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The Exclusivity of the Christian Faith: A Case for Christ-Alone in a Culture of Relativism

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Abstract

The proposition of absolute and exclusive truth in a culture permeated by relativism is among the most important discussions of today. The answer to this dilemma is imperative. Relativism has not only taken captive secular society, it has infiltrated the thinking of many professing Christians. The traditional Christian message has always been one of exclusivity and Christ-alone. The challenge for the Christian Apologist in a culture of relativism is three-fold: Establish the existence of absolute and exclusive truth, nullify the arguments presented by relativism as unreasonable, illogical, and fallible, and to make a solid case for the unsurpassable uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. To accomplish this, steps must be taken within the local church to renew a culture of evangelistic apologetics. The exclusivity of Christ-alone and the Christian faith must be presented and established as the right and only alternative to the failed ideology of relativism.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

If one could point to the greatest deficit in society today it would be the deficit of truth. Truth can be thought of like a medicine, it may be bitter to the taste, but it will cure what ails a person. The taste for truth in society today, however, is one for which few have an acquired taste. In a culture that celebrates diversity, it also desires a diversity of truths. To say that truth is absolute is to speak a sort of postmodern blasphemy. Just the mere mention of an exclusive truth is often enough to get one shamed from the public square. Truth that is absolute is not acceptable. Only that which allows a diversity of truths is deemed appropriate and unbigoted. The notion of an exclusive truth does not allow for the ideology of the day that sees no one truth greater than the other. In fact, these numerous truths can co-exist and there need be no mention of the plethora of contradictions. In seeking to be accepting of all truths and ideologies, not preferring one over the other, society has created a culture of systematic contradictions. At some point, when the need for truth is demanded, these varying theories of truth will collide like two locomotives barreling towards one another on the same track.

Before one can even begin to argue the truthfulness and exclusivity of a particular worldview, a foundation must be laid for the absoluteness of truth before any other assertions can be made. Dr. Ravi Zacharias asks an important question, "Is the Truth Dead?"¹ The question is one that resonates both philosophically and theologically in the postmodern culture. The problem that truth currently faces is the idea of relativism, which could be ascribed almost religion-like status, being that its adherents preach its values as those who have been undeniably converted to the faith. Relativism admonishes the principles of all-inclusive truth. In other words, a premise or

¹ Ravi Zacharias, "Is the Truth Dead?" (Lecture, West Coast Conference, Seattle, June 15, 2018).

belief is true if the stated premise or held belief is true to the one who espouses it. For the relativist there is no absolute authority of truth. Even in the event that a relativist believes in a deity or higher power, it is unacceptable to assert that said higher power has a set of concrete truths for man to adhere to. The religious relativist will often, influenced by pluralism, assert that there are many paths and truths to reach God, suggesting that each path and or truth holds as much relevance and truthfulness as the other. For the relativist, truth is formed by every possible environmental and cultural dynamic other than a set of absolute morals and truth-claims based on an exclusive faith. One can suggest that relativism is the umbrella for which every possible worldview may fall under. The relativist is willing to accept one's beliefs as long as they are not claimed to be absolute and those beliefs are not imposed on another who believes differently. In essence, what is true for one is true for that individual; however, it may not be true for another. If postmodernism had an official theory of truth it would be that of relativism.

For one who holds an orthodox Biblical worldview the idea that multiple truths can co-exist is not reasonable; furthermore, one holding to Biblical truth asserts that Christ-alone and the Christian faith are the only way by which one can find truth. The exclusivity of Christ in a culture of relativism demands that the premise of absolute truth in and of itself be true. Dr. Zacharias made an important assertion when he stated that the truth is by its very nature exclusive.² If absolute truth exists, multiple truths cannot claim equality among truth-claims. Likewise, if Jesus' assertion found in John 14:6 that He alone is the way, the truth, and the life is true, then by His truth-claim all other possibilities are cancelled out. Jesus cannot simultaneously be both the way, the truth, and the life, and just one among many others. Jesus does not leave the possibility that He can be truth for one and not for another. Either Christ alone is true for all, or it

² Ravi Zacharias, "Jesus Among Other God Pt. 1" (Lecture, Yale University, Connecticut, March 15, 2019).

is true for none. The issue becomes establishing the exclusivity of the Christian faith and Christ-alone in a culture permeated by the religion of relativism. Faith in Christ-alone is not cohesive with a relativist mindset. Faith in Christ-alone is actually diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive to all other truth-claims, religions, and worldviews.

Statement of Purpose

In the present culture there is a great need for an apologetic case to be made for Christ-alone and the exclusivity of the Christian faith. The postmodern relativist culture only responds to an argument that is both reasonable and logical. While many aspects of faith certainly transcend the realm of empirical evidence, this does not mean that the case for faith in Christ-alone cannot be made with reason and logic. The truth-claims of Christianity, the unique features of the faith, and the historical evidence for resurrection of Christ make it the most reasonable, logical, and likely of all worldviews to be true absolutely.

The purpose of this thesis is multifold:

- 1) To establish the necessity of absolute and exclusive truth
- 2) To deconstruct the ideas of relativism as illogical
- 3) To build the case that Christ-alone and the exclusivity of the Christian faith is true for all

In order to build a case for an exclusive truth or worldview, the claims of relativism must be explored and deconstructed. Until it is shown that the assertions of relativism are not reasonable nor logical, it remains impossible to offer the alternative of absolute truth and exclusivity. The hope is that once the ideas of relativism are deconstructed one will be able to see that any theory

of truth that holds all claims to be equally valid and true is one that is filled with irreconcilable contradictions.

Once the assertions of relativism have been deconstructed, the hope is to establish the necessity for absolute truth. If truth is in and of itself exclusive, then the assertion that there is one true worldview also becomes true. Establishing the premise of absolute truth, however, is only the beginning of the battle. Once absolute truth is established, then the task of establishing which worldview is true becomes the mountain that must be climbed.

The greatest purpose of this thesis is to establish the case that Jesus Christ alone is the only truth in a culture that preaches relativism. Jesus declared Himself the only way, and if His claims are true, it is the hope that an effective apologetic argument can be made to bring revelation to the reader and glory to the name of Jesus. If successful, the argument that this thesis makes will at the very minimum cause the reader to contemplate the claims made herein; and at the most, it will reveal the way of truth and salvation.

Statement of Importance of the Problem

The issue at hand is of the utmost importance for several reasons. The subject matter is more than just an educational thesis, it has eternal implications. If Christ alone is the way, the truth, and the life, then the case for the exclusivity of the Christian faith is one that needs to be heard by all. If Christ alone is absolute, then all men must make a decision based on that hearing. It is the Christian's responsibility to give an answer to all who ask of things concerning hope and truth.

Furthermore, the case for Christ-alone and the exclusivity of the Christian faith is important for more than just the unbeliever. The influence of relativism has even begun to infiltrate the church. The Barna Research group released a poll surveying Christians who attend

religious services at a minimum of once monthly and the findings were concerning. Of those polled, 23% stated that what is morally right or wrong depends on what an individual believes.³ Furthermore, 15% of those polled asserted that if one's beliefs offend or hurt someone's feelings, it is wrong.⁴ In another study surveying Christian millennials, 47% of those polled stated it is at least somewhat wrong to share one's faith with someone of a different faith in order to convert them.⁵ If these studies just scratch the surface of postmodern Christendom, the ramifications are significant. The exclusivity of Christ and the Christian faith is foundational to the message of the Gospel. Jesus asserted He was the only, not one among many. It is understandable for those who do not espouse the Christian faith to give credence to the claims of relativism; however, it is concerning when those who profess Christ begin to believe that truth is relative and believe that sharing the message of Christ with the unconverted is wrong. It is important that the case for Christ-alone be made for both the unbeliever and the postmodern Christian.

Statement of Position

The position of this writer and thesis is that truth is absolute and that Jesus Christ, the incarnation of that truth, is the way, the truth, and the life. The contradictions of relativism are too difficult to overcome. It is impossible that multiple truths can, in fact, be true. The construction of a culture of systemic contradictions demand that truth be searched for and found. While the claims of relativism appease the desire of diversity and equality demanded by society, such claims do not fulfill the necessities of truth. Truth is exclusive and even offensive by nature. It is exclusive in that there can only be one truth among contradictory claims. Furthermore, truth

³ "Competing Worldviews Influence Today's Christians," Barna Group, Accessed June 19, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/competing-worldviews-influence-todays-christians/>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Almost Half of Practicing Christian Millennials Say Evangelism Is Wrong," Barna Group, accessed June 19, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/millennials-oppose-evangelism/>.

is offensive to the natural sensibilities of men who prefer comfort and appeasement over truth. If a man receives the bite of a poisonous snake, the only hope that man has is to receive an anti-venom that can overcome the effects of the venom. The first step is to acknowledge the truth that he has been bitten and that he needs a cure. While this is logical, the depravity of the human condition and soul are not viewed with the same logic by those who espouse relativism. For the relativist, even if they do acknowledge the depravity of the human condition, they believe there are many cures to the condition. The Biblical worldview acknowledges that man has been bitten by the serpent of sin and there are not many cures to this condition. The only cure for this condition is Christ alone. Christ is the anti-sin that can overcome the depravity of the human condition. To assert this premise is to claim that truth is absolute, and the truth has a name, Jesus.

Limitations/Delimitations

When it comes to the theory of relativism, there are some limitations when contrasting and comparing it with the Christian worldview. First, there is no concrete doctrine or statement of belief when it comes to relativism. As described earlier, relativism can be considered somewhat of an umbrella which nearly every worldview can fall under and claim equal and valid truth. However, one could assert that in its efforts to claim that there are no absolutes, relativism is making a claim for an absolute truth of no absolutes and inclusion. While the theory of relativism is quite broad, there are several core principles of the theory that can still be deconstructed. Namely, a few of the principles include: the non-existence of absolute truth, the source of truth, the application of truth, the existence and source of moral law, etc. The goal is to overcome the breadth of limitations by showing that just the core principles of relativism are inconsistent, illogical, unreasonable, and contradictory.

If there are any delimitations, or challenges to stay within the confines of the topic, it will be touching on the unique attributes of Christianity and Christ-alone without getting too deep and drifting off into other topics. Some of the topics that will be covered such as: transformative power, the purity of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, etc. could each be a lengthy thesis within themselves. Therefore, the challenge will be to keep the discussion within the confines of making a case for the exclusivity of Christianity and Christ-alone while addressing these unique building blocks. It is the belief of this author that Christianity alone has the best answers for some of the questions that will be raised in this writing. Likewise, the unique characteristics of this faith will cause it to stand alone in a category all to itself, with which no other worldview can match its authenticity. It may be thought of as the case between “All-Inclusive Relativism” vs. “Exclusive Faith in Christ Alone” as the source of truth and the answer for all mankind.

Chapter 2: Taxonomy on the Relationships between Christianity and other Religions

Before one can deconstruct the ideas of relativism and justify an exclusive stance concerning faith in Christ-alone, the epistemology and theories of knowledge must be examined, recognizing that such an evaluation deals not only with the justifiability of knowledge and truth, but also the scope thereof. Theories on knowledge and truth range from very narrow propositions that only one viewpoint or belief is true, to the possibility that numerous propositions are equally valid and true. Herein lies the challenge of not only establishing that there is an absolute truth, but of all the propositions, which one is most true, or completely true. Some theories of knowledge and truth allow for contradictions, which create systemic inconsistencies and inadequacies. Therefore, one must examine the full spectrum of theories before one can begin to deduct which is most likely to be true, which in turn, will lead one to a conclusion on the existence of absolute truth, with Christ-alone being that justified truth.

Exclusivism

The first theory of knowledge, which is most often associated with religious belief, is the proposition of Exclusivism. Ewere Nelson Atoi describes exclusivism as the position that one's own religious beliefs and traditions are true; therefore, any other traditions or beliefs that appear to be incompatible with one's own claims must be rejected as false.⁶ Exclusivism establishes that one belief system or religion is the essence and substance of universal truth and all other possibilities are to be excluded.⁷ In other words, there is a system of belief which claims to be absolute truth that not only supersedes all other beliefs, but makes all other possibilities and propositions impossible. Concerning religious exclusivism, Francis Jonbäck states, "A religious exclusivist concerning religious beliefs holds that there is at most one true religion and declares that, of two religious beliefs that contradict one another, either only one is true, or both are false – that is, both cannot be true."⁸ According to Jonbäck, when one is examining two belief systems, it is possible that one is true; however, under no circumstances does exclusivism allow for both to be true. It is within the realm of possibilities that both examined propositions could be false, meaning that there is still another to be examined that will prove to be true. When thinking of exclusivism in a religious context, the belief persists that all can be saved, but many will be lost because they have not believed in the one universal, absolute truth.⁹ Christianity and Islam are belief systems that have traditionally held a similar exclusivist viewpoint. It may also be noted that groups that hold strong exclusivist viewpoints tend to have minimal interreligious

⁶ Ewere Nelson Atoi, "The Epistemology of Truth-Claims in Global Multi-Religious Ambiance" (Studies in Interreligious Dialogue 28, no. 1 (2018): 129–47).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Francis Jonbäck, "Logical Religious Exclusivism and Truth" (Journal of Ecumenical Studies 48, no. 1 (Wint 2013): 121–24).

⁹ Daniel J. McCoy, Winfried Corduan, and Hendrik G. Stoker, "Christian and Buddhist Approaches to Religious Exclusivity: Do Interfaith Scholars Have It Right?" (Hervormde Teologiese Studies 72, no. 3 (2016): 1–8. doi:10.4102/hts.v72i3.3266).

contact with groups of differing beliefs.¹⁰ In fact, interreligious involvement is highly discouraged among groups holding exclusive beliefs, as each see the other as holding false and errant beliefs concerning truth. It will be this theory of truth on which the case of this work will be based.

Inclusivism

The idea of inclusivism stands in contrast to that of exclusivism. Where exclusivism allows no other possibility for truth other than the belief in which one holds, inclusivism on the other hand leaves open the possibility for other truths and beliefs to be accepted. However with this said, there are certainly varying degrees of inclusivism within the theory. The definition provided by Ewere Nelson Atoi for inclusivism states, “In the context of religious truth-claims means the elevating of one’s own religion to a privileged position among the world religious traditions but also provides for the possibility that other faiths could share some of the territory.”¹¹ In other words, some inclusivists, though accepting other beliefs as valid, still elevate their own to a place of superiority. There are also some who claim that those who identify as being religious exclusivists are in fact inclusivists.¹² This assertion is made on the claim that if one recognizes a truth-statement in another faith consistent with a statement within their own, that the person recognizes that truth also exists in other faiths, thereby, making them inclusivists. A prime example of this is the fact that both Christianity and Islam believe in the

¹⁰Stephen M. Merino, "Religious Diversity in a 'Christian Nation': The Effects of Theological Exclusivity and Interreligious Contact on the Acceptance of Religious Diversity" (*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49, no. 2 (June 2010): 231–46).

¹¹Ewere Nelson Atoi, "The Epistemology of Truth-Claims in Global Multi-Religious Ambiance" (*Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 28, no. 1 (2018): 129–47).

¹²Robert Boyd, "The Nature of Religious Truth" (*Perspectives in Religious Studies* 41, no. 1 (Spr 2014): 31–48).

virgin birth of Jesus.¹³ Therefore, one would say the Christian who acknowledges this is also acknowledging truth within Islam, which would make one an inclusivist. However, it should be noted that in this work, the idea of exclusivism refers to the full theology of salvation in Christ-alone. It is not of this writer's opinion that the acknowledgement that there are bits of truth sprinkled throughout other religious beliefs is enough to constitute an inclusivist stance. Furthermore, for some inclusion formulates into what can be called, "The Doctrine of Inclusion," the idea that all will be saved regardless of religious belief.¹⁴ This too can be broken down into varying ideas, with some believing one religious claim is true and will save everyone despite their religious beliefs, while others believe that all religious claims are equally true and lead to the same end. Some will suggest that all religions are valid and each contain pieces of a larger truth. Ryan Patrick McLaughlin suggests that the encounters Jonah, the Israelite Prophet, had with a group of pagan sailors and a Ninevite King reveal that these "religious others" had some mysterious relationship with YHWH.¹⁵ Despite what angle one takes on inclusivism, it is not consistent with the claim of salvation in Christ-alone and absolute truth. Inclusivism immediately falls to the law of non-contradiction, which inclusivism by its nature stands in contrast to. Multiple truth claims cannot all be true, even if one asserts that, of them all, one stands superior.

Non-Exclusivism

Non-exclusivism, while similar to inclusivism, differs in a few key points. While inclusivism allows for one's truth-claim to be superior to others, non-exclusivism rejects the

¹³ Robert Boyd, "The Nature of Religious Truth" (*Perspectives in Religious Studies* 41, no. 1 (Spr 2014): 31–48).

¹⁴ Daniel J. McCoy, Winfried Corduan, and Hendrik G. Stoker, "Christian and Buddhist Approaches to Religious Exclusivity: Do Interfaith Scholars Have It Right?" (*Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 72, no. 3 (2016): 1–8. doi:10.4102/hts.v72i3.3266).

¹⁵ Ryan Patrick McLaughlin, "Jonah and the Religious Other: An Exploration of Biblical Inclusivism" (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 48, no. 1 (Wint 2013): 71–84).

notion that a particular truth-claim or religious traditions can be superior to another.¹⁶ Non-exclusivism views religious beliefs as something to be held private, or at most, something that should be held only as a personal preference, not a superior truth.¹⁷ Non-exclusivists hold that due to the fact that every religious belief has reasonable people with integrity on every side of the debate, that religious beliefs should be held tentatively.¹⁸ As one can see, this theory of truth and religious belief still fails to answer a number of important questions. It avoids any rigorous examination of truth and religious belief that would lead to a conclusion that all cannot be equally valid. It avoids the areas of contradiction, leaving each to decided which belief best fits their preference. In other words, it is comfortable with the idea of no absolute truth, and if there is truth, it is impossible to know which is true because there are credible people on every side of the issue. This line of thinking is at the core of relativism, which will be discussed in much more detail momentarily.

Pluralism

On the road to relativism is the theory of pluralism. Pluralism, like other theories, seeks to find ways to validate many truth-claims. Ewere Nelson Atoi states, “The central idea of the pluralistic philosophy of religion is the validity and equality of all religious traditions. The pluralists are of the view that all religions are partial expressions of the same ultimate reality.”¹⁹ Pluralism essentially espouses that all religious beliefs lead to the same ultimate end. Furthermore, that all religious beliefs contain a portion of the truth. Therefore, none are superior to the other, and each are equally valid and capable of an equivalent salvation. Pluralists have

¹⁶ Ewere Nelson Atoi, "The Epistemology of Truth-Claims in Global Multi-Religious Ambiance" (Studies in Interreligious Dialogue 28, no. 1 (2018): 129–47).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

jettisoned the uniqueness of Christ and embraced the thinking that no one religion has the final word on truth.²⁰ For the pluralist, Christ is just one among many equals. Christ is seen in no more unique terms than historical religious figures like Muhammed and Buddha. While traditional Christianity and Islam remain steadfastly exclusivist, many modern philosophers see pluralism as one of the most important features of contemporary Western society.²¹ This ideology has even crept into some branches of nominal Christianity, much less so than within Islam. The pluralist sees exclusivism as authoritarian and oppressive to others; therefore, they prefer more of an overlapping consensus and areas of commonality when it comes to religious beliefs.²² To simplify pluralistic religious belief would be to say, "All paths will save."²³ In "The Varieties of Religious Experience," pluralist thinker William James articulates, "Is the existence of so many religious types and sects and creeds regrettable? I answer 'no' emphatically. No two of us have identical difficulties, nor should we be expected to work out identical solutions. The divine can mean no single quality, it must mean a group of qualities, by being champions of which in alternation, different men may all find worthy missions. Each attitude being a syllable in human nature's total message, it takes the whole of us to spell the meaning out completely."²⁴ In other words, truth and concrete solutions are a culmination of all expressed beliefs, coming together to find consensus and common ground. There seems within the pluralist mindset to be little concern for areas of contradiction. Instead of focusing on areas that are in direct opposition, these

²⁰ Mark L. Y. Chan, "Sowing Subversion in the Field of Relativism," *Christianity Today* 54, no. 2 (February 2010): 44–47.

²¹ Peter Jonkers, "Redefining Religious Truth as a Challenge for Philosophy of Religion" (*European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 4, no. 4 (Wint 2012): 139–59).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Daniel J. McCoy, Winfried Corduan, and Hendrik G. Stoker, "Christian and Buddhist Approaches to Religious Exclusivity: Do Interfaith Scholars Have It Right?" (*Hervormde Theologische Studies* 72, no. 3 (2016): 1–8. doi:10.4102/hts.v72i3.3266).

²⁴ Ulf Zackariasson, "Pragmatic Pluralisms and Religious Diversities: Toward Diapractice" (*American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 40, no. 1 (January 2019): 20–35).

conflicts are overlooked and common ground is the highest priority, not the discerning of absolute truth. One could say pluralists see truth as fractured, with each party holding a piece of the puzzle. Dr. Ravi Zacharias stated, “Pluralization is a great idea when it comes to food, people, ideas, etc., but not properly understood can lead to relativism.”²⁵

Relativism

At this point the introduction to relativism will be brief, as it will be discussed in greater depth momentarily. However, when outlining the theories of truth, it is imperative to introduce relativism as it will serve as the competitive argument for the case in Christ-alone to be made. Relativism is a widely accepted theory in contemporary Western society. While some will argue a shift is beginning away from pure relativism, one can assert that its ideology permeates postmodern thinking. On relativism Atoi states:

Relativism on the other hand, is a concept that has risen among scholars in recent times. The central idea in this approach is that each faith tradition should remain committed to the truth of its own religious teachings while at the same time agreeing with some of the central concerns raised by pluralism. In other words, relativism is the view that all beliefs are proportionate to particular circumstances. No belief can claim to be universally valid, because there are no generally agreed standards for ascertaining truth. Only transitory and localized consensus is a claim to knowledge about a reality open to examination.²⁶

Essentially, relativism encourages one to believe what they feel best suits their circumstances while agreeing that no belief is universally valid. Relativism asserts that there is no standard of absolute truth, so truth is relegated to personal preference and circumstance. Only where there is wide overlapping consensus can one assume there is anything plausibly close to truth. This type of postmodern thinking is what leads to a moral relativism where judging between right and

²⁵Ravi Zacharias, "Is the Truth Dead?" (Lecture, West Coast Conference, Seattle, June 15, 2018).

²⁶Ewere Nelson Atoi, "The Epistemology of Truth-Claims in Global Multi-Religious Ambiance" (Studies in Interreligious Dialogue 28, no. 1 (2018): 129–47).

wrong is a matter of private interpretation.²⁷ As previously stated, Barna Research Group found that 23% of those polled who attend church service at least once a month believe that what is morally right or wrong depends on an individual's beliefs.²⁸ Moral relativism is not something relegated to secular society and thinking, its dangerous ideology had infiltrated the postmodern church at a troubling level. To simplify relativism one could say of it, "All beliefs are safe."²⁹ In discussing the conflicts of knowledge and truth that relativism presents, authors Daniel McCoy, Winfried Corduan, and Hendrik Stoker assert, "The way out of that obstacle is to erase and redraw the boundaries once again, this time eschewing the search for any kind of transcendent Truth whatsoever. The solution to pursuing a particular (even if unknown) metaphysics is to see all metaphysics as created equal, with emphasis on the word created with the meaning of 'contrived'."³⁰ The big problem with this relativism is that not only is metaphysical truth not accessible, it does not even exist.³¹ This theory of knowledge is to the far extreme of many of the others, which at least acknowledge some level of truth, even if it is dispersed among many truth-claims. Relativism seems content with truth merely being a creation of one's own preference with no search for anything of absolute and concrete value.

Chapter 3: An Argument for Absolute Truth

Before one can make an argument for a truth-claim, such as salvation in Christ-alone, there must be a solid foundation laid for truth. There was a time where there was more of a general consensus that absolute truth did exist. In that time, one could begin their argument from

²⁷ Mark L. Y. Chan, "Sowing Subversion in the Field of Relativism," *Christianity Today* 54, no. 2 (February 2010): 44–47.

²⁸ "Competing Worldviews Influence Today's Christians," Barna Group, Accessed June 19, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/competing-worldviews-influence-todays-christians/>.

²⁹ Daniel J. McCoy, Winfried Corduan, and Hendrik G. Stoker, "Christian and Buddhist Approaches to Religious Exclusivity: Do Interfaith Scholars Have It Right?" (*Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 72, no. 3 (2016): 1–8. doi:10.4102/hts.v72i3.3266).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

a presuppositionalist position, arguing from a position of establishing which worldview and faith was true. The Bible was a starting point in an argument for faith in Christ. Not so much anymore, as many do not see the Bible as authoritative. With the infiltration of relativism, there is not only a lack of consensus on what is true, there is contention over if any truth exists. Now, in order to arrive at an effective argument for the exclusivity of Christianity, one must first establish that absolute truth does exist and that it is knowable. The postmodern apologist must be able to argue outside of a presuppositionalist position, effectively establishing an argument for truth based on logic, rationale, and general revelation.

Does Truth Exist?

For thousands of years the world's most brilliant minds have questioned the existence of truth. The desire to know truth, if it exists, has been the pursuit of every generation. Some have pointed to the fact, recorded in John 18:38, that even Pontius Pilate asked Jesus the question, "What is truth?"³² Dr. Ravi Zacharias asserted that Pilate asked this question without waiting for an answer.³³ One must ponder what the response of Jesus would have been had Pilate allowed Jesus to respond to such an important question. It is even more ironic that Pilate questions Jesus about what is true when Jesus Himself asserted that He was the truth (John 14:6). What Pilate could not see was that the truth was standing before him in the form of man. This revelation is indicative of many today, who question truth even if the truth seems to be evident before their eyes.

Truth is often missed due to the fact that many look to the wrong source for truth. Since the beginning of time, man has been cultivating culture; and sadly, that culture has been

³² Tony Lee Richie, "Approaching the Problem of Religious Truth in a Pluralistic World: A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution" (Journal of Ecumenical Studies 43, no. 3 (Sum 2008): 351–69).

³³ Ravi Zacharias, "On the Uniqueness of Jesus," (Address, Keswick Convention, United Kingdom, November 20, 2014).

complicated by sin.³⁴ Culture often becomes the cultivator of truth, leading people to express truth-claims through the prevalent opinions of society, rather than the discovery of universal absoluteness. Truth in many societies essentially becomes the expression of popularity. If something is proclaimed enough to be true, many will repeat the stated claim regardless of what obvious factors contradict it. So rather than culture looking for the source of truth, it declares itself the authority on all truth. This imposter of truth is both fluid and frail, shifting with the winds of popularity and political correctness. Popular culture will encourage one to find their own truth, as long as it does not contradict popular thought. For many, this means one can make truth-claims on their experiences, as long as they make no truth-claims concerning the superiority of a religion. Author Olof Franck asserts that young people should be encouraged to find their own paths by searching for answers to questions based on their own experiences.³⁵ Franck also states that religious truth-claims should be the object of critical analysis.³⁶ The Christian apologist should hold no objection to this, except for the condition that the end goal is to reach absolute truth, not preferences based on personal experience. Critical analysis, even of religious truth-claims, are not only encouraged, but necessary. However, many begin the search for truth by preliminarily ruling out the possibility that truth can be found within the realm of religion. Authors like Brian Zamulinski suggest that religious truth-claims do not accurately represent the world and that religion allows people to create an unobservable, supernatural realm where moral injustice is made right in an attempt to satisfy their human longing for a more

³⁴Robert Rosin, "Christians and Culture: Finding Place in Clio's Mansions" (Concordia Journal 45, no. 2 (Spr 2019): 21–45).

³⁵Olof Franck, "Critical Religious Education: Highlighting Religious Truth Claims in Non-Confessional Educational Contexts" (British Journal of Religious Education 37, no. 3 (September 2015): 225–39).

³⁶ Ibid.

perfect set of affairs.³⁷ Despite the encouragement for individuals to search for their own truth, it fails in challenging the seeker to determine if absolute, universal truth exists.

So the conversation must be moved to a new goal, does absolute, universal truth exist, and is it knowable? This moves truth beyond the cultivated values of an individual culture and personal truth based on earthly experiences, and moves it into a realm that transcends both time and culture. If absolute, universal truth exists, it does so outside of the confines of human cultivation. It would mean truth is something to be discovered instead of something to be created and or agreed upon based on social contracts and popularity.

One could start at the point that absolute and universal truth, though not always convenient, is logical and reasonable. Likewise, said truth must have an authoritative source. The apologist must build on the foundation of these two principles; first that there is a source of truth, and second that absolute truth proceeds universally from that source. Being that truth demands reason, the source of truth would logically be a supreme being that is capable of declaring truth. For these reasons, Dr. Zacharias states that man has always questioned the reality of a sovereign power in the universe because reason demands cause and purpose.³⁸ Taking that a step further, one could suggest that the seeming existence of truth-claims and “oughtness” that have transcended time, culture, and generations likewise demand an origin and source. For example, many cultures spanning time and space have agreed that it is generally wrong to steal and to kill. These cultures, with no possible communication, have held a number of the same standards, along with retribution and punishment for violating said standards. This demonstrates that these truth-claims of what is morally acceptable transcend time and space. If this is so, these standards

³⁷ Michael Scott, "Do Religious Beliefs Aim at the Truth?" (Religious Studies 41, no. 2 (June 2005):217–24).

³⁸Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale, *Jesus Among Secular Gods: The Countercultural Claims of Christ* (New York , NY: Hachette Book Group, Inc., 2017).

of truth and morality were not a creation of each individual culture, but existed outside of it. Following this logically, one could state that God gave man the source and necessity of moral reasoning and truth.³⁹ Reason also demands that the question of truth be followed by the question of relevance, and that relevance be checked by truth.⁴⁰ Therefore, reason necessitates that a standard of truth exists, that there is a logical, reasonable, and intelligent source of stated truth, that truth exists outside of the realm of human creation and social contracts, and that truth is relevant. All of the stated propositions speak to the likelihood that an absolute, universal truth exists.

One could suggest that those who make an argument that no concrete truth exists, are in actuality making an argument based on the assertion of truth. As Dr. Zacharias stated, “We all make exclusive truth claims, even if our truth claim is that we should not make truth claims.”⁴¹ Any assertion of an absolute, even based on personal preference, is an appeal to the case that truth exists, and it is knowable. The issue with making truth-claims in a relativistic culture is that society often lacks basic definitions concerning standards, morals, and institutions, thereby, causing a loss of sensing what “is” or what “ought” to be.⁴² However, the burden of establishing the existence of truth in a truth-fluid or relativistic world is not in establishing the existence of multiple truth-claims and examples, but in showing that in at least one truth-claim or statement that there is a concrete example of what “is” or “ought” to be. If truth can be proven to exist in one claim, then it is reasonable and logical to believe that truth can and does exist outside of personal preference and experience, and that it exists in an unchanging condition. For example,

³⁹Ravi Zacharias, "Jesus Among Other God Pt. 1" (Lecture, Yale University, Connecticut, March 15, 2019).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale, *Jesus Among Secular Gods: The Countercultural Claims of Christ* (New York, NY: Hachette Book Group, Inc., 2017).

⁴² Ravi Zacharias, "What Makes Jesus Different?" (Interview, 100 Huntley Street, November 20, 2017).

“the earth is round” is a truth-claim that is now known to be fact. One’s personal belief and or personal experience does not change that truth. If one can establish the truth claim that the world is round, this truth-claim alone establishes that truth does exist, is knowable, and unchanging despite personal belief.

Is Truth Absolute?

The existence and nature of truth demands the absoluteness of truth. Traditional Catholic Apologists believed that truth is objective, exclusive, and absolute.⁴³ Despite what a relativist culture may claim, as Dr. Zacharias asserts, “We all have absolutes.”⁴⁴ If pressed, every individual will have propositions that they hold to be absolutely true. Even the argument that no truth exists, is and of itself, an argument for truth.⁴⁵ To say that no absolute truth exists is to argue that at least one absolute and definitive truth exists. If one exists, then reason would lead one to believe that other absolutes exists as well. Deep down every individual knows that absolute truth exists. Truth is often dismissed because to acknowledge such a claim may be offensive to some, or may challenge one’s personal preferences. Therefore, the postmodern relativist replaces the existence of absolutes with preferential beliefs. Personal beliefs become the arbiter of truth, the declaration of, “true for me.” However, truth relies on definitive statements that transcend personal belief. In actuality, personal belief has no bearing on truth. Belief does not make something true or false.⁴⁶ For instance, one can believe that gravity does not exist. However, the belief that gravity does not exist does not have any impact on the actual existence of gravity. This same concept applies to truth, and even the existence of God. Belief

⁴³ Glen B. Siniscalchi, “Postmodernism and the Need for Rational Apologetics in a Post-Conciliar Church,” (Heythrop Journal 52, no. 5 (September 2011): 751–71).

⁴⁴ Ravi Zacharias, “Is the Truth Dead?” (Lecture, West Coast Conference, Seattle, June 15, 2018).

⁴⁵ Greg Koukl, “Is Truth Relative?” (Lecture, Thrive Apologetics Conference 2013, Granite Bay, March 5, 2013).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

does not make the existence of truth, and or God, true or false. The existence of both absolute truth and God stand-alone from belief.

One of the greatest arguments for objective and absolute truth is the notion of First Principles of Knowledge.⁴⁷ First Principles of Knowledge consist of three main laws: the Law of Identity, the Law of the Excluded Middle, and the Law of Non-Contradiction.⁴⁸ The Law of Identity simply asserts that each thing is identical with itself. In other words, an object or thing will always be itself and cannot be simultaneously something that it is not. For example, a dog will always be a dog, and it can never be a cat, despite what one believes about it. The Law of the Excluded Middle proposes that for any proposition, either it is true or its negation is true. In other words, there is no fluidity, or middle ground, between a proposition and its negation. Lastly, and of extreme importance, the Law of Non-Contradiction asserts that contradicting propositions cannot both be true. In other words, either one is true, or both or false. It is the First Principles of Knowledge that postmodern relativist vehemently resist.⁴⁹ In just taking the Law of Non-contradiction alone, it becomes clear that two opposing religious views cannot both be true. It is true that both could be false; however, it dismantles the idea that opposing religious views are equally valid and equally true. The Law of Non-contradiction requires that one truth-claim stand alone, and that all contradicting truth-claims are false. The issue then becomes, if contradicting truth-claims and propositions cannot both be true, then which is true? Once it is established that truth does exist in an objective and absolute form, then the work of the philosophy of religion can begin with the goals of discovering the essence of religion,

⁴⁷ Glen B. Siniscalchi, "Postmodernism and the Need for Rational Apologetics in a Post-Conciliar Church," (Heythrop Journal 52, no. 5 (September 2011): 751–71).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

determining which of the competing religions is true, and evaluating if religious belief and behavior is rational.⁵⁰

The Exclusivity of Truth

A key component of truth is that not only is it absolute, but it is also exclusive. For something to be exclusive simply means that it does not allow for or admit any other possibilities. This makes logical and rational sense. Dr. Ravi Zacharias asserted that truth by its very nature is exclusive.⁵¹ Therefore, if one removes exclusivity from the makeup of truth, it ceases to be truth. Once again, the Law of Non-Contradiction is at play here. The moment one claims that two contradicting propositions can both be true, or “true for the individual,” the element of exclusivity is removed, which in turn makes the claim of truth null and void. Taking a previous example that the earth is round, which is a known fact, this truth-claim is exclusive. Meaning, if it is true the earth is round, then there are no other admissible possibilities. Despite what one may believe, or on claimed experience, the earth can never be anything but round. It is not possible that the earth is both round and flat. The truth that the earth is round is exclusive. If truth exists, and it can be proven absolute in any example, then it must naturally follow that truth is also exclusive.

The issue with exclusivity of truth is not so much a metaphysical or philosophical one in today’s culture, it is more of an emotional one. The idea of exclusivity is appalling to the relativist who sees value in inclusion and pluralism. In an effort to be non-offensive, it becomes morally acceptable to validate everyone’s beliefs and feelings, despite the fact that major contradictions exist. “True for” is much easier for the postmodern appetite to digest than is

⁵⁰ Ireneusz Ziemiński, "Philosophy of Religion as a Way to Skepticism" (European Journal for Philosophy of Religion 10, no. 1 (Spr 2018): 53–65).

⁵¹ Ravi Zacharias, "Jesus Among Other God Pt. 1" (Lecture, Yale University, Connecticut, March 15, 2019).

“absolute, exclusive truth.” Truth in its purest form often appeals to the human taste as a bitter medicine. Rather than take the cure, the relativist would rather ease the symptoms so that all can feel equally right and validated. Dr. Zacharias wrote, “Others question the intellectual soundness of Christian faith not because they see faith as blind, but because affirming one worldview to the exclusion of others is taken to be arrogant.”⁵² Those who make a claim for truth are often demonized and seen as bigoted, arrogant, and hateful. This is especially true for those who claim religious superiority and exclusivity. No faith encounters more attacks from the politically correct relativist than does Christianity. To claim that Jesus is unique and the exclusive way to salvation in postmodern culture is to invite an onslaught of vicious attacks and repudiation. Postmodern culture has no room for exclusivism, even if that means openly accepting systematic contradictions. However, cultural acceptance does not change the DNA of truth, and exclusivity is part of truth’s identity and nature.

Chapter 4: Relativism

In coming to understand relativism, one must understand the circumstances and contributing factors that have given birth to this philosophical doctrine. The traditional concept that truth is absolute, objective, and universal is something that has undergone radical reinterpretation in the West.⁵³ Truth is no longer seen as a goal worthy to be pursued or discovered, it is rather something determined by the individual.⁵⁴ Author Glenn B. Siniscalchi states that postmodern truth is considered something that is, “...inseparable from politics, culture, psychology, biology, race, and gender.”⁵⁵ The culture of relativism is a place where

⁵²Ravi Zacharias, "Jesus Among Other God Pt. 1" (Lecture, Yale University, Connecticut, March 15, 2019).

⁵³ Glen B. Siniscalchi, “Postmodernism and the Need for Rational Apologetics in a Post-Conciliar Church,” (Heythrop Journal 52, no. 5 (September 2011): 751–71).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

nearly everything, from moral truth to the definition of terms, lacks stability. Siniscalchi asserts that in this culture even human nature lacks stable meaning.⁵⁶ Concerning relativism, Professor Allan Bloom states:

There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. If this belief is put to the test, one can count on the students' reaction: they will be uncomprehending. ... The danger they have been taught to fear from absolutism is not error but intolerance. Relativism is necessary to openness; and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to inculcating. Openness - and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth and various ways of life and kinds of human beings - is the great insight of our times.⁵⁷

The ideas of tolerance and openness have been so stretched in their meaning that they have been construed to oppose the existence of truth, rather than having a healthy dialogue and debate concerning truth. The postmodern culture is one that at its core is easily offended and non-confrontational.⁵⁸ One could say that truth has been sacrificed on the altar of tolerance and inclusion. Relativism has become the religion of those who detest the notion of religion. In this setting, one must not confuse the terms religion and spiritualism. Relativism allows for the idea of spiritualism as long as there is no claim of religious superiority. In essence, individuals can claim they are spiritual, but not religious.⁵⁹ The claim of being spiritual but not religious is a very open term, leading to a number of possible meanings without having to adhere to any absolute or concrete doctrine or belief. One that claims to be spiritual can worship nature, they can believe in some form of universal energy, they can claim belief in a deity or many deities, or they can

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Glen B. Siniscalchi, "Postmodernism and the Need for Rational Apologetics in a Post-Conciliar Church," (Heythrop Journal 52, no. 5 (September 2011): 751-71).

⁵⁸ Voddie Baucham, "Doing Apologetics in an Anti-Apologetics Age," (Lecture, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, January 20, 2016).

⁵⁹ John J. Thatamanil, "True to and True For': The Problem and Promise of Religious Truth for a Theology without Walls" (Journal of Ecumenical Studies 51, no. 4 (Fall 2016): 450-63).

believe in nothing outside of themselves. The term “spiritual” fits nicely into the vocabulary of the relativist because it allows one a sense of individual spirituality without conferring that belief as a truth on anyone else. Dr. Voddie Baucham asserts that faith has become simply what one feels, or Mysticism.⁶⁰ When feelings become the foundation of truth claims and faith, the idea of absolutism and exclusivity are immediately dismissed. Tolerance and non-confrontation at all costs easily becomes a vacuum where relativism fills the void. As stated by Dr. Greg Koukl, “Relative = Tolerant.”⁶¹

What is Relativism?

Much has been referenced to relativism thus far, but what exactly is relativism more accurately defined? Relativism is the end result of a number of epistemological discussions that took place during the Enlightenment among scholars such as Rene Descartes, John Locke and Immanuel Kant.⁶² In part, they were reacting to Aristotle’s metaphysics and logic.⁶³ With such a foundation one can see how relativism has become so ingrained into Western thought and philosophy. Defined by author Nico Grönium, “Relativism, roughly put, is the view that truth and falsity, right and wrong, standards of reasoning, and procedures of justification are products of differing conventions and frameworks of assessment and that their authority is confined to the context giving rise to them.”⁶⁴ In very simplistic terms, Dr. Greg Koukl lays out some attributes of relativism. First, Dr. Koukl asserts that in relativism there are little “t” truths that relative to

⁶⁰Voddie Baucham, "Doing Apologetics in an Anti-Apologetics Age," (Lecture, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, January 20, 2016).

⁶¹Greg Koukl, "Is Truth Relative?" (Lecture, Thrive Apologetics Conference 2013, Granite Bay, March 5, 2013).

⁶²Nico Grönium, "Four Different Views of Scientific Knowledge and the Birth of Modern Churches in a Western World" (Hervormde Teologiese Studies 74, no. 4 (2018): 1–9).

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

the belief of the individual; however, there are no big “T” truths that exist and apply to all.⁶⁵ Second, Koukl states that for the relativist truth is subjective.⁶⁶ This once again leaves all truth and value to the discretion of the individual. Third, relativism creates an end-around to all arguments.⁶⁷ In other words, relativism allows the relativist to skirt the actual problem without dealing with it directly. No answer or rebuttal needs be given for a truth claim when all truth is relative to the individual. One can say relativism is best summed up by a quote from a former Harvard student, Rebecca Baer Porteous, captured by author Kelly Monroe Kullberg, “The freedom of our day is the freedom to devote ourselves to any values we please, on the mere condition that we do not believe them to be true.”⁶⁸

Dr. Ravi Zacharias points to several detrimental ramifications of relativism. First, when all choices are made valid, man loses his sense of what nature meant for nourishment and what was meant for garbage.⁶⁹ Society no longer sees what is essentially good and bad, or right and wrong; rather, the relativist society only sees what is preferable to the individual. Likewise, shame is removed.⁷⁰ The stigma of wrong is removed because the relativist can claim that wrong, or what the Christian calls sin, is relative to the individual. Therefore, what one calls wrong is actually right for another. In a relativist society all value is reduced to the preference of an individual person, culture, or age.⁷¹ For example, the life of an unborn baby in the womb of a mother may hold a different value for the relativist. In order to legitimize the abortion of an

⁶⁵ Greg Koukl, "Is Truth Relative?" (Lecture, Thrive Apologetics Conference 2013, Granite Bay, March 5, 2013).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Greg Koukl, "Is Truth Relative?" (Lecture, Thrive Apologetics Conference 2013, Granite Bay, March 5, 2013).

⁶⁸ Kelly Monroe Kullberg, ed., *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 17.

⁶⁹ Ravi Zacharias, "Is the Truth Dead?" (Lecture, West Coast Conference, Seattle, June 15, 2018).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale, *Jesus Among Secular Gods: The Countercultural Claims of Christ* (New York, NY: Hachette Book Group, Inc., 2017).

unborn baby, individuals in society reduce the value of the unborn to something less than a viable human, making something like the rightness or wrongness of abortion a relative proposition. Dr. Zacharias sums up relativism by secularization as, "...the process by which religious ideas, institutions, and interpretations have lost their social significance."⁷²

As one can see, relativism bleeds into every aspect of life and humanity for the relativist. Though its tentacles are far-reaching, relativism is as illogical as it is broad. Relativism is at its very core self-defeating, for by saying that all truth is relative is to engage in a contradiction.⁷³ As previously mentioned, this leads to a society filled with systemic contradictions. These contradictions make for interesting irony. As stated by author Ted Olsen, society today is in an era of constant moral indignation, often referred to as modern outrage culture.⁷⁴ There is much irony in a culture that praises relative truth while being indigent over the beliefs of others who they believe are wrong in opposing "cultural truth claims." For instance, the belief that marriage should be between a man and woman alone is seen as wrong and bigoted by a culture that asserts that truth is relative. To take such a stance is to actually make an argument for truth, for right and wrong. As stated by Dr. Greg Koukl, "Relativism is obviously false."⁷⁵

The Umbrella of Relativism

One can think of relativism as an umbrella under which all beliefs and worldviews can exist, granted that none claim superiority or absoluteness. Relativism allows for all truth claims to be accepted even if it means that all views are contradictory. One can believe in monotheism,

⁷²Ravi Zacharias, "Is the Truth Dead?" (Lecture, West Coast Conference, Seattle, June 15, 2018).

⁷³ Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale, *Jesus Among Secular Gods: The Countercultural Claims of Christ* (New York, NY: Hachette Book Group, Inc., 2017).

⁷⁴ Ted Olsen, "DIFFERENTLY MORAL: What New Studies Reveal about Outrage, Relativism, and Christian Witness," *Christianity Today* 61, no. 3 (April 2017): 23–24.

⁷⁵ Greg Koukl, "Is Truth Relative?" (Lecture, Thrive Apologetics Conference 2013, Granite Bay, March 5, 2013).

pluralism, humanism, atheism, etc. and find a place under the covering of relativism. Relativism is the natural destination for a philosophy that seeks to validate all truth claims, with the primary goal of inclusion and offending none. The umbrella of relativism allows for individual truths, without necessitating any defense for said beliefs. A shared and common truth is not a goal worthy of pursuit for the relativist. In fact, relativist often do not even share the same common points of reference within their own philosophical thinking. As stated by Dr. Zacharias, “Atheist and secularist in the United States want to redefine marriage, while their counterparts in Russia and China want nothing to do with the redefinition. Both have their own reasons, but there is no common point of reference. This is the foundation of naturalism and relativist thinking, ‘Each person is a law unto himself.’”⁷⁶ Under the umbrella of relativism none are wrong; however, none are right either, except in subjective, relative terms which apply individually. To the relativist this does not matter as long as a covering exists where all claims are considered equal. However, one could say the relativist believes this in theory, but not in practice. For even the most diehard relativists will reject the validity of certain beliefs and truth claims which they see as violating their preferences or the accepted stances of politically-correct culture. This, however, does not change the real challenge that Christian exclusivity faces in a society inundated by relativistic philosophy.

Chapter 5: A Case for the Unsurpassable Uniqueness of Christ

Once the existence of absolute truth has been established, the focus must then turn to which truth claim is most likely to be true based on sound reason, rationale, and evidence. It must also be understood that this truth claim must be exclusive, as it would not be true at all if it allowed for contradictory claims to be equally valid. Upon this reasoning, one can turn to Christ

⁷⁶Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale, *Jesus Among Secular Gods: The Countercultural Claims of Christ* (New York, NY: Hachette Book Group, Inc., 2017).

and make a valid and sound argument for the exclusivity of Christianity and faith in Christ-alone. In fact, an examination of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith reveals that the claims made by Jesus, His followers, and the Biblical writers leave no possibility for Christ to co-exist within the realms of relativism and pluralism. The claims made by Christ, and about Christ, are so exclusive, that they are either completely true, or completely false. There is no middle ground when it comes to who Jesus is and exclusivity of the Christian faith.

In order to lay the foundation for Christ alone, one must examine how the sources and history present Jesus. To study the Bible and the followers of Christ throughout time, it would be impossible to separate the claim that Jesus was the divine Son of God from His identity. One could say that viewing Jesus as merely a historical figure, separating Him from all claims of divinity, is a fairly modern approach. From the time of Christ, He has been inseparable from the claims that He was the Messiah. Now whether one believes He is or not is another story; however, the claims made about Christ are so absolute, one would be hard pressed to accept a Jesus where said claims were not ingrained into His identity. Author Carl E. Braaten sums it up best when he states:

The texts and traditions that tell us about Jesus of Nazareth represent him as the expected Messiah of Israel, God's only Son, the Lord of creation, and the Savior of all humanity. We have no non-Christological picture of the historical Jesus. Every recollection of his identity is penetrated by an identification that raises his significance to the highest possible power. If one should wish to subtract all the special titles of identification, one is not left with the identity of Jesus who is really Jesus.⁷⁷

Braaten goes on to say that the heritage of Christian exclusiveness runs deep into the New Testament and dominates Christian tradition from the time of Christ until the present.⁷⁸ Referring

⁷⁷ Carl E. Braaten, "Who Do We Say That He Is: On the Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ," (Missiology 8, no. 1 (January 1980): 13–30).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

to scripture Braaten asserts, "Acts 4:12 is the classical locus of this Christological exclusiveness: 'And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'"⁷⁹

As one can see, it is impossible to accept Jesus without the claims of His divinity. If one seeks to separate Christ from these claims, they end up with someone or something completely different than the sources, tradition, and history proclaim Him to be. This also means that to place faith in Christ one must accept a position of exclusivity, for in no way does the claimed identity of Christ allow for valid and equal alternatives. The proposition of faith in Christ is an "all or none" concept.

The Exclusive Claims of Christ

The claims of exclusivity concerning Christ are not just assertions by those who followed Christ, history, and tradition. Jesus Himself made clear His identity and who He believed Himself to be. While one must examine and evaluate the claims of Christ and what makes Him unique and exclusive, it must be noted that Jesus was clear on who He claimed to be. Jesus was sure to leave no doubt about His divinity. On a number of occasions, as record in John 10:30, Jesus asserts, "I and the Father are one." This claim to be one with the Father and divine infuriated the religious order of Jesus' day. The claim that Jesus was divine and the Son of God was not something that others suggested and Jesus took on as a result; rather, Jesus established with conviction His identity and purpose. Jesus was likewise concerned with his disciples and followers knowing His true identity. All three writers of the synoptic gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke, record Jesus' dialogue with His disciples about the perception of His identity. This

⁷⁹ Carl E. Braaten, "Who Do We Say That He Is: On the Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ," (Missiology 8, no. 1 (January 1980): 13–30).

event is recorded in Matthew 16, Mark 8, and Luke 9. Jesus begins by asking His disciples, “Who do men say that I am?” To this question Jesus received numerous responses. Some believed Jesus was a prophet returned from the past, while some even suggested He was John the Baptist returned from the dead. However, Jesus was more concerned with who His disciples said that He was. When asked who they believed Jesus was, it was Peter who spoke up and asserted, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Jesus proclaimed that flesh and blood had not revealed this to Peter, but that this revelation had come from the Father in Heaven. It was evident in this moment that Jesus wanted His disciples to have no doubt about who He was and who sent Him. Jesus was declaring that He was not one among many; but rather, He was the one sent from God the Father. Recorded in Matthew 24:5, Jesus asserts that many false messiahs will come in His name, and not to be deceived. Such a claim from Christ Himself does not allow Him to fit into the mold of relativism. Either the claims of Christ are true and exclusive, or not true at all. Many, who often claim to be Christian, try to make Jesus one among equals; however, to do so means they do not fully know or understand His claims. As Dr. Zacharias asserts, “The average person does not know who Jesus is and what He actually said. Most have nothing more than some phraseology with which they create a caricature of Jesus.” When one knows the things Jesus actually said, one comes to realize that Jesus made an effective argument for His own identity, an argument that leaves no room for alternative interpretations.

Exegesis of John 14:6

There is likely no more definitive statement and argument for the exclusivity of Christ-alone than His own words recorded by the Gospel writer John. “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:6, NKJV). The words spoken by Jesus were spoken in the presence of His disciples as He comforted them

concerning His coming crucifixion and departure. Jesus assured His disciples that though He was going away that He would return again. In this moment Jesus made the claim that would assure His disciples that there was none equal to Him, nor none besides Him. Jesus identified Himself as the way, the truth, and the life. Despite the claims of relativism, which often encompasses pluralism, Jesus declares that there is no other access to salvation and truth, or to the Father, except through Him. Each of these claims are monumental and must be examined.

First, Jesus proclaims that He is the way. Several things must be noted here. Jesus was clear on this statement. He suggested that the way is a singular proposition. Jesus left no possibility that there are other ways to the Father. Such a declaration is contrary to the assertions of pluralism (many ways) and relativism (the way that is true for the individual). This statement alone does not allow for the Christian faith to coexist with other ways and truth claims. As one will later see, the influences of relativism have crept into the theology and belief systems of individuals who profess faith in Christ. However, if one simply takes the words of Jesus literally, one cannot profess Jesus and other ways without significant contradictions. Jesus is making an argument for exclusivity. If one accepts the claims of Jesus as valid, they must also accept His assertion of exclusivity. There are not many paths and truth-claims that all end up at the same destination, Jesus claims there is one path to the final destination, and it comes through Him. Each individual may choose any path they desire, however, all paths are not valid and equal. Choosing a preferable way does not make that way, the way. One can dispute that Jesus is the way; however, one cannot make the claim that Jesus is one among many, as Jesus Himself ruled out that possibility.

Secondly, it is interesting when referencing truth that Jesus did not suggest that He knew the truth, nor did He assert that He had the truth. Jesus clearly stated that He was the truth. Such

a claim cannot be quickly brushed over or disregarded. The proposition that Jesus is truth follows the logical assumption that outside of Him exists no other truth. Jesus did not leave room for the assumption that He was just part of the truth, or one among many truth-claims. Jesus declared that all truth was in Him. Jesus believed and made the argument that being the truth, He was absolute and exclusive. Anything contrary to Jesus Christ would then be false. For the relativist this proposition is repugnant. The relativist will claim that faith in Christ may be true for the Christian, but not true for all. The problem with this argument is that it was not the Christian who made this initial argument, it was Christ. Therefore, this argument must be dealt with based on the claims that Jesus Himself made, not what the Christian who believes in Christ alone says. Either the proposition that Jesus is the truth, by His own claims, be fully accepted or rejected based on the merits of Christ's declaration. There is no middle ground. The argument Christ establishes by His own words is that truth exists, truth is absolute and exclusive, and He alone is that truth. The "relativist Christian," if there can even be such a thing, must deal with this truth claim. The words of Jesus either make Him Lord and truth, or they make Him a liar, but no other options exist. Jesus is either the exclusive truth, or He is absolutely false in all of His claims.

Thirdly, Jesus claims that He is the life. Again, not that He has life or gives life, but that He is the source of life. John makes this claim when he writes of Jesus, "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3). Likewise Luke writes in the book of Acts, "For in Him we live and move and have our being..." (Acts 17:28). The claim is that all things exist in and because of Jesus, including all truth, and outside of Him is nothing. This means that Jesus is not just the source of all things that have materialized, but that He is likewise the source of all knowledge, truth, and morality. He encompasses all living things, and all living things abide in Him. To accept Jesus is to acknowledge that life, and all

things, exclusively exist in Him. Jesus could not be more direct and clear on the argument that He is absolute and exclusive.

Lastly, Jesus puts the exclamation point on these claims by asserting that no one can access God the Father except through Him. Jesus proclaims that He is the exclusive door. Once again, Jesus makes the argument for exclusivity over relativity. It is quite a bold claim that Jesus makes that He is the way, the truth, and the life and that there is no other access to the source of life, knowledge, and truth except through Him. Jesus Christ, if taken at His Word, can never be accepted as relative, though some make a valiant attempt at doing so. According to His own claims, one who professes Christ must believe that He is exclusive and absolute. Now one must have logical reasons as to why they accept Jesus and exclusive; however, Jesus gave only two possible options concerning Him. He is either the way, the truth, and the life, or He is nothing.

Counter Claims: Christ among Equals

Though the claims of Jesus concerning Himself have been established, it would behoove one to understand a few of the arguments against the exclusivity and uniqueness of Christ. These propositions concerning Christ are not just among secular relativist, but also among the religious relativist, many of whom profess Christianity. Relativism has wrapped its tentacles around every aspect of thought and philosophy, including around what some call interfaith-dialogue. Whether one refers to such thinking as pluralism or inclusion, said thinking is permeated with the broader concepts of relativism. It has been suggested that the notion of exclusivity is one of the most important issues facing current religious dialogue.⁸⁰ For those who adhere to a traditional Christian belief system, the idea of exclusivity has never been in question. However, the pressure to rethink exclusivity is coming from those who see faith from the pluralistic/relativistic

⁸⁰James S. Cutsinger, "The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ and other Religions," (The Greek Orthodox Theological Review 42, no. 3-4 (Fall 1997): 427-34).

perspective. These proponents of non-exclusivity suggest that other faiths and belief systems likewise contain saving truths.⁸¹ Therefore, in whatever truth-claim an individual finds truth, or their truth, it is relative and of saving virtue to that individual. Author John Hick, who states he is a protestant Christian, asserts that his interfaith dialogue has led him to the conclusion that there is not just one valid religion or truth-claim.⁸² Hick claims that to accept exclusivity is to accept the idea that much of humanity will die without the opportunity to receive salvation due to their place and time of birth.⁸³ This, however, avoids the proposition of the justice of God and that God is capable of revealing Christ to all men. Leonard J. Swidler, writing about the unsurpassable uniqueness of Jesus, asserts that while he may find that for himself that Jesus is unsurpassed by any other truth-claim, it is impossible for him to know that all other existing possibilities have been found and examined.⁸⁴ Therefore, Swidler suggests that truth and faith can never be known to the point of exclusivity, being that there is always the possibility of an unknown and unexamined truth-claim. Some have exclaimed that passages alluding to the exclusivity of Christ have caused conflict and must be reexamined with contemporary Christian thinking.⁸⁵ In an article called, "A Bahá'í Approach to the Claim of Exclusivity and Uniqueness in Christianity," the following is asserted:

For Christianity, it would appear that the erroneous interpretations of scripture, particularly those leading to the dogmas of exclusivity, have played an important role. Historically, issues in the debate of exclusivity within the early Christian Church became "not so much the cause of conflict but its most convenient and hallowed battlefield" (Johnson, History 92). The dogma of the uniqueness and

James S. Cutsinger, "The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ and other Religions," (The Greek Orthodox Theological Review 42, no. 3-4 (Fall 1997): 427-34).⁸¹

⁸² John Hick, "Comment on 'Jesus' Unsurpassable Uniqueness'," (Horizons 16, no. 1 (Spr 1989): 121-24).

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Leonard J. Swidler, "'Jesus' Unsurpassable Uniqueness': Two Responses," (Horizons 16, no. 1 (Spr 1989): 116-20).

⁸⁵ Seena Fazel and Khazeh Fananapazir, "A Bahá'í Approach to the Claim of Exclusivity and Uniqueness in Christianity" (The Journal of Bahá'í Studies 3, no. 2 (1990): 15-24).

finality of Christianity has not only been a source of conflict and persecution within the Church but has also been used to justify triumphalism and crusades.⁸⁶

The Bahá'í Institute goes on to assert that the erroneous scriptures that suggest the exclusivity of Christianity must be reinterpreted to allow for the unity of all religions.⁸⁷ The understanding is that God, and likewise truth, is revealed in various manifestations and no one truth claim can profess superiority or exclusiveness.⁸⁸ Author Hans Ucko seconds this assertion by suggesting that God and truth, or truths, are manifested and related in diverse ways to people and nations.⁸⁹ In 1987 a lecture by Wesley Ariarajah from the World Council of Churches on religious pluralism caused a large group of Christian to release a work entitled, "The Myth of Christian Uniqueness."⁹⁰ The essence of this release was to encourage Christians to abandon the idea of exclusivity. The work promoted two main relativistic ideals. First, that it is not possible for one of anything to exist.⁹¹ In other words, it is impossible that one faith or truth-claim be exclusively and absolutely true. Second, the work suggested that there are no such thing as absolute values, that values must be created collectively by all within a society.⁹² Essentially, values are relative to the collective in any given time and place. This line of philosophical thinking suggests that all values and truth are fluid, and that the individual or the collective are the ultimate source of truth. However, authors Daniel J. McCoy, Winfried Corduan, and Hendrik G. Stoker point to the hypocrisy of many of these interfaith groups when they state:

Buddhist-Christian interfaith scholars are quick to denounce what they perceive as religious exclusivity. So when it comes to the major views on just how true and

⁸⁶Seena Fazel and Khazeh Fananapazir, "A Bahá'í Approach to the Claim of Exclusivity and Uniqueness in Christianity" (The Journal of Bahá'í Studies 3, no. 2 (1990): 15–24).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Hans Ucko, "Part 1: Thinking Together on Religious Pluralism: Truth or Truths - How Does This Fit in a World of Religious Plurality?" (Journal of Ecumenical Studies 52, no. 1 (Wint 2017): 15–27).

⁹⁰ Lesslie Bp Newbiggin, "Religious Pluralism and the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ," (International Bulletin of Missionary Research 13, no. 2 (April 1989): 50–54).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

salvific the religions can be, it is no surprise that Exclusivism is ruled out automatically. What is surprising is how inevitable it is that when Buddhist-Christian interfaith scholars commit to any view – whether Inclusivism, Pluralism, or Relativism – they themselves end up committing the sin of exclusivity. Whatever view they entertain turns out to be too exclusivistic for somebody.⁹³

As one can see, the ideals of secular relativism have invaded the realm of religious thinking, even among some who profess Christ. It is this circumstance that also causes this author to suggest that the exclusivity of Christ is the most important issue in Christendom today. Contrary to the interfaith scholars and organizations, it must be suggested that exclusivity must not be abandoned, but rather strengthened. The argument for the exclusivity and unsurpassable uniqueness of Christ must reestablished in the church, and must be carried into the square of public debate. Out of fear of offense and non-inclusion, the argument for the exclusivity of Christ has either been abandoned or relegated to private belief by many. However, there is a valid argument to be made concerning what makes Jesus exclusive and unique.

The Uniqueness of Jesus and the Christian Faith

Building on the foundation of absolute, exclusive truth and the self-identifying claims of Jesus, one could make an argument for the truth of Christ-alone based on the uniqueness of Jesus and the Christian faith. In weighing out matters of truth, it is the uniqueness of Jesus that lends to the likelihood that the message of Christ and the gospel is not something that would have been crafted in the minds of men. Jesus stands out uniquely different; and as a result, Jesus stands out uniquely exclusive. It is the unique characteristics and attributes of Jesus and the Christian faith that make Christ unsurpassable. One could assert that only one whose ways far exceed that of man's could inspire such a proclamation as the gospel message of Christ.

⁹³ Daniel J. McCoy, Winfried Corduan, and Hendrik G. Stoker, "Christian and Buddhist Approaches to Religious Exclusivity: Do Interfaith Scholars Have It Right?" (*Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 72, no. 3 (2016): 1–8. doi:10.4102/hts.v72i3.3266).

Christ: God Incarnate

The notion that God became man, walked among men, suffered as a man, and was tempted in all points as are men is a characteristic rather exclusive to the Christian faith. The understanding that Christ would come in the form of man to save man was not just a post-Christ assertion, but it was greatly prophesied throughout the Old Testament. The Psalmist wrote, “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honor” (Psalm 8: 3-5). Jesus was long expected, though he did not come in the fashion as many anticipated. He was born of a virgin, placed in a manger, and surrounded by livestock (Luke 2:12). It was certainly not a circumstance deserving the arrival of a King, much less the incarnate Son of God. If crafted by men, the portrayal of Christ’s arrival would have been filled with much more pomp and grandeur. This was not the circumstance of Christ’s arrival. Yet, in these humble beginnings the Messiah entered the world. What makes this occurrence so unique and exclusive to the Christian faith is that God came to man, contrary to most other truth-claims, where if God does exist, man must through religious tenets and acts attempt to reach God.⁹⁴ This is an all too impossible task. However, the idea of God incarnate goes beyond just God dwelling among men, the Christian perspective sees God as a friend of man. According to Matthew, Jesus had the reputation that He was a friend of sinners (Matthew 11:19). Dr. Ravi Zacharias asserts, “Friendship with God is an aspect distinctive to Christianity.”⁹⁵ The idea of God becoming man

⁹⁴ Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale, *Jesus Among Secular Gods: The Countercultural Claims of Christ* (New York, NY: Hachette Book Group, Inc., 2017).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

and befriending His fallen, sinful creation makes the Christian faith uniquely unsurpassable and beyond human inspiration.

God in the Hands of Man

One of the most disturbing aspects of the Christian faith is the idea of God in the hands of man. It would seem that if one wanted to present their God as superior to all other gods, that the writer, or in the case of the Bible the writers, would not display their God being beaten, whipped, mocked, spit upon, and crucified at the hands of men. It would be much more convincing to advocate for a God who would not be submitted to such humility and shame. Jesus hung completely unclothed on the cross, while being mocked and shamed. Jesus foretold these things when He stated to His disciples, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again” (Mark 10: 33-34). What manner of God is this? Who would display their God in such a way? This unique characteristic of the gospel and story of Jesus leads the apologist to believe that such a circumstance could only be inspired by God. For if inspired by man, the presentation of Christ among men would likely be much different. In fact, it is this disturbing treatment of Christ that causes many to cringe. Author Trent Dougherty asserts, “The second problem is that the Gospel doesn’t strike some people as the greatest story ever told. Some think it is a terrible story. Bertrand Russell expresses this sentiment in “Why I am Not a Christian,” some contemporary theologians see it awash with violence in an objectionable way.”⁹⁶ In fact,

⁹⁶ Trent Dougherty, "Divine Union with and without the Gospel: A Probabilistic Problem of Pluralism" (European Journal for Philosophy of Religion 11, no. 1 (2019): 135–43).

when the gospel is put into motion picture as in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* it is unwatchable for many.⁹⁷

An Answer for the Depravity of Man

One of the most convincing aspects of the Christian faith is that God's answer for the utter depravity and helplessness of fallen man was the substitutionary death of His only begotten Son, Jesus. With the talk of what lives matter within culture today, the gospel made clear that to God every single life matters. In fact, Jesus taught that every life had intrinsic value.⁹⁸ Whether it was the woman at the well (John 4), blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10), or one of the many lepers He healed, Jesus saw the irreplaceable value of every human life. This differs from many truth-claims that see some lives as worth more due to their place in a caste system, or through the theory of the survival of the fittest. The intrinsic value of every life is seen in the declaration that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16).

As for the depravity of man, Christ is the solution which man could not provide. Jesus never taught that man had a moral problem; but rather, that man's ailments were spiritual.⁹⁹ It is this dilemma that all other truth-claims have attempted to resolve, and failed miserably. Most truth-claims, whether religious or humanistic, seek to find salvation from within. Some believe that man can earn salvation through earthly accomplishments, while others work towards some level of enlightenment. Those who operate with the assumption no deity exists tend to believe that the answers to the perfection of man lie somewhere in the midst of science, government, and law. However, none of these fallible solutions solve the problem of sin. Only Jesus could address

⁹⁷Trent Dougherty, "Divine Union with and without the Gospel: A Probabilistic Problem of Pluralism" (European Journal for Philosophy of Religion 11, no. 1 (2019): 135–43).

⁹⁸Ravi Zacharias, "Jesus Among Other Gods Pt. 2" (Lecture, Yale University, Connecticut, March 16, 2019).

⁹⁹ Ibid.

the dilemma of man, which is the dilemma of sin that infects every aspect of life and turns the heart of man to rebellion against God.¹⁰⁰

The solution for the depravity of man was in itself unique. Because sin required a punishment of death (Romans 6:23), God provided Jesus to die a substitutionary death in man's place. This again leads the apologist to suggest that lowering the sovereign God of the universe to the place of a substitutionary sacrifice for the vile acts of men is a proposition beyond the imagination of men. The uniqueness of it lends to the possibility that its inspiration is of a higher nature. To this Dr. Ravi Zacharias states, "The diagnosis of the human heart and Christ's solution and hope for mankind is not only unique, it is true."¹⁰¹

Sacrificial Love

One of the most unique characteristics of Christ and the Christian faith is the message and display of sacrificial love. Its power and practice is unparalleled by any other truth-claim or belief system. Not only was the sacrificial love of God on display through Christ, but Christ expected that those who followed Him would love in the same unique manner. Jesus told His disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13: 34-35). Jesus came teaching a love that went far beyond the "Golden Rule." The instruction of Christ was that the Christian love in the same sacrificial manner as He. Jesus took the message of love even further when He commanded that each one of them should also love their enemies (Matthew 5). If loving one's neighbor as oneself (Mark 12) was the second of the two greatest commandments, Jesus elevated the commandment of love to a level

¹⁰⁰Ravi Zacharias, "On the Uniqueness of Jesus," (Address, Keswick Covention, United Kingdom, November 20, 2014).

¹⁰¹ Ravi Zacharias, "What Makes Jesus Different?" (Interview, 100 Huntley Street, November 20, 2017).

unattainable by the human heart absent the love of God when He stated to love even one's enemies.

Love is the language of the message of Christ. It transcends all cultural, ethnic, and national boundaries. Christian love may be the most unique characteristic of all. Dr. Burk Parsons asserts, "Love is the greatest apologetic."¹⁰² On a similar note, Dr. Ravi Zacharias declares, "Love is the supreme ethic."¹⁰³ It would seem that there is general consensus among apologists that this issue of love is not only unique, but that it is paramount to the argument that Christianity is true. One cannot separate love from the message of Christ, or one has no message at all. Furthermore, one cannot separate love from the identity of Christ, or one ends up with a different Jesus than the one who walked the earth. Dr. Zacharias summed up this matter of love well when he stated, "In every other worldview, at best life precedes love. Only in the Christian faith does love precede life. The God of love has created us for His purpose, supremely found in loving God and our fellow human beings. Love succeeds life. It is both here and hereafter. You enjoy it, you spend it, and you inherit it in still grander terms."¹⁰⁴

Unmerited Forgiveness

The power of unmerited and undeserved forgiveness makes the message of Christ unsurpassably unique. When most truth-claims, be they religious or humanistic, focus on the betterment of the human condition as a way to reach a more perfect condition, or earn salvation, the message of Christ declares that there is a debt owed to God that cannot be repaid. Upon this revelation the precept of unmerited forgiveness enters the salvation equation. Jesus demonstrated

¹⁰² Burk Parsons, "Apologetics and the Local Church," (Lecture, West Coast Conference, Seattle, June 15, 2018).

¹⁰³ Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale, *Jesus Among Secular Gods: The Countercultural Claims of Christ* (New York, NY: Hachette Book Group, Inc., 2017).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

his power to forgive sins and offer unmerited forgiveness, even to the dismay of His critics. The scriptures declare, “But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Arise and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins...’” (Matthew 9:4-6). The message of unmerited forgiveness has always been central to the gospel. Even before man could say “sorry,” Jesus stood ready to offer forgiveness. Paul writes in the Book of Romans, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Christ paid a debt on the cross that man could not pay, thereby offering a forgiveness man could not earn.

What makes unmerited forgiveness even more unique is that Jesus expected those who followed Him and were forgiven to offer the same unmerited forgiveness to others. Matthew records the words of Jesus, “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15). In Matthew 18:21-22 Peter, likely believing to offer a very sufficient proposition on forgiveness, asks Jesus how many times a day one must forgive another, suggesting seven as the number of times. However, Jesus dwarfed Peter’s offer by suggesting no less than 70x7 within one day. Jesus was essentially asserting that forgiveness should be offered every time it is genuinely requested. This Jesus expected of His own. The depth and breadth of genuine Christian forgiveness is incomparable and unsurpassable by any other truth-claim. As Peter demonstrated, the level of forgiveness that man feels is reasonable and more than gracious fails in comparison to God’s unmerited forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Transformative Power

Nothing is likely more convincing of the uniqueness of the Christian faith than that of transformative power. Both the scriptures and modern testimonies of believers demonstrate how many have been radically transformed by an encounter with Jesus through the message of the gospel. The scripture teaches this a normal and expected result of the Christian experience. Paul writes, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Paul, if anyone, would know this transformative power, as he was radically converted on the Damascus Road (Acts 9).

However, possibly as convincing as the testimony of a Christian is the assertion offered by an atheist who acknowledges the unique transformative power of the Christian faith. December 27, 2008, prominent writer Matthew Parris wrote a unique article in *The Times* called, “As an Atheist, I Truly Believe Africa Needs God.” Parris, when he visited Malawi where he had been raised, witnessed the decline of life in Africa. His conclusion was that more humanitarian aid was not the solution to raising the people of Africa. Rather, Parris acknowledged that only the message of Jesus and the Christian faith had the power to transform hearts and lift the peoples of Africa. Parris stated, “Those who want Africa to walk tall amid twenty-first-century global competition must not kid themselves that providing the material means or even the know-how that accompanies what we call development will make the change. A whole belief system must first be supplanted. And I’m afraid it has to be supplanted by another. Removing Christian evangelism from the African equation may leave the continent at the mercy of a malign fusion of Nike, the witch doctor, the mobile phone, and the machete.”¹⁰⁵ Though Parris was admittedly

¹⁰⁵Matthew Parris, "As an Atheist, I Truly Believe Africa Needs God," (Times, December 27, 2008).

torn as an atheist, he was forced to admit that the Christian faith brings with it a unique transformative power.¹⁰⁶

The Purity of Jesus

Another aspect unique to Jesus was that it is declared that He was without sin and fault. Jesus was morally pure and perfect. The Apostle Paul writes, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). For those who knew of Him and the testimony of His works could never declare one sin or fault ever found within Him. However, it is one thing for those who follow Him to declare His righteousness, purity, an innocence; yet, it is another for one who may profit politically to do the same. When the crowds were calling Jesus guilty and a sinner, Pontius Pilate privately questioned Jesus. After examination Pilate came to the conclusion that no guilt could be found in Him (John 19:4). The purity of Christ attests to His being the spotless and sinless Son of God.

Likewise, the Christian is made pure through the purity and righteousness of Christ. The transformative power, previously mentioned, produces a changed heart and morality in the life of the Christian. It is this transformative power and purity that produces a moral standard for the Christian, built upon the Word of God and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. To this assertion Dr. Zacharias states, “The Christian faith brings with it convictions by which to stand and build and moral framework. The secular thinker, with his implicitly amoral assumptions, imagines that knowledge without a moral base has enough sustaining power. It simply doesn’t.”¹⁰⁷ The purity of Jesus and its emphasis in the life of the Christian makes the Christian faith unique. These standards of morality and purity often go against the accepted standards of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale, *Jesus Among Secular Gods: The Countercultural Claims of Christ* (New York, NY: Hachette Book Group, Inc., 2017).

the humanistic norm. It is often these unique standards that cause the Christian to stand out as different.

The Resurrection and the Behavioral Changes in the Disciples

There are two occurrences that make the case for Jesus and the Christian faith historically unique, and those are the resurrection claims concerning Jesus after crucifixion and the behavioral changes that took place in the disciples following the crucifixion and resurrection. These two happenings lend themselves to be some of the most solid evidence for the truth and exclusivity of Jesus and the Christian faith. Much could be said on each of these topics, probably enough that they could deserve their own individual work; however, for the sake of the argument of this work, just a few points will be highlighted.

Concerning the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, all four gospel writers give an account of the events that transpired. If Jesus truly rose from the dead, as is claimed by the gospel writers and over 500 eyewitnesses (1 Corinthians 5:6), then this very event alone is enough to establish Jesus as the exclusive and absolute truth. The resurrection of Christ would cause the Christian faith to supersede all other truth-claims. It is why this event in the life of Christ is so often challenged. However, several things lend themselves to the credibility of the resurrection. First, this event can be investigated historically, despite what some may suggest. The fact that it is historically provable from various sources, both in support and against, that the resurrection claim was made, makes it a legitimate inquiry. The evidence lends itself to the side supporting a resurrection, primarily based on historical writings and eyewitnesses. Those who oppose the claim of the resurrection had only one task in order to prove their assertion and close the case forever, produce a body. The body of Jesus which was removed from the cross need only be reproduced, and the claims of Jesus vanish. However, those who oppose the resurrection

narrative following the crucifixion of Christ immediately began to claim a stolen body theory (Matthew 28:13). This theory is still repeated in modern times. It may be believable had not precautions such a massive stone being placed at the tomb opening and highly skilled guards being put in place to prevent such a theft had not occurred (Matthew 27:62-66). A missing body lends itself to a risen Savior, and to the exclusivity of salvation and truth in Jesus alone.

No evidence suggests a risen Jesus more so than the behavioral changes observed within the disciples. At the time of the arrest of Jesus (Luke 22) the disciples and followers of Christ dispersed. It would be only the disciple John who would follow Jesus all the way to the cross, being present for His crucifixion. Following the crucifixion and prior to the resurrection, the disciples and followers of Jesus hid in fear from the authorities (John 20). However, it is historically accepted that a major shift in behavior occurred within the disciples. While some may offer various theories for this sudden change in behavior, the Christian asserts that only an encounter with a risen Jesus would produce such a radical change. This was not a one-time encounter. Luke states in Acts 1:3 that Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples numerous times over a 40 day period following His death and resurrection. In Acts chapter 2 Luke records that the same disciples who were once hiding in fear were then declaring the message of a risen Jesus openly and publically. The disciples would go on to face persecution, imprisonments, beatings, and many of them martyrdom. What would cause the same disciples cowering in fear to so radically alter their behavior that they were willing to lay down their lives? The only explanation is an encounter with a Jesus that was very much alive. The radical behavioral changes in the disciples further lend to the uniqueness of Jesus and the Christian faith.

One cannot overlook the unique characteristics of Jesus and the Christian faith when examining this truth-claim. When given thorough and fair examination, it is very possible that

one arrives at the conclusion that the claims of Jesus and the Christian faith are uniquely unsurpassable. The uniqueness of the Christian truth-claim makes its exclusivity and absoluteness very likely. However, a truth claim must go beyond theory, it must be applicable.

Chapter 6: A Case for Renewing Evangelistic Apologetics within the Local Church

It is never enough to have established that truth exists, and to come to an understanding of that exclusive truth, without making that truth applicable. One may know that Christ is truth and that He is absolutely exclusive, but one must live a life that reflects that truth and in doing so make a solid case for Christ-alone in a culture of relativism. Christian Apologetics is not merely for the university student, nor for the philosopher, but this discipline is the responsibility of every Christian. Once again Peter reminds the Christian, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you...” (1 Peter 3:15). The local church should be a producer of Christian Apologists.

Christian Exclusivity Does Not Equal Exclusion

In renewing an evangelistic apologetic for Christ-alone in a culture of relativism, it must be noted that exclusivity is not synonymous with exclusion. The message and truth of Jesus Christ applies to all, and is available for all. The point of Christian apologetics is never to win an argument for the sake of being right, nor is it for the purpose of excluding others who may come from a different faith background; instead, the purpose of the Christian apologetic is to demonstrate to the non-believer the truth of the message of Christ in the hopes that they might be won to Christ through a solid case made on behalf of Christ. It is to show that Christ alone is exclusive, not exclusionary. In fact, the core of the gospel is that God gave His only begotten Son Jesus and that if any would believe on Him that they would be saved (John 3:16). The

Christian apologetic is a case to be presented in grace to those of other faiths, as well as to the relativist.

Historical Practice of Evangelistic Apologetics

While time would not allow for a comprehensive examination of the historicity of apologetics in the New Testament church, a brief mention of a few examples will certainly help lay the foundation in highlighting the need for apologetics in the postmodern church. The first examples of Christian apologetics are as old as the New Testament itself. While one would not tend to think of the four gospels as a discourse in apologetics, there is an apologetic element to them that should not be ignored. Author Avery Dulles asserts, “The Gospels, while they do not resemble modern apologetics, they do have an apologetic ingredient to them. They do however make a case for Christology and the claim for Christ-alone.”¹⁰⁸ It is upon the foundation of these gospels that the apologetic case for Christ-alone is built. Next, one of the earliest accounts of Christian Apologetics is from the Apostle Paul himself.¹⁰⁹ Paul in Athens, speaking to the Greeks who belonged to the Council of the Areopagus, made an appeal for Christ-alone in their hearing (Acts 17).¹¹⁰ Many recognize Paul as an Apostle, but he also rightfully deserves the title, Christian Apologist.

The practice of apologetics was not relegated to Paul, a few early church fathers, and some Catholic thinkers. A well know protestant minister by the name of John Wesley also promoted the practice of apologetics. In 1756 John Wesley spoke to a group of clergy about carrying out pastoral ministry with joy and skill. Wesley was quoted, “Ought not a Minister to have, first, a good understanding, a clear apprehension, a sound judgment, and a capacity of

¹⁰⁸ Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

reasoning with some closeness?”¹¹¹ Wesley admonished the clergy to have a knowledge and understanding of: logic, metaphysics, natural theology, geometry, and the ideas of the most important figures in the history of philosophy.¹¹² This may seem foreign to many in the contemporary church who do not see apologetics as an integral part of modern evangelism. However, the absence of a solid apologetic as part of an evangelistic effort has often left the case for Christ lacking substance, relegating it to the arena of feelings and mysticism.

Lastly, in a historical context, it must be noted that apologists have typically relied on two realms of revelation in building a case for the existence of God and Christ-alone. First, the Christian Apologist has historically relied on what one would call, General Revelation.¹¹³ In General Revelation, nature and the order of things are used to point to the existence of God. The second realm of revelation is called, Special Revelation.¹¹⁴ Special Revelation reveals the truth of God through His inspired Word. It is on special revelation that the case for Christ-alone is built. The postmodern Christian Apologists have at their disposal the same revelations as their predecessors, nature and the Word.

Contending for the Faith

Contending for the faith is not just a great slogan or good idea, it is an imperative. There are several reasons why a revived movement of apologetics is necessary in the postmodern church. First, as previously referenced, nearly 47% of Christian millennials believe it is at least somewhat wrong to attempt to convert someone of a different faith to Christianity.¹¹⁵ This

¹¹¹ James Porter Moreland, “Philosophical Apologetics, the Church, and Contemporary Culture,” (Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 39, no. 1 (March 1996): 123–40).

¹¹² James Porter Moreland, “Philosophical Apologetics, the Church, and Contemporary Culture,” (Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 39, no. 1 (March 1996): 123–40).

¹¹³ Stephen Nichols, “Applied Apologetics,” (Lecture, West Coast Conference, Seattle, June 15, 2018).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ “Almost Half of Practicing Christian Millennials Say Evangelism Is Wrong,” Barna Group, [PAGE], accessed June 19, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/millennials-oppose-evangelism/>.

revelation alone is enough to demonstrate how far the ideals of relativism have infiltrated the postmodern church. This should be alarming for the Christian exclusivist. Secondly, many within culture have a deep distrust of the Bible and Christianity.¹¹⁶ This deep distrust may be the result of a number of things; however, regardless of the causes, the postmodern church has a responsibility to produce an apologetic message that once again gains legitimacy within the realm of public dialogue. To settle for less is to do a disservice to the message of Christ. Thirdly, Jude urged that all should contend for the faith (Jude 1:3).¹¹⁷ Again the work of evangelistic apologetics is not for the minister alone, nor is it for the university-educated, this work is one to which every Christian is called. Therefore, it demands a revival of Christ-alone apologetics within the postmodern church.

Contending for the faith is as much about attitude as it is knowledge. First, the goal of apologetics is not about destroying another's faith or beliefs, but about revealing truth.¹¹⁸ The purpose of understanding another's point of view and beliefs is so that one can meaningfully present the gospel to their counterpart.¹¹⁹ It is noteworthy that Jesus never sought to impose His message against the will of a person.¹²⁰ Likewise, Jesus never sought to dispute and quarrel over religious matters. There is a difference between arguing and contending.¹²¹ There is a right way to practice apologetics and a wrong way. Author Anton Bosch asserts that contending for the faith

¹¹⁶ Eric I. Hanson, "The Hope of Grace: An Essay Exploring the New Atheism, the Church, and the Gospel," (Currents in Theology and Mission 44, no. 2 (2017): 3–6).

¹¹⁷ Voddie Baucham, "Doing Apologetics in an Anti-Apologetics Age," (Lecture, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, January 20, 2016).

¹¹⁸ Gnana Robinson, "Dialogue with People of Other Faiths and the Question of the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ," (Studies in Interreligious Dialogue 16, no. 1 (2006): 89–99.)

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ravi Zacharias, "Jesus Among Other Gods Pt. 2" (Lecture, Yale University, Connecticut, March 16, 2019).

¹²¹ Anton Bosch, *Contentiously Contending: A Word to Today's Apologetics Emphasis* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2014), Electronic.

must be done in the right method and with the right attitude.¹²² Paul admonished the Christian through his spiritual son Timothy when engaging in sharing the message of Christ to avoid ignorant and foolish disputes, and to deliver the truth in gentleness (2 Timothy 2: 23-26).¹²³

There are a couple approaches to consider in the practice of Christian Apologetics. First, the message of Christ and truth must first and foremost be delivered in love. John Wesley, discussed previously, believed this was of utmost importance. Wesley's approach to truth was based on Christian agape (love).¹²⁴ Author Tony Lee Richie describes it this way:

Furthermore, no one has a right to violate the conscience of others regarding their convictions. So, Wesley insists that all individuals and groups ought always to affirm their commitments to truth as they see it—but carefully, without excluding others. Yet, for Wesley, love matters most regarding religious others, especially love arising from the heart (our affective center) rather than from the head (our cognitive processes). One of Wesley's most-oftquoted [sic] texts was the phrase from Eph. 4:15, "speaking the truth in love."⁹ Significantly, love is never separated from the conviction of truth, but truth is always set in the context of love (see 2 Jn. 1-6).¹²⁵

Wesley believed that it was very possible to be tolerant of another's beliefs while remaining convinced of the truth of Christianity and its mission.¹²⁶ Christian love should create an approach of tolerance and respect while maintaining an adherence to Christian conviction and exclusivity of truth. Author Mark L.Y. Chan asserts, "More important than winning the argument against relativism is winning the relativist for Christ."¹²⁷ Love is the Christian's most effective apologetic. As for the second approach, the Christian Apologist must present a picture of

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Anton Bosch, *Contentiously Contending: A Word to Today's Apologetics Emphasis* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2014), Electronic.

¹²⁴ Tony Lee Richie, "Approaching the Problem of Religious Truth in a Pluralistic World: A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution" (*Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 43, no. 3 (Sum 2008): 351–69).

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Mark L. Y. Chan, "Sowing Subversion in the Field of Relativism," *Christianity Today* 54, no. 2 (February 2010): 44–47.

reality.¹²⁸ The Christian message must be presented in a way that flows logically and rationally. Likewise, it must be applicable to the individual's life. An apologetic that is not relevant to an individual's living will be seen as irrelevant and obsolete. This approach to evangelism is often difficult and shunned by Christians because it requires one to move past mere arguments of feeling or experience, and move into the realm of rationale, reason, and logic. Christianity was intended to be a thinking faith, not merely just an experiential feeling. In making a case for Christ-alone in the context of reality and applicability, one must accept that real and difficult questions will be raised. This is not something to be feared, but something rather to be welcomed, as it solidifies one's argument and strengthens one's own faith.

Apologetics Renewed in the Local Church

The time has come where a real effort to renew apologetics in the local church among the clergy and laity is needed. One could assume there are several reasons why churches tend to shy away from apologetics. It could be because of the nature of debate that apologetics brings in a non-confrontational culture; however, it is more likely because the practice of Christian Apologetics is difficult. Author James Patrick Green asserts, "Apologetics is one of those things in life that is easy to do badly, and difficult to do well."¹²⁹ Also, the postmodern church has de-spiritualized apologetics.¹³⁰ Dr. Voddie Baucham suggests that the church has found itself in a place where head-knowledge is a bad thing, as if it is a disease to be cured.¹³¹ The church treats the practice of apologetics and the spiritual work of the Holy Spirit as an either/or proposition. These two, however, are not mutually exclusive. The anti-apologist must realize that the Holy

¹²⁸ Greg Koukl, "Is Truth Relative?" (Lecture, Thrive Apologetics Conference 2013, Granite Bay, March 5, 2013).

¹²⁹ James Patrick Green, "'Giving Reasons for Our Hope': The Role of Apologetics in the Church Today," (Grace & Truth 26, no. 1 (April 2009): 4–12).

¹³⁰ Voddie Baucham, "Doing Apologetics in an Anti-Apologetics Age," (Lecture, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, January 20, 2016).

¹³¹ Ibid.

Spirit can and will work through the intellect.¹³² Dr. Steven Lawson suggests that the Holy Spirit is the greatest defender of the faith and is by far the greatest apologist.¹³³ The Christian Apologist must always depend on the Holy Spirit as they defend and contend for the faith. As Dr. Lawson put so well, “The Holy Spirit convicts and exposes the sin of unbelief.”¹³⁴ The Holy Spirit can empower the argument of a Christian Apologist to convict the heart and mind of the non-believer. When one speaks the truth and the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, it goes beyond the intellect and has a spiritual impact. The Christian does not have to choose between being spiritual or knowledgeable, it is possible to be both.

The need for a renewal of evangelistic apologetics in the church is made obvious by the lack thereof. Christians contending for the faith has not been on an upward rise; rather, it has been on a steep decline. Barna Research Group suggests that, in particular, U.S Christians are losing a desire to share their faith.¹³⁵ Shockingly, 56% of U.S. Christians polled by Barna Research Group report having a discussion about faith with a non-Christian two or fewer times in the past year.¹³⁶ One could suggest that this percentage is in reality even higher. In a culture of relativism, the church has been detrimentally quiet. The importance of contending for the faith seems to be of little priority. Why is this? Is it because the Christian message is not wanted in the public discourse? To the contrary! Barna Research Group also spoke with non-Christians, of which 44% claimed they would be more interested in Christianity if they had more evidence.¹³⁷

¹³² Glen B. Siniscalchi, “Postmodernism and the Need for Rational Apologetics in a Post-Conciliar Church,” (Heythrop Journal 52, no. 5 (September 2011): 751–71).

¹³³ Steven Lawson, “Preaching and Apologetics,” (Lecture, West Coast Conference, Seattle, June 15, 2018).

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Reviving Evangelism: Current Realities That Demand a New Vision for Sharing Faith (Ventura, CA: Barna Research Group, 2019).

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Is it possible that the Spirit-empowered Christian Apologist could offer a solid and evidential argument to move those 44% to faith in Christ if only it was a priority and practice?

Renewing the practice of apologetics in the church is not a difficult task, but a few important steps must be taken to start the process. First, it all starts in the pulpit. The presentation in many churches today does not replicate that of the early church. The early church was a preaching church.¹³⁸ The early church preached with power and passion; but most of all, they made a solid case for the resurrected Christ. The preaching of the early church was often built on the foundation of the fulfilled promises and prophecies of the Old Testament as they made a case for why Jesus was the logical, reasonable, and rightful Messiah. As previously mentioned, Paul preached an apologetic message in Athens, in which he relied on reference to an altar the Greeks had made to the “Unknown God” (Acts 17:23). From this Paul made a logical case for the God of the universe and His only begotten Son, Jesus. The preaching of the early church was not self-focused, but it was Christ-centered. If the apologetic case for Jesus is to return to the local church body, preaching must once again become Christ-centered and applicable to the Christian witness. However, it must go beyond preaching and into the realm of discipleship. Opportunities must be provided at the local church level to train the laity in evangelism and apologetics. The sheep must not be sent out helpless against the wolves of relativism, but they must be equipped to contend for the faith. Whether a church utilizes Sunday school, small groups, or some other setting for training, it matters not. What matters is that in some forum training in evangelistic apologetics is offered as a priority of the church. Lastly, the church must create forums of dialogue, open to all church people and the public, to address difficult cultural issues. This dialogue must contain individuals that may be on the opposite side of an issue. For example,

¹³⁸ Steven Lawson, "Preaching and Apologetics," (Lecture, West Coast Conference, Seattle, June 15, 2018).

many churches have recently held forums on racial equality and societal injustice. These are deep cultural issues which must be addressed, and the church must have a voice in the discussion. Deep conversations are needed in corporate settings and on a personal level. This is where the practice of Christian Apologetics must offer real answers and solutions to the most troubling issues of society. A gospel response is required for deep cultural questions.¹³⁹ If the church remains silent, and the practice of apologetics null and void, the proponents of relativism will win the day, offering very little hope and answers to a society in desperate need of truth.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

One of the most important philosophical dilemmas facing the culture today is and will continue to be the debate over the absoluteness and exclusiveness of truth. This will continue to be the starting point for all Christian Apologists. Gone are the days where one can begin from the presuppositionalist position of the authority of scriptures, as much of society has not only become skeptical of the Bible, but also doubtful that truth is anything but relative and subjective. An argument for absolute and exclusive truth must be the foundation on which the apologist begins to build. As has been discussed, once absolute truth has been established in any proposition, it naturally follows that absolute truth does exist and must be accepted beyond the one proposition that has been proven. Likewise the Laws of Non-contradiction, Identity, and the Excluded Middle attest to the necessity of truth. Reason demands that absolutes exist.

Relativism, while praised by many within the realm of postmodern thinking, does not pass the test of reasonability and rationality. Rather than attempt to answer difficult questions, for fear of offending another, relativism can be said to be an escape and end-around all arguments. Relativism, as may be asserted, is a politically correct theory that seeks to be all-

¹³⁹Reviving Evangelism: Current Realities That Demand a New Vision for Sharing Faith (Ventura, CA: Barna Research Group, 2019).

inclusive. The umbrella of relativism is so broad that it allows for nearly every belief and worldview, despite creating a culture of systematic contradictions. One can believe anything they desire as long as they do not believe it to be absolutely true for anyone else. The tentacles of relativism have reached far beyond secular society, taking root even within the realm of nominal Christendom. Despite its best efforts, the theory of relativism fails horribly. For one to even make an argument that absolutes do not exist, is in itself an argument for an absolute. One can assert that even the relativist has absolutes.

Once the foundation that absolute and exclusive truth does exist, and that the theory of relativism is unreasonable and illogical, then one can begin to make a case for which truth is most likely absolute and exclusive. In this case, the argument has been made for Christ-alone based upon the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. Taking into consideration the claims of Christ concerning Himself, and those who make counter-arguments, one can assert that Christ leaves no possibility that He is just one among many. Christ establishes by His own testimony that He is either the way, the truth, and the life or He is nothing at all. However, an evaluation and examination of the characteristics and attributes of Jesus and the Christian faith leads one to conclude that Jesus and the gospel are too unique and contrary to the motives of man to be the mere invention of the human mind. In a culture of relativism, Jesus Christ and the Christian faith stands alone, being both absolute and exclusive.

Once the case for Christ-alone is established, it is logical that this truth must be applied in a manner that will challenge and combat the culture of relativism. To do this, evangelistic apologetics must be renewed within the local church. The practice and discipline of apologetics is not for the clergy and university-academic alone, it is the responsibility of every Christian to contend for and defend the faith. As the ideas of relativism continue to invade the church, proper

teaching and training must be applied to expose these falsities and equip the Christian community to be ready at all times to give an answer for the hope that they have within them. The practice of Christian Apologetics within the culture of relativism is not just a good idea, it is an imperative.

May it be concluded that absolute truth does in fact logically and reasonably exist, and that by its nature is exclusive. Relativism fails the test of rationality, reasonability, and usefulness, and should thereby be rejected. In the search for truth Jesus Christ stands alone. While the Christian faith is exclusive in terms of truth, it is not exclusionary. The message and salvation of Christ is for all who will believe. Despite the best efforts of the apologist, who should be adequately prepared and disciplined at all times, one would do well to remember that love is the greatest apologetic, and the Holy Spirit is the greatest apologist for Christ.

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