cor. 3:18

C. We’re growing into greater likeness of Christ - Rom. 8:29

IV. At Christ’s return: Complete restoration of God’s image

A. Adam was not perfect; Christ is (1 Cor. 15:49)

B. We’re like Adam now, but our ultimate goal is to be like Christ - Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49

C. “When he appears we shall be like him.” (1 John 3:2)

V. Our great dignity as bearers of God’s image

A. Discuss: How does it make you feel that you, as a human being, are more like God than any other creature in the universe? How does that knowledge make you want to act? Do you think that God has made us so that we become happier or less happy when we grow to become more like him? In which areas would you now like to make more progress in likeness to God?

Essential Nature of Man

VI. Trichotomy, dichotomy, and monism

A. Trichotomy - view that man is made up of body, soul and spirit

1. Soul: intellect, emotions and the will

2. Spirit: higher faculty that comes alive when a person becomes a

Christian (Rom. 8:10)

3. Body: the physical part

B. Dichotomy - view that teaches that “spirit” is not a separate part of man, but simply another term for “soul” and that both terms are used interchangeably in Scripture to talk about the immaterial part of man—the part that lives on after our bodies die.

C. Monism - the belief that there is no separate existence for any “soul” after the body dies.

VII. Soul (Heb. nephesh and Gk. psyche) and “spirit” (Heb. ruach and Gk. pneuma) appear to be used interchangeably.

A. Examples:

1. John 12: 27: Jesus says, “Now is my soul troubled; in the same context (John 13:21) Jesus was “troubled in spirit.”

2. Luke 1:46-47: Mary says “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” This sounds like Hebrew parallelism — expressing the same idea using different words for emphasis.

3. People who have died are called either spirits or souls

a) Heb. 12:23, 1 Pet. 3:19

b) Rev. 6:9; 20:4

4. The phrase “body and soul” and “body and spirit” appear to be the same

a) Matt. 10:28 - Jesus appears to be referring to the entire person without mentioning “spirit.”

b) 1 Cor. 5:5 - Paul didn’t forget the salvation of man’s soul; he simply uses spirit to refer the whole of the person’s immaterial existence.

c) James 2:26 - “the body apart from the spirit is dead”; no mention of the soul

d) 1 Cor. 7:34 - talks about growth in holiness; “how to be holy in body and spirit”; suggests that this covers the whole of the person’s life.

e) 2 Cor. 7:1 - “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.”

f) Rom. 8:10; 1 Cor. 5:3; Col. 2:5

5. Everything that the soul is said to do, the spirit is also said to do, and everything that the spirit is said to do, the soul is also said to do.

a) Acts 17: 16 - Paul’s “spirit was provoked within him”

b) John 13:21 - Jesus was “troubled in spirit”

c) Prov. 17:22 - “crushed spirit”

d) Mark 2:8 - Jesus “perceiving in his spirit” [knowledge]

e) Rom. 8:16 - Holy Spirit “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” [knowledge]

f) 1 Cor. 2:11 - Paul asks, “What person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him?”

g) Psalm 25:1 “To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul” [soul doing spirit things?]

h) Psalm 62:1 “For God alone my soul waits in silence”

i) Psalm 103: 1 “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!”

j) Psalm 146: 1 “Praise the Lord, O my soul!”

k) Luke 1:46 “My soul magnifies the Lord”

l) 2 Cor. 7: 1 - Paul encourages the Corinthians to cleanse themselves “from every defilement of body and spirit” [Trichotomist argue that the spirit is purer than the soul; but clearly is not free from sin]

m) 1 Cor. 7:34 - there is concern for how to be holy “in body and spirit” [again, if the spirit is pure, then there is no need for concern to be holy]

n) Deut 2:30 - Lord hardened the spirit of Sihon the king of Heshbon

o) Psalm 78:8 - talks about the rebellious people of Israel “whose spirit was not faithful to God”

p) Prov. 16:18 - “haughty spirit”

- q) Eccl. 7:8 - possible to be “proud in spirit”
- r) Isaiah 29:24 - Isaiah speaks of those “who err in spirit”
- s) Daniel 5:20 - Nebuchadnezzar’s “spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly”
- t) Prov. 16:2 - there’s the idea of God weighing the spirit; which means the spirit can be wrong

6. What does 1 Thess 5:23 mean? Paul is just piling up synonyms for emphasis, as is sometimes done elsewhere in Scripture. For ex. compare Matt. 22:37 and Mark 12:30

VIII. Benefits of holding to dichotomy with overall unity

- A. Avoid error of depreciating the value of our intellects, emotions, or physical bodies
- B. Reminds us that Christian growth must include all aspects of our lives (2 Cor. 7:1; Col. 1:10, Gal. 5:17; 22)

Man as Male and Female

The creation of man as male and female shows God’s image in (1) harmonious interpersonal relationships, (2) equality in personhood and importance, and (3) difference in role and authority.²⁰⁵

IX. Personal Relationships

- A. Joined together - Matt. 19:6, Eph. 5:28; 1 Cor. 7: 3-5
- B. Picture of Christ and his church - Eph. 5:23-32
- C. Image of God - Gen. 1:26 [notice God stating the “image” part twice.

X. Equality in Personhood and Importance

A. The members of the Trinity are equal in their importance and in their full existence as distinct persons, so men and women have been created by God to be equal in their importance and personhood.

1. Ex. Gal. 3: 27-28

XI. Differences in Roles

- A. Relationship between the Trinity and male headship in marriage

²⁰⁵ Grudem, Bible Doctrine, 199.

1. If human beings are to reflect the character of God, then we would expect some similar differences in roles among human beings, even with respect to the most basic of all differences among human beings, the difference between male and female. And this is certainly what we find in the biblical text.²⁰⁶ [Ex. 1 Cor. 11]

B. Roles were established even before the Fall

1. Some scholars assert that the roles of man and women came about as a result of the Fall.

a) Primogeniture - Adam was created first. The firstborn assumes the leadership role. [1 Tim. 2:13]

b) Eve was created as a helper for Adam - Gen. 2:18; 1 Cor. 11:9

c) Adam named Eve - Gen. 2:19-20. The act of naming designated the character or function of someone [Gen. 2:23]

d) God named the human race "man" not "woman" - Gen. 5:2

e) God spoke to Adam first after the fall - Gen. 2:15-17; Gen. 3:9

f) Adam, not Eve, represented the human race - Gen. 3:6

(1) New Testament - in Adam we all die (1 Cor. 15:22; cf. v. 49)

(2) "Many died through one man's trespass" (Rom. 5: 12-21)

g) The curse brought a distortion of previous roles, not the introduction of new roles

(1) Work got hard

(2) child bearing got hard

(3) man/woman relationships got hard - Gen. 3:16

(a) "deisre" could be interpreted as "desire to rule"

(b) "rule over you" is less kinder

h) Christ reaffirms the creation order

(1) Col. 3:18-19

(2) Eph. 5:22-33

(3) Titus 2:5

(4) 1 Pet. 3:1-7

i) Application extends to the church

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 202.

(1) Egalitarian - no roles, no distinction between man and woman. Emphasize the ff:

- (a) Gal. 3:28
- (b) Judges 4-5
- (c) Acts. 2: 17-18; 18: 26; 21: 9
- (d) Rom. 16:7
- (e) 1 Tim. 3:11

(2) Complementarian - men and women have distinct roles. Emphasize the ff:

- (a) 1 Tim. 2:11-15
- (b) Matt. 10:2-4
- (c) 1 Cor. 14:33-35
- (d) 1 Tim. 3:2
- (e) Titus 1:6

Sin

XII. Definition: failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.²⁰⁷ A departure from the way things ought to be.²⁰⁸

- A. Acts - stealing, lying, murder, etc.
- B. Attitude - Coveting, desire to do wrong, etc.
- C. Nature - we inherited Adam's sin and so we're sinners from the moment of conception (Rom. 5:8, Eph. 2:3)

XIII. The Origin of Sin: Where did sin come from?

- A. Not God - Deut. 32:4, Job 34:10, James 1:13
- B. Not dualism - there is no eternally existing evil power in the universe similar to or equal to God himself in power.
- C. He ordained it; not a surprise. - Eph. 1:11
- D. Angels and Man²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ *ibid*, 210.

²⁰⁸ I've heard Dr. Douglas Geivett state it this way.

²⁰⁹ Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, 212.

1. Knowledge: What is true?
2. Moral Standards: What is right?
3. Identity: Who am I?

E. Sin is ultimately irrational

XIV. Doctrine of Original Sin (Inherited Sin)

A. Inherited guilt: We are counted guilty because of Adam's sin.

1. Rom. 5:12 - 21 — this is not talking about individual or particular sin; but a comparison between Adam and Christ. Even without the law (from Adam to Moses) man was not exempt from the consequences of sin [they still died].

2. Protest — it's unfair that we're guilty when it's Adam who sinned and not us.

Response:

- a. We'll still be judged according to our own sins
- b. If we were Adam, we'd most likely sin like he did
- c. Rom. 5: 12-21 — "As by one man's disobedience many were made

sinner,

so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous." [Rom. 5:19]

B. Inherited corruption: We have a sinful nature because of Adam's sin.

Ps. 51:5 — David realizes he was sinful from the beginning.

Eph. 2:3 — any parent can attest to this. We don't teach our kids to do

wrong; they

just learn it on their own.

1. Our nature lacks spiritual good before God.

a) Rom. 7:18 — Paul says, "I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh..."

b) Titus 1:15 — "to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure, their very minds and consciences are corrupted"

c) Jeremiah 17:9 — "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?"

These passages aren't denying that people can't do good; it is denying that they can do any spiritual good in terms of a relationship with God.

2. In our actions we are totally unable to do spiritual good before God.
 - a) Rom. 8:8 — we can't please God
 - b) John 15:4 — without God we can do nothing.
 - c) Heb. 11:6 — without faith it is impossible to please Him.
 - d) What happened to freedom of choice? It's not lost, we're free only to do bad

Discuss

XV. Are infants guilty before they commit actual sins?

- A. Passages we've looked at don't support the idea of an "age of accountability."
- B. Psalm 58:3 — "The wicked go astray from the womb, they err from their birth."

XVI. How can infants who die be saved?

- A. Regeneration in the womb
 1. Luke 1:15 — John the Baptist
 2. Psalm 22:10 — David says, "Since my mother bore me you have been my God."
- B. These are exceptions; not the pattern for salvation — 1 Tim. 2:5; John 3:3
 - C. It's not unusual to have believer's children saved — Gen. 7:1, Heb. 11:7, Josh 2:18, Ps. 103:17, John 4:53, Acts 2:39; 11:14; 16:31; 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:16; 7:14; Titus 1:6;
 - D. David and Bathsheba's first child — 2 Sam. 12:23
 - E. Scripture is silent regarding children of unbelievers who die at an early age.

XVII. Are there degrees of sin?

- A. Legal guilt — James 2: 10-11
- B. Yes
 1. John 19: 11 — Jesus before Pontius Pilate: "He who delivered me to you has the greater sin."
 2. Matt. 5:19 — "Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven."

3. Matt. 23:23 — “...weightier matters of the law...”

C. The laws God gave Moses had provisions for cases where people sinned “unwittingly.”

THE EXISTENCE AND KNOWABILITY OF GOD

Intro

- General vs. Special revelation
- The church has not only believed in the existence of God, but that God could be known (proven)
- Not exhaustive, but enough to place our trust in Him
-

Existence and Knowability in the Early Church

General Revelation

- Origen (3rd century theologian) on general revelation: "...gained by means of the visible creation and the natural feelings of the human mind; and it is possible, moreover, for such knowledge to be confirmed from the sacred Scriptures."
- Origen explained that human understanding "...knows the Father of the world from the beauty of his works and the comeliness of his creatures."
- Aristides (2nd century philosopher/apologist; follower of Christ): "perceived that the world and all that is in it are moved by the power of another; and I understood that he who moves them is God, who is hidden in them, and veiled by them. And it is manifest that that which causes motion is more powerful than which is moved."
- Theophilus (2nd century apologist; follower of Christ)²¹⁰ analogized God's providential work as a captain steering a ship: "...perceived that God is the pilot of the whole universe, although he is now visible to the eyes of the flesh."
- *ibid*: "the timely rotation of the seasons, and the changes of temperature; the regular orbit of the stars; the well-ordered course of days and nights, months and years; and the providence with which God provides nourishment for all creation"

Arnobius (2nd century apologist): "is there any human being who has not entered on the first day of his life with the idea of that great God? In whom has it not been implanted by nature? On whom has it not been impressed, yes, stamped almost in his mother's womb? In whom is there not a natural instinct that he is King and Lord, the ruler of all things that exist?"

Special Revelation

- Tertullian thought that special revelation was a stronger witness to God than general revelation — Scripture.
- "So that we might obtain an ampler and more authoritative knowledge at once of himself and of his plans and will, go has added a written revelation. This

²¹⁰ disciple of Ignatius, who was a disciple of Barnabas.

revelation is on behalf of everyone whose heart is set on seeking God, that seeking they may find, and finding they may believe, and believing they may obey.”

God can be known, but not exhaustively known.

John Chrysostom (great preacher in the 4th century) speaks of God as inexpressible, incomprehensible, invisible, and unknowable; that only God possesses exhaustive knowledge of himself.

What’s the problem? If God is wholly other, how can we know him?

Lactantius: “The truth, that is the secret of the most high God, who created all things, cannot be attained by our own ability and perceptions. There would be no difference between God and human beings, if human thought could reach to the counsels and plans of that eternal majesty.”

Dionysius’ Apophatic Expression of God²¹¹

“It is not soul or mind, nor does it possess imagination, conviction, speech, or understanding. Nor is it speech per se., It cannot be spoken of and it cannot be grasped by understanding. It is not number or order, greatness or smallness, equality of inequality, similarity or dissimilarity. It is not immovable, moving, or at rest. It has no power, it is not power, nor is it light. It does not live nor is it life. It is not a substance, nor is it eternity or time. It cannot be grasped by the understanding since it is neither knowledge nor truth. It is neither one nor oneness, divinity nor goodness. Nor is it a spirit, in the sense in which we understand that term... There is no speaking of it, nor name nor knowledge of it. Darkness and light, error and truth—it is none of these. It is beyond assertion and denial.”

Augustine’s Approach

- insisted that all people know God’s existence through what exists in the created world.

- better yet, we understand better who God is by understanding what true love is.

- God left a trace of himself (*imago Dei*) and it can be discovered by contemplating the self when it loves someone:

“When I, who make this inquiry, love anything, there are three things concerned—I myself, the one whom I love, and love itself. For I not love love; rather, I love a lover; for there is no love where nothing is loved. Therefore there are three things—he who loves, and that which is loved, and love.”

- In other words, God can be known by reflection on the traces of the Trinity in human beings.

²¹¹ At Athens Paul preached his famous philosophical discourse in the Areopagus. Only a few were converted, amongst these being St. Dionysius the Areopagite.

- Augustine rejected those who maintained that nothing could be said of God. It is a contradiction, “because if the unspeakable is what cannot be spoken of, it is not unspeakable if it can be called unspeakable.”

The Existence and Knowability of God in the Middle Ages

Anselm’s Ontological Argument

1. Our understanding of God is a being than which no greater can be conceived..
2. The idea of God exists in the mind.
3. A being that exists both in the mind and in reality is greater than a being that exists only in the mind.
4. If God only exists in the mind, then we can conceive of a greater being—that which exists in reality.
5. We cannot imagine something that is greater than God.
6. Therefore, God exists.

Aquinas’ Five Ways

The First Way: Argument from Motion

1. Our senses prove that some things are in motion.
2. Things move when potential motion becomes actual motion.
3. Only an actual motion can convert a potential motion into an actual motion.
4. Nothing can be at once in both actuality and potentiality in the same respect (i.e., if both actual and potential, it is actual in one respect and potential in another).
5. Therefore, nothing can move itself.
6. Therefore each thing in motion is moved by something else.
7. The sequence of motion cannot extend *ad infinitum*.
8. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.

The Second Way: Argument from Efficient Causes

1. We perceive a series of efficient causes of things in the world.
2. Nothing exists prior to itself.
3. Therefore nothing is the efficient cause of itself.
4. If a previous efficient cause does not exist, neither does the thing that results.

5. Therefore if the first thing in a series does not exist, nothing in the series exists.

6. The series of efficient causes cannot extend *ad infinitum* into the past, for then there would be no things existing now.

7. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.

The Third Way: Argument from Possibility and Necessity (Reductio argument)

1. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, that come into being and go out of being i.e., contingent beings.

2. Assume that every being is a contingent being.

3. For each contingent being, there is a time it does not exist.

4. Therefore it is impossible for these always to exist.

5. Therefore there could have been a time when no things existed.

6. Therefore at that time there would have been nothing to bring the currently existing contingent beings into existence.

7. Therefore, nothing would be in existence now.

8. We have reached an absurd result from assuming that every being is a contingent being.

9. Therefore not every being is a contingent being.

10. Therefore some being exists of its own necessity, and does not receive its existence from another being, but rather causes them. This all men speak of as God.

The Fourth Way: Argument from Gradation of Being

1. There is a gradation to be found in things: some are better or worse than others.

2. Predications of degree require reference to the “utmost” case (e.g., a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest).

3. The maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus.

4. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.

The Fifth Way: Argument from Design

1. We see that natural bodies work toward some goal, and do not do so

2. by chance.

3. Most natural things lack knowledge.

4. But as an arrow reaches its target because it is directed by an archer,

what lacks intelligence achieves goals by being directed by something intelligent.

5. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

The Existence and Knowability of God in the Reformation and Post-Reformation

Luther - we can easily make idols of false notions of God; "...there is vast difference between knowing that there is God and knowing who or what God is. Nature knows the former; the latter is taught only by the Holy Spirit."

- embraced the notion of natural and special revelation
- general knowledge vs. true knowledge of God
- hidden God vs. revealed God
- true knowledge can only come through Jesus (through His word): "Begin your knowledge and study with Christ, and there let them stay and stick."

Calvin - knowledge of God and knowledge of self are intimately connected
- People begin to consider their very existence and the many gifts—
intellect

tual, social, artistic—they possess, they are inevitably drawn to the conclusion that these blessings have been bestowed on them by a loving, caring creator.

- When we discover our wretchedness (miserable ruin), we begin to focus
our
gaze upwards.

- Methods by which we know God: self-knowledge, sense of the divine
(Sen

sus Divinitatis), revelation in creation (Natural Theology),
Scripture. The first three are natural theology (God the Creator/the Works
of God) — all subject to false ends. The fourth (God the Redeemer/the
Word of God) is salvific and is desperately needed by all.

- Ultimately, because of sin, one must know God the Redeemer in Jesus
Christ
before knowing one can know God the Creator.

The Existence and Knowability of God in the Modern Period

Rene Descartes- Cogito, ergo sum (I think, therefore I am); certainty was
paramount
for Descartes.

- he thought that the idea of an infinite God is unlikely to have arisen by
one's

own thinking, that is unless it was given him by some substance in
reality infinite.

- 2nd argument is like Aquinas' Second Way
- 3rd argument is a form of the ontological argument, i.e. existence is a perfection of God.

William Paley - teleological argument

- stone in the field vs. a watch in the field.

Isaac Newton - "This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being."

Skeptics

David Hume - Problem of Evil

- Is God willing to prevent evil but not able? Then he is impotent.
- Is he able but not willing? Then he is malevolent.
- Is he both able and willing? Then from where does evil come?

(con Immanuel Kant - in Pure Reason, he argued that existence is not a real predicate

tra Anselm and Descartes). This resulted in the denial of the ontological argument. This led to the denial of the cosmological argument since it makes an appeal to the ontological argument. Eventually he dismissed the teleological argument as well. He called it an ontological argument in disguise.

- he tried to rescue his proofs of God's existence by arguing for some

form of a moral argument: summum bonus (highest good).

- he joined moral virtue with happiness; do good and you'll get rewarded with happiness.

- the only problem is that one cannot attain the summum bonus in life.

So an afterlife, God, the soul got postulated.

- ultimately, his philosophy ended up with a complete denial of any knowledge of God whatsoever.

- but belief in the Christian God is good and regulatory. This is where

faith and reason split. He saw this as a major step forward for Christianity: "I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith."

Rescuers of Skeptics

Friedrich Schleiermacher

- "a feeling of absolute dependence" on the Geist (world spirit) that pervades everything. To know God comes through intuition; one becomes self-consciously aware of being dependent

on this universal being. It's not mediated through the Bible, the church, morality or religion.

Karl Barth - rejected general revelation; this knowledge, according to him, stood in distinction from God's own revelation of himself in Jesus Christ — it became another revelation.
- he brought it back to the basics: Knowledge of God comes through one source—Jesus Christ.

Logical Positivist (early 20th century) - verification principle: all statements, to be meaningful, must be verifiable, and they must be verifiable by appeal to empirical tests—tests that necessarily involve one or more of the five human senses. This didn't last long — for obvious reasons.

C.S. Lewis - Mere Christianity revived the moral argument for the existence of God.

Norman Malcolm
- revived Anselm's ontological argument; except his version doesn't affirm existence as a perfection. Rather, "the logical impossibility of non-existence" as a perfection of God.
(1) God's existence is contingent
(2) God's existence is impossible
(3) God's existence is necessary

William Lane Craig
- made the Cosmological argument popular.

GOD IN THREE PERSONS: THE TRINITY

The Early Church

The church has historically believed that “God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.”²¹²

Theological Milieu - 4th century heresies kept the church fathers busy, i.e. Arianism²¹³, modalism, Paul of Samosata (dynamic monarchianism - emphasized the oneness of God), etc.

The early church had to reconcile monotheism (inherited from Judaism) and tritheism (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)

Justin Martyr described a Trinitarian baptismal formula: “In the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they [the new converts] then receive the washing with water.”

As Polycarp was being martyred, he prayed to God the Father: “I glorify you, through the eternal and heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, through whom to you, which him and the Holy Spirit, be glory both now and for the ages to come.”

Economic Trinity: what is the relationship among the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit? What are their roles and activities in relationship to the world?

Irenaeus - Father planning everything; Son carrying it out; the Spirit nourishing and increasing what has been made.

Tertullian is credited for his precise formulation of the Trinity and became the foundation for later development:

“All are of one, by unity ... of substance; while the mystery of the economy is

still guarded, which distributes the unity into a Trinity, placing in their order the three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Three, however, not in condition, but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in appearance. Yet they are of one substance and of one condition and of one

²¹² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 226.

²¹³ For a good summary of Arianism - Alister McGrath *Historical Theology*, p. 43.

power, inasmuch as he is one God from whom these degrees and forms and aspects are reckoned under the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

- In other words: one essence or substance yet in three persons

Origen contributes to this by introducing the idea of hypostases (persons) and develops an ontological component in our understanding of the Trinity.

- homoousios vs. homoiousios²¹⁴

- “As light ...could never exist without splendor, so neither can the Son be understood to exist without the Father.”

- Son was generated by the Father, this generation was from all eternity.

- Similarly, there was never a time when the Holy Spirit did not exist.

- Origin affirms this: “we have been able to find no statement in holy Scripture in which the Holy Spirit could be said to be made or created.”

- Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father—this procession is from all eternity.

- eternal generation of the Son; eternal procession of the Holy Spirit.

Arian heresy (and others) prompted a clear formation of the Christian doctrine (emphasis on the Trinity) at the council of Nicaea.

- Athanasius: “We believe in one unbegotten God, Father almighty...who has his being from himself. and in one only-begotten Word, Wisdom, Son, begotten of the Father without beginning and eternally ...the true image of the Father, equal in honor and glory.”

- of the Holy Spirit: “...has the same oneness with the Son as the Son has with the Father.”

- creed named after him is one of the clearest statements of the Trinity.

Cappadocian Fathers (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus) introduced the concept of perichoresis within the Godhead.²¹⁵

Augustine agreed with the orthodox expression of the Trinity. He added the idea of the double procession of the Holy Spirit. He found it Biblically warranted e.g., Rom. 8:9

“God the Father is not the Father of the Holy Spirit, but of the Son; and God the Son is not the Son of the Holy Spirit, but of the Father; but God the Holy Spirit is the Spirit not of the Father only, or of the Son only, but of the Father and the Son.”

²¹⁴ What a difference an “i” makes. *ibid.* p.46

²¹⁵ Perichoresis explained in primary source quoted by Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology*, p. 240.

“The Holy Spirit is neither of the Father alone, nor of the Son alone, but of both; and so intimates to us a mutual love, with which the Father and the Son reciprocally love one another.”

This is where we get Augustine’s analogies of the Trinity:

- he that loves, and that which is loved, and love
- memory, understanding, and will
- mind, knowledge, and love

The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Middle Ages

The Third Council of Toledo (Spain) in 589 introduced a one-word change in the Nicene Creed that eventually caused the church to split: *filioque* (“and the son”).

- affirms Augustine’s double procession.

Thomas Aquinas: “one essence of the three persons, and three persons of the one essence.”

- this is part of divine essence itself.

The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Reformation and Post-Reformation

The Protestant church split from Rome just like the Eastern church did 500 years earlier, but it wasn’t over the doctrine of the Trinity. There was no disagreement between the two over the doctrine of the Trinity and the Reformers added little to the discussion.

- post-Reformation theologians continued to affirm the Western church’s double procession rather than the Orthodox church’s view.

The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Modern Period

- the doctrine of the Trinity got deemphasized with the rise of materialism, agnosticism and atheism.

Friedrich Schleiermacher view is that religion is essentially based on feelings. For this reason he dispensed with abstract Christian abstract dogmas. He didn’t think it was essential.

“The assumption of an eternal distinction in the Supreme Being is not an utterance concerning the religious consciousness, for there it never could emerge.”

Karl Barth (again) to the rescue. Barth disagreed and considered the doctrine to be essential to a right understanding of Christian doctrine. He made this a priority in his voluminous work *Church Dogmatics* by placing it at the very beginning.

- emphasize both: “oneness in threeness” and “threeness in oneness”
- responsible for ushering in the idea of the social Trinity.

BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR THE TRINITY

Some Definitions

God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.²¹⁶

There is one only and true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Person, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence.²¹⁷

Biblical Support

Old Testament: Gen. 1:26 “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”

Majestic plural?

Spoke to angels?

Gen. 3:22

Gen. 11:7

Ps. 110:1

New Testament: Matt. 3:16 -17, Matt. 28: 19, 1 Cor. 12: 4 - 6, 2 Cor. 13:14, Eph. 4: 4 -6, 1 Pet. 1: 2, Jude 20 -21

Which cult uses what verse above as proof that there are three gods?

Minimum Requirements:

1. God is three persons.

Jn 1: 1-2 “with” shows distinction from the Father.

Intercession: 1 Jn. 2:1, Heb. 7:25, Jn 14:26, Rom. 8:27

What is the Holy Spirit? Is he some kind of a power or force of God?

- spirit is neuter; but Greek pronoun “he” is used

- Counselor or comforter is a term used to speak of a person.

- other personal activities ascribed to the Holy Spirit, i.e. teaching, bearing witness, etc.

- Acts 5: 3 -4, Cor. 3:16, Ps. 139: 7 - 8

2. Each person is fully God.

Jn 1: 1-4

²¹⁶ Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, 104.

²¹⁷ B.B. Warfield, “Trinity” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930), 5:3012.

Jn 20:28

Heb 1

What cult uses what verse to deny the deity of Christ?

3. There is one God.

Deut. 6: 4 -5

1 Tim. 2: 5

Rom. 3: 30

James 2:19

EARLY CHURCH HISTORY²¹⁸

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Docetism - denies that he was truly a real, physical human being.

Simon Magus: it was necessary to explain the fact that he was still alive on Earth after the supposed events of the crucifixion by saying that he was merely thought to have suffered, but did not actually do so.

the Matter was evil, Christ could not be associated with a human body despite the Bible's teaching to the contrary.

Marcion: Jesus is simply God himself (also a docetist). Created his own Church and canon.

Montanus: preserves most of the principles of orthodox theology but adding personal revelations (precursor to LDS?)

Fa Patrissianism - God the Father himself became man and suffered. Christ is fully God, but it did not identify the Son as a separate Person, distinct from the ther.

oriental Manicheanism: mixture of Christian thought with Zoroastrianism and other a religions. Two opposing forces; man came into being by emanations from a being who in turn was a high emanation from the ruler of the kingdom of light. The king of darkness tricked man and now has a mingling of darkness and light. To be liberated, one must be exposed to the Light, Christ.

man Monarchianism: Paul of Samosata (Lucian of Antioch-->Arius) and Sabellius Paul of Samosata taught that Christ was not divine but was merely a good who, by righteousness and by the penetration of his being by the divine Logos at baptism, achieved divinity and saviorhood.

This Sabellius taught a trinity of manifestation of forms rather than of essence.

²¹⁹ Much of the discussion here was taken from *Heresies* by Harold Brown and *Christianity Through The Centuries* by Earle Cairns.

is also known as modalism.

Iranaeus (Against Heresies) and Tertullian wrote against these 1st and 2nd century

heresies. Note: None of early apologists in the second century claimed to know the inner nature of the godhead; instead they dealt with the testimony of

Scripture and the church concerning the person and work of Christ, and pro

duced an impressive, consistent, believable Christology, *one that stands up well against the most critical questioning of later ages.*

Origen (school of Alexandria)

Pre-Christian Judaism: "Son of God" did not denote deity.

Christians used the term to imply a relationship by nature and not merely obedience.

Origen was first to introduce the idea of the "Father eternally begetting the Son."

Introduction of the term "subsists"

Arius Controversy (318):

In 318 or 319, Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, preached to his presbyters on "The Great Mystery of the Trinity in Unity." One of the presbyters, Arius (ca. 250-336), an ascetic scholar and popular preacher, attacked the sermon because he believed that it failed to uphold a distinction among the persons in the Godhead. In his desire to avoid a polytheistic conception of God, Arius took a position that did injustice to the true deity of Christ. He said "there was a time when he was not."

He believed:

- Christ had not existed from all eternity but had a beginning.
- Christ was of difference (heteros) essence or substance from the

Father.

- Christ is divine but only because of the virtue of his life and

obedience to

God's will.

- Created being; not coequal, coeternal or consubstantial with the

Father.

Athanasius (296-373)

Opposed Arius. Chief exponent of what became the orthodox view. He insisted on these things because he believed that if Christ were less than he had stated Him to be, He could not be the Savior of the mankind.

Eusebius of Caesarea:

homoi vs. homoo

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Nicene Creed (381 Version)

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty
Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the Son of God, eternally begotten from the father, ~~only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the father,~~

God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten not made, one in Being with the Father.

through whom all things came into being, ~~things in heaven and things on earth.~~

Who because of us men and because of our salvation came down from the heaven
and became incarnate

by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, becoming man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

suffered and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures ||

he ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,

And his kingdom will have no end

And in the Holy Spirit. the Lord, the Giver of Life,

Who proceeds from the Father

With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the [resurrection of the dead,](#)

and the life of the world to come.

~~But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or is subject to alteration or change—those the Catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes.~~

DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

The four major teachings of the Bible about itself²²⁰:

1. the authority of Scripture
2. the clarity of Scripture
3. the necessity of Scripture
4. the sufficiency of Scripture

The Authority of Scripture

I. All the Words in Scripture Are God's Words

A. Prophets were God's mouth pieces; "Thus says the Lord..." (it's like hearing "thus say's the King..." Ex. Num. 22:38; Deut. 18: 18-20; Jer. 1:9; 14:14; 23:16-22; 29:31-32; Ezek. 2:7; 13:1-16

B. Prophets speak on behalf of God. Ex. 1 Kings 14:18; 16:12, 34; 2 Kings 9:36; 14:25

C. To disbelieve or disobey anything a prophet says is to disbelieve or disobey God himself. Ex. Deut. 18:19; 1 Sam. 10:8; 13: 13-14; 15: 3, 9, 23

D. All of the Old Testament = "law of God" or "book of the covenant" [Ex. 24:7; Deut. 29:21; 31: 24-26; Josh. 24:26; 1 Sam. 10:25; 2 Kings 23:2-3

E. In the New Testament - 2 Timothy 3:16: *graphe* means Scripture. This Greek word appears 51 times in the New Testament and every time it refers to Scripture.

F. "God-breathed" - theopneustos - "breathed out by God." God speaks and men write it down.

G. 2 Peter 1:21; Matt. 19:5; Luke 1:70; 24:25; John 5:45-47; Acts 3:18, 21; 4:25; 13:47; 28:25; Rom. 1:2; 3:2, 9:17; 1 Cor. 9: 8-10; Heb. 1:1-2, 6-7 attribute to God the words of the Old Testament.

II. What about the New Testament? How are the words here attributed to God?

²²⁰ Grudem, *Bible*, 33.

- A. 2 Peter 3: 15-16 - "...the other Scriptures."
- B. 1 Timothy 5:18 - it's an amalgam of a Old Testament passage [Deut. 25:4] and a non Old Testament passage [Luke 10:7]. Paul here quotes Jesus' words as found in Luke's gospel and calls them Scripture.
- C. Paul thought his writings were Scripture - 1 Cor. 14:37
 - Did Paul think his words were inferior to Jesus? 1 Cor. 7: 12-25
- D. The Holy Spirit will bring to remembrance all that Jesus had said to the disciples - John 14:26; 16:13; 2 Pet. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thes. 4:15; Rev. 22:18-19

III. How do we know God's words we read in the Bible are true?

- A. This ultimately is a question of authority
 - We must reject the neoorthodox approach, i.e. Karl Barth (1886-1968). "Although much of his writing provided a welcome reaffirmation of the teachings of the Bible in distinction from the unbelief of liberal German theology, Barth still did not affirm that all of the words of the Bible are the words of God in the same sense that we have argued here. Rather, he said that the words of Scripture become the words of God to us as we encounter them."²²¹
 - Scriptures are self-attesting:
 - ◆ We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture.[10] And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it does abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the

²²¹ ibid 37

inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.²²²

- It's a form of circular reasoning:
 - ◆ Answer to objection - So while appealing to Scripture for Scripture's authority might be a form of circular reasoning, it's not a problem unique to Christians. It is in fact what all people do. For example, a man who appeals to reason believes it reasonable to do so. Such a man bases his entire life on the unproven and unquestioned assumption that reason is king without ever stopping to realize that it only ever got to that place because felt it was reasonable to put the crown on it.

IV. Inspiration is not strictly dictation. Hebrews 1:1 says that God spoke to our fathers by the prophets "in many and various ways."

- A. Dictation - Rev. 2:1, 8, 12
- B. Historical - Luke 1:1-3
- C. God speaks in dreams, visions, or hearing God's voice
- D. Human writers - John 14:26

Inerrancy of Scripture

*The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscript does not affirm anything which is contrary to fact.*²²³

I. Inerrancy vs. Ordinary Language: The Bible can be inerrant and still speak in the ordinary language over everyday speech. For example: sun rising, numbers, measurements, etc.

II. Inerrancy vs. Loose or Free Quotations: [See Paul Copan's article]

III. Inerrancy vs. Grammatical Errors: For example, Rev. 1:4

²²² Westminster Confession of Faith, ch. 1, para. 5

²²³ Ibid., 42.

- A. Style
- B. Rough-hewn language of ordinary people
- C. Grammatical rules change

IV. Infallible vs. Inerrant: Until about 1960 or 1965, the word infallible was used interchangeably with the word inerrant. But in more recent years, at least in the United States, the word infallible has been used in a weaker sense to mean that the Bible will not lead us astray in matters of faith and practice.

V. What about (apparent) Bible contradictions? For example, genealogies, numbers, etc. (see CARM article).

VI. The best way to argue for inerrancy:

A. Syllogism:

- (1) God cannot lie;
- (2) Jesus is God;
- (3) Therefore Jesus cannot lie.

◆ What does Jesus say about the Old Testament? [see Harry's Rocklin notes]

◆ What does Jesus say about the New Testament? [see Harry's Rocklin notes]

The Clarity of Scripture

*"The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it."*²²⁴

VII. Self-attesting

A. Deut. 6:6-7 "These words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

- ability to teach

²²⁴ Ibid., 52.

- ability to discuss
- God expects his people to know and talk about his Word with proper application to ordinary life situations.

VIII. Simple

- A. Ps. 19:7 “The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple”
- B. Ps. 119: 130 “The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple”
- C. Jesus in the New Testament expects his listeners to understand Scripture: Ex.

- “Have you not read...?” (Matt. 12:3, 5; 22:31)
- “Have you never read in the Scriptures...” (Matt. 21:42)
- “You are wrong because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt. 22: 29; 9:13; 12:7; 15:3; 21: 13; John 3:10)

IX. Spanning generations

- A. New Testament authors expected Gentile Christians to be able to read a translation of the Old Testament in their own language and to understand it rightly

- Rom. 4:1-25; 15: 4; 1 Cor. 10: 1-11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17

X. Spiritual and Moral Qualities

- A. 1 Cor. 2:14 “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

- other examples: 1 Cor. 1:18 - 3:4; 2 Cor. 3:14-16; 4: 3-4, 6; Heb. 5:14; James 1:5-6; 2 Pet. 3:5; Mark 4: 11-12; John 7:17; 8:43

XI. Slip-ups in understanding Scripture

- A. Disciples failed to understand Jesus’ own teachings of the Old Testament - Matt. 15:16; Mark 4:10-13; 6:52; 8:14-21; 9:32; Luke 18:34; John 8:27; 10:6

B. Disciples failed to understand Old Testament and each other - Paul opposing Peter (Gal. 2:11-15); Gentile inclusion in the church (Acts 15:7)

- Causes
 - ◆ unfolding of revelation
 - ◆ hardness of heart - Luke 24:25
- Tools to help us:
 - ◆ hermeneutics - study of correct methods of interpretation
 - ◆ exegesis - process of interpreting a text of Scripture
 - ◆ the problem always lie not with Scripture but with ourselves.

XII. Steady study of Scripture

- A. Sometimes Scripture is Silent on certain things
- B. Sin - selfishness, pride, greed, lack of faith, laziness

XIII. Scholar's role

- A. Fulfill the office of teacher - 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11
- B. Explore new areas of understanding the teachings of Scripture
- C. Defend the teachings of the Bible.
- D. Continue the work of translating Scripture into different

languages.

The Necessity and Sufficiency of Scripture

*The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowledge of the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for certain knowledge of God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws.*²²⁵

²²⁵ Ibid., 54.

The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.²²⁶

The source of Christian teaching is God, and he has instructed believers through the prophets, the Gospel, and the blessed apostles. This teaching is like an axiom in math or a first principle in philosophy: It has no need of proof, nor is it capable of being corrected. Rather, it is the standard by which everything else is evaluated.²²⁷

- XIV. Necessary for knowledge of the gospel - Rom. 10: 13-17
- A. One must call upon the name of the Lord in order to be saved
 - B. People can only call upon the name of Christ if they believe him
 - C. People cannot believe in Christ unless they have heard of him
 - D. They cannot hear of Christ unless there is someone to tell them about Christ
 - E. Conclusion: Faith comes by hearing the gospel message
 - What about those who haven't (or cannot) heard the preaching of the gospel? Heb. 11:13
- XV. Necessary for maintaining spiritual life
- A. Matthew 4:4 quoting Deut. 8:3 - this is the believer's spiritual food (nourishment)
- XVI. Necessary for certain knowledge of God's will
- A. Consciences are good; but not sufficient [Jer. 17:9; Titus 1:15]
 - B. Deut 29:29; Ps. 119: 1; Ps. 1:1-2; 1 Jn. 5:3
 - C. General vs. Special Revelation
 - general - Rom. 1:19-21

²²⁶ Ibid., 58.

²²⁷ Clement of Alexandria, Stomata, 7.16, in AND, 2:551.

- special - gospel; trinity, etc.

XVII. Sufficient for salvation and to equip us for living the Christian life:

2 Tim. 3: 15-17; Ps. 119:1, 9

XVIII. Sufficiency of Scripture means our focus is narrowed

A. Avoid searching through all the writings throughout history in order to find what God requires of us.

B. In matters of moral and doctrinal questions, we have confidence that we will be *able* to find what God requires us to think or do.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
2. Difficulties in Understanding the Holy Spirit
3. The Nature of the Holy Spirit
4. Implications of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

- Personal
- His work is more prominent today than of any member of the Trinity.
- Current culture stresses the experiential

Difficulties in Understanding the Holy Spirit

- Less explicit revelation in Scripture regarding the Holy Spirit than about the Father or the Son. No systematic discussions. The best discussion we have is found in Jn. 14-16.
- Lack of imagery.
- Confusion over His work and nature.

Early Thoughts about the Holy Spirit

- Origin believed the Bible was written by the Holy Spirit. He had inconsistent views about the Holy Spirit because he emphasized the three distinct hypostases so sharply, some thought his view approximated tritheism. He believed the Holy Spirit was a created being (a la Arianism with the Son).
- Apologist Athenagoras thought prophets were caught up in a state of ecstasy with the Holy Spirit breathing through them as a musician breathes through a pipe.
- Philo and other Alexandrian Jews believed human Scripture authors were seized by the Holy Spirit as they wrote.
- Augustine believed the Holy Spirit helped the authors own recollections and prevented them from error.
- Irenaeus believed the Holy Spirit was just an attribute of God: divine wisdom
- Clement of Rome and Tertullian affirmed the threeness/oneness nature.
- Calvin based his understanding of the authority of Scriptures on the Holy Spirit.
- testimony of Holy Spirit is superior to reason
- stressed union of Holy Spirit with the Word (no new revelation - Jn. 14:26)

- Interest in the Holy Spirit lay dormant until the end of the 19th century, i.e., Azusa Street meetings.
- [the historical development of the Holy Spirit was covered in a previous lesson.]

The Deity of the Holy Spirit

I. References to the Holy Spirit are interchangeable with references to God.

A. Acts 5: Ananias and Sapphira; For Peter lying to the Holy Spirit and lying to God are the same.

B. 1 Cor. 3: 16-17 and 6:19-20 - For Paul, to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit is to be inhabited by God.

II. Holy Spirit and God possess same attributes

A. Omniscience: 1 Cor. 2:10-11 & Jn. 16:13

B. Eternal: Hebrews 9:14 compared with Hebrews 1:10-12

III. Holy Spirit performs works that are commonly ascribed to God

A. Creation: Gen. 1:2 we read the Spirit of God was brooding over the face of the waters.

B. Job 26:13 notes that the heavens were made fair by the Spirit of God.

C. Ps. 104:30

D. Regeneration: Rom. 8:11

E. God's Word: Paul (2 Tim. 3:16) and Peter (2 Peter 1:21) affirm use God and the Holy Spirit interchangeably in the transmission of God's Word.

IV. Association with the Father and the Son.

A. Matt. 28:19 - Great Commission

B. 2 Cor. 13:14 - Pauline benediction

- C. 1 Cor. 12 - Spiritual Gifts are coordinated among the Godhead.
- D. 1 Peter 1:2 - Roles in the process of salvation.

Holy Spirit's Personality

I. A person and not an impersonal force.

- A. Masculine: Jn. 16: 13-14: pneuma (the Greek word for spirit) is

neuter but Jesus describes the Holy Spirit with a masculine pronoun.

- B. Not a thing - Eph. 1:14: the use of “who”

C. If the Holy Spirit was just a force, a number of verses wouldn't make sense.²²⁸

- Luke 4:14 “Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee” would have to mean, “Jesus returned in the power of the power of God into Galilee”
- Acts 10:38 “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power,” would mean, “God anointed Jesus with the power of God and with power”
- Rom. 15: 13; 1 Cor. 2: 4

II. Holy Spirit work is associated with a person

- A. Jn. 14: 26; 15: 26; 16: 7 - parakletos

- B. Jesus is also spoken of as a Paraclete in 1 Jn. 2:1

- C. Jn. 14: 16 - the use of “another” parakletos. Jesus is saying that

when he leaves, “another of the same kind” will carry on the same role. The

²²⁸ Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, 108.

similarity in their function is an indication that the Holy Spirit, just like Jesus, must be a person.

D. Acts 15:28 - coordinating work between the Spirit and Christian leaders.

III. Glorifying another member of the Trinity.

A. Jn. 16:14

B. Jn. 17: 4

C. Groupings:

- Matt. 28: 19
- 2 Cor. 13:14
- Jude 20-21
- 1 Peter 1:2
- Acts 2: 33, 28
- Galatians 4:6
- 2 Cor. 1: 21-22
- Romans 15: 16
- 1 Cor. 12: 4-6
- Ephesians 3: 14-17
- 2 Thessalonians 2: 13-14
- Matt. 3: 16-17 - All the members of the Trinity were present in Jesus' baptism.

IV. Personal characteristics - intelligence, will, emotions, etc.

A. John 14: 26 - "...*teach* you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

B. 1 Cor. 12: 11 - "...the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, *just as he determines.*"

C. Ephesians 4:30 - Paul warns against *grieving* the Holy Spirit.

D. Acts 5: 3-4 - It's possible to lie to the Holy Spirit

E. 1 Thess. 5:19 - quenching the Holy Spirit.

V. Engages in moral actions and ministries: teaching, searching, regenerating, speaking, interceding, commanding, testifying, guiding, illuminating, revealing, etc.

A. Romans 8: 26 - prayers words can't express

B. John 16:8 - convicting

Implications of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

1. In a very real sense, we can have a personal relationship with God. The Holy Spirit is someone we can pray to.

2. The Holy Spirit is fully divine and must be accorded the same honor and respect we give to the Father and the Son.

3. The Holy Spirit's work is the expression and execution of what the three of them have planned together.

4. God is not far off — He has truly become Immanuel, "God with us."

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The Spirit of God could mean will, mind or activity of God. But there are signs in the Old Testament that point to the progressive revelation of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the New Testament. (Acts 2: 16-21)

VI. Creation - Gen. 1:2

VII. Prophecy and Scripture - Old Testament prophets testified that their speaking and writing were a result of the Spirit's coming upon them.

A. Ezekiel 2:2; 8:3; 11:1, 24

B. Balaam - Numbers 24:2

C. Saul - 1 Samuel 10:6, 10

VIII. Grant skills for various tasks

A. Bazalel - helped build the tabernacle (Ex. 31:3-5)

B. Zerubbabel - built the temple after the Babylonian captivity
(Zech. 4:6)

- C. Joseph received leadership and administrative skills from the Holy Spirit (Gen. 41:38)
- D. Moses needed assistance in leading the people of God (Numbers 11:25)
- E. Joshua's leadership skills appear to be related to the working of the Holy Spirit (Deut. 34: 9)
- F. Othniel - Judges 3:10
- G. Gideon - Judges 6:34
- H. Samson - Judges 14: 19

These are foreshadows of what is to come - Joel 2:28-29

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus

IX. Even in the beginning of God's incarnate existence we encounter the Holy Spirit's work: Lk. 1:35, Matt. 1: 18; 20.

X. John baptizes with water. Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

XI. The temptation of Jesus - Matthew 4, Luke 4 & Mark 1:12

A. Following the temptation "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside" (Lk. 4:14)

XII. Fulfillment of prophecy - Is. 61: 1-2

XIII. Teachings, miracles and exorcisms are done in the power of the Holy Spirit - Matt. 12: 25-32

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Christian

XIV. The beginning of the Christian life.

A. Conversion - Jn. 16:8-11

B. Regeneration - Jn. 3: 3, 5-6

XV. The continuation of the Christian life

A. Christians are expected to be doing “greater works” (John 14:

12). This is dependent upon both Jesus going away and the Holy Spirit’s coming

(Jn. 16: 7)

XVI. Indwelling of the Holy Spirit - John 14:16-17

XVII. Teacher - John 14: 16

XVIII. Intercessor - Romans 8: 26-27

XIX. Sanctification - continued transformation

The Gifts of the Spirit

6-8	Romans 12:	1 Cor. 12:4-	Ephesians	1 Peter 4:11
	11	11	4:11	
	prophecy	wisdom	apostles	speaking
	service	knowledge	prophets	service
	teaching	faith	evangelists	
	exhortation	healing	pastors and teachers	
	liberality	working of miracles		
	giving aid	prophecy		
	acts of mercy	ability to distinguish spirits		
		various tongues		
		interpretation of tongues		

Some observations:

- XX. No unified definition:
 - A. Ephesians 4: 11 appear to be offices in the church (God's gifts to the church)
 - B. Romans 12: 6-8 and 1 Pet. 4:11 appear to be functions performed in the church
 - C. 1 Cor. appear to be special abilities
- XXI. It's not clear when these gifts are given.
- XXII. Some gifts are expected in all believers (i.e., faith and service), but some are likely to have unusual abilities in those areas.
- XXIII. These are not comprehensive lists

Functions of the Gifts

- XXIV. They are for the edification of the whole body, not merely for the enjoyment or enrichment of the individual members possessing them (1 Cor. 12: 7; 14: 5, 12)
- XXV. No one person has all the gifts (12: 14-21), nor is any one of the gifts bestowed on all persons (12:28-30). That's why we need each other.
- XXVI. Although not equally striking or prominent, all gifts are important (12: 22-26)
- XXVII. The Holy Spirit apportions the various gifts to whom and as he wills (12:11)

Discovering and seeking spiritual gifts:

- Paul seems to assume believers will know what their spiritual gifts are. He simply tells them (Rom. 12: 6-8)

- Peter similarly tells his readers how to use their gifts; nothing about discovering them.
- seeking the higher gifts (1 Cor. 12:31)

Have some gifts ceased?

Does 1 Cor. 13: 8-13 tell us when miraculous gifts will cease?

Major premise: “When the perfect is come, the imperfect will pass away”

- meaning tongues will be unnecessary
- completion of Scripture
- when the church is mature

Problem:

- Testament to
- phrase “face to face” (verse 12) is used several times in the Old
- refer to seeing God personally. That only can happen when the Lord returns.
- Im
- “Now I know in part; then I shall know even as a I have been known.”
- returns
- plies imperfect ways of knowing.
- Reinforces the idea that love will last beyond the time when the Lord
- temporary
- (1 Cor. 13:8)
- It fits better with 1 Cor. 1: 7; suggests that Paul saw the gifts as a provision made to equip believers for ministry until the Lord returns.

Explanation of some of the gifts

Prophecy: telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind.

- Old Testament had prophets
- New Testament had apostles
- both meanings simply mean a “herald”

Teaching: the ability to explain Scripture and apply it to people’s lives.

- Scripture
- prophecies are always to be subject to the authoritative teaching of
- was
- Timothy was not told to prophecy Paul’s instructions in the church; he
- to teach them (1 Tim. 4:11; 6:2)
- The Thessalonians were not told to hold firm to the traditions that were “prophesied” to them but to the traditions that they were “taught” by Paul (2 Thess. 2:15)

Healing: a partial foretaste of the blessings that will be ours when Christ returns.

minis

- Purpose: (1) authenticate the Gospel, (2) God's mercy, (3) equips for try, (4) God's glory
- What about medicine? Gen. 1: 31; Ps. 24: 1
- Hezekiah's example: 2 Kings 10:7
- Methods: laying of hands and anointing with oil
- Should we pray for healing? Yes, (Matt. 6:13; 3 Jn. 2); Jesus frequently healed all who were brought to him.
- It's God's will.

Tongues and Interpretation: Speaking in tongues is prayer or praise spoken in syllables not understood by the speaker.

(Tower

- tongues must be understood through the lens of redemptive history of Babel)
- prayer and praise to God (1 Cor. 14:2)
- needs an interpreter or else the church is not edified.
- not ecstatic but self-controlled; there's order (1 Cor. 14: 27-28)
- not all speak in tongues.

IN-CLASS LECTURE SLIDES

The original slides are in a standard PowerPoint presentation. The exported version did not format well in Word, so I converted it to a movie for viewing and it can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVt0G1ZE7os&t=1s>

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