Liberty University

A Contemporary Pauline Apologetic Toolkit

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Master of Arts in Christian Apologetics

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Introduction.

Biblical prophecy and predictions are everywhere. Christianity is undergoing attack

because of the changing cultural milieu in the First World, mainly the United States and Europe.

Many have left the church. In Britain nearly half of all born-and-raised Catholics no longer

consider themselves to be Catholic; the vast majority of these—almost two out of every five

British cradle Catholics – claim to have 'no religion.'[1] Furthermore, for every ten Catholics who

leave the church in Britain, there is just one convert to Catholicism. Meanwhile in the United

States, two of every five born and raised Catholics no longer identify as Catholics, and one of

every five (or half of the 2 of 5) identify as having no religion.[2] In Boston alone, former

Catholics form the largest religious bloc.[3] Pew Charitable Trust reports:

> "About 64% of Americans call themselves Christian today. That might sound
> like a lot, but 50 years ago that number was 90. The same survey said that
> the Christian majority will disappear in America by 2070.[4]"

What can be done about these dwindling numbers of the faith from an apologetic

perspective when apologists are called to contribute to increasing the membership of the Body of

Christ through the Great Commission? In the Old Testament, Hannah provides good advice,

which should apply to those Christians on the front lines sharing the faith, including apologists,

stating: "Talk no more so exceedingly proudly; Let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: For

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[1] Stephen Bullivant. *Mass Exodus: Catholic Disaffiliation in Britain and America since Vatican II.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 2.

[2] Ibid., 2-3.

[3] Philip F. Lawler. *The Faithful Departed: The Collapse of Boston's Catholic Culture.* (New York: Encounter Books, 2008), 12.

[4] "Modeling the Future of Religion in America," Religion, Pew Charitable Trusts, last modified on September 13, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/09/13/.

the Lord is a God of knowledge, And by him, actions are weighed (1 Samuel 2:3 KJV)."

Hannah reminds believers that the God one serves is holy and sovereign, guarding those faithful

to Him. Christians are to maintain humility because the power of God changes lives. Christians

are to refrain from arrogance in sharing the Lord God who is knowledgeable, as only He can

change lives, weighing actions of the people and passing judgment based on His perfect

knowledge. For it is not the messenger but the message of Christ which is endowed with power.

Therefore, in sharing Christ's message, one must exercise humility.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul informs in 2 Timothy 3:16: "All scripture is

given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for

instruction in righteousness (KJV)." Scripture divinely inspired is all that is needed to share

Christ and to bring each to the best state of righteousness. Hence, apologists must rely foremost

on the Word of God. Furthermore, Paul instructs us to examine ourselves as a member of the

Christian community to ensure the genuineness of faith and Christ's indwelling:

> Examine yourselves whether ye be in faith; prove your own selves.
> Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be
> reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. Now I
> pray to God that ye do not evil; not that we should appear approved, but that
> ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. For we can do
> nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we are glad, when we are
> weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.
> Therefore, I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use
> sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to
> edification, and not to destruction (2 Corinthians 13:5-10 KJV).

With the reality of global Christianity at a crossroads, Christian apologists must maintain

humility in sharing Christ, heed the words of the Scriptures, and foster genuine faithfulness

amongst the Christian community. In this state of mind, apologists globally should desire to

create new opportunities that realign the church for contemporary audiences. Our collective

efforts must be to "up" our game for Christ.

One highly important opportunity presented to apologists is a study of Paul's unique apologetic methods that appealed to the audiences he was ministering in ancient times. Paul's apologetic methods were so successful that Christianity grew and survived. The same opportunity should be given to review Paul considering contemporary challenges to Christianity. Just as in the times of Paul, and similarly, today, for humanity to hear the message of Jesus Christ and receive it, the church, its methods, and messages must be finetuned and understandable to reach the culture of the times.

Hence, today there is a need to appeal to different audiences through modern methods and styles that an audience can better identify with further enabling apologists to positively impact the Great Commission in post-modernist society. This thesis will explore whether and how Paul's ancient methods of apologetics can be effectively applied to current culture and whether similar (and scalable) contemporary methods would receive Paul's approval if he were alive and in charge of a worldwide mission field today. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to analyze ancient Pauline apologetic methods for contemporary application. This includes researching Paul's ancient methods and categorizing those approaches for contemporary contemplation alongside perceived views of Christianity that help to dissuade interest on the part of the target audience regarding affiliating with the Christian faith or preventing any belief in Christianity at all. It is also true that among the targeted audience some have not heard about the Christian faith at all. This paper will match ancient methods with contemporary challenges and identify any gaps. This analysis will determine whether Paul's methods would be a good fit, or if there are newer methods that Paul might look at to fill any identified gaps due to the complex nature of contemporary challenges. The thesis intends to propose new apologetic solutions and update the application of apologetic methods through a Pauline apologetic toolkit specifically for

all interested in Christian apologetics desiring to be an effective witness for Christ. The hope is that a Pauline apologetic toolkit for contemporary application would be of benefit and use in adapting toolsets to counter pervasive secular threats to Christianity today.

Importance of the Problem

Due to several issues contemporary society faces in this digital age, the First World's current cultural milieu is mobilized to slowly chip away at the foundation of Christianity through digital media and sources. Bingaman summarizes the problem with the digital age impacting religious disaffiliation in a paper, stating:

> Digital technology is fundamentally changing what it means to be human, in particular what it means to be a religious or spiritual human being, as it becomes an "irreversible" process. Indeed, the process is having a seismic impact on the religious and spiritual lives of "digital natives," who have never known a world without the Internet. This paper will seek to determine, by way of the Digital Theology method put forward by Sutinen and Cooper, if the religious disaffiliation trend among younger populations is connected to the digitalization of society, either causally or correlational, and what, if anything, religious leaders and faith communities can do about it. Research on the effects of high social media usage will be given special attention, to highlight the double-edged nature of digital technology.[5]

The digital age is only one threat to Christianity. Post-modernism views Christianity as one meta-narrative. Such viewpoints put forth by post-modernism introduce competing philosophies/ideologies for societal consideration, formulating pseudo-religions put forth by those who can capture society's attention. One such example is the overarching ideology of moral relativism, which states that all moral decisions are deemed acceptable, as there is no universal or absolute set of moral principles. Additionally, today, there is also the idea of gender

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[5] Kirk A. Bingaman. "Religion in the Digital Age: An Irreversible Process" Religions 14, no. 1: 108 (2023), 1.

as a social construct, rather than gender as God-given. Paganism, secular humanism, and atheism also stand in contrast to the Christian worldview.

While Christianity is growing in the Third World, there is an astounding falling away, and/or unchurched upbringing far from the Christian faith by young people who have adopted these alternative philosophies to replace a Christian worldview in the First World. One such example of an area in which Christianity thrives now is Africa, where there is now a greater adherence to traditional family values embracing a Christian worldview. If it all keeps moving in the same direction, in due time Africa will be the newest missionaries to Europe to preach the Gospel message both on European soil and in North America also where African church communities are being planted.[6] Due to these facts, there is a need among apologists to expand their collective reach globally through scalable tools based on ancient Pauline methods with the hope that this thesis will bring about a renewed set of contemporary Pauline apologetic methods to push back and counter the counter-culture that is pushing back on Christianity at large.

Statement of Position

The positional claim being made is that the church has not been able to unify its most holy and sacred dogmas within the context of modern-day advancement in science and technology foremost. Furthermore, the church now faces a contemporary society in which many children have not grown up or inherited the Christian faith from a young age. Due to these perspectives, there is a compelling idea being put forth by this thesis that the solution lies within the study and development of a Pauline-inspired strategy that would be targeted specifically at younger adults born between the years of 1981-1996 and 1997-2003, considered as Millennials

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[6] "How Africa is Changing Faith Around the World," Religion, Pew Charitable Trusts, last modified on July 4, 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/en/trend/archive/summer-2016/how-africa-is-changing faitharoundtheworld

(Generation Y) and Generation Z. Essentially, winning this target group for Christ would have the greatest impact on populations worldwide. As of 2018, "Generation Z comprises 32 percent of the global population of 7.7 billion in 2019, nudging ahead of millennials who accounted for 31.5% in that same year, based on Bloomberg Analysis of United Nations data and using 2000/2001 as the generational split."[7] Although outside of the scope of this research paper, theoretically speaking, the target group would then positively impact older generations, part of families and households, with the message of Christ. Hence, overall impacts would bring about the needed "Great Awakening for Christ" worldwide, pushing back on counterculture and further fulfilling the Great Commission.

Apologists must look beyond their immediate sphere of influence creating an understanding of the utility of apologetics globally, including where apologetics can greatly inform a strategy that refocuses apologetics in a central commanding position by setting the correct tones, styles, methods, and approaches in line with contemporary audiences. Much as the Scripture is divinely inspired, there is an unwavering sense of confidence that this thesis will replicate the methods, approaches, and lessons embedded also in the Word of God to systematically produce an insightful contemporary Pauline toolkit that can be utilized to meet contemporary challenges to Christianity head-on.

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[7] Lee J. Miller and Wei Lu, "Gen Z is Set to Outnumber Millennials Within a Year," Business Economics, *Bloomberg*, August 20, 2018.

Chapter One: Laying the Groundwork

Literature Review

A fundamental matter of importance for any thesis starts with a quality literature review on the topic. A contemporary Pauline apologetic toolkit as planned for discussion in this thesis has not been entirely laid out amidst existing literature in the same way this researcher has proposed, although significant Pauline literature of varying magnitudes, topics, and directions has been written throughout the years. In the most recent years (interestingly, since the 2019 pandemic) publications emerged that are more in line with the thinking of this project. Therefore, the boundary conditions placed upon this literature review include publications that have at their essence the intent to provide a contemporary Pauline apologetic toolkit as proposed in the introduction. None consulted have mentioned specifically a contemporary apologetic toolkit.

In that absence, the literature presented must articulate Paul's ancient methods and approaches first broadly defined and in the study of Paul's character as a baseline reference. Secondly, this thesis will review the literature with specific and unique apologetic methodological approaches that may apply to contemporary society going forward as an apologetic tool to provide a strong witness to unbelievers and/or those in danger of falling away from the Christian faith due to contemporary cultural opposition to Christianity. Thirdly, the ancient societal themes and lessons that Paul applied through his apologetics will be considered as content to compare if some relevance to contemporary society is identified. As there is much written in the literature to raise awareness regarding Paul's unique methods and approaches in general, it is of practical interest to expand beyond that discussion not only identifying academic material on apologetic methodology but also a real-life practical application of Paul's methods and approaches. In the end, the goal is to build up the contemporary church today much like Paul

did in his time. This thesis presents an opportunity for a second Paul to inform the contemporary church.

Additionally, inciteful literature sources that give attention to the apologetic nature of Paul's writings and how those writings apply to the discipline of apologetics, contemporary society, and spiritual community will be reviewed, expanding the body of knowledge that creates the best environment for contemporary society to be receptive to God's Word and lessons of the Bible through apologetic tools custom-made for today's society. The literature strongly points to the impacts of the digital age in which new and needed apologetic methodologies for spiritual formation are required potentially through applying Paul's methods in a contemporary context. Other potential literature topics highly relevant to this thesis would include the challenges of the digital age, its impact upon the youngest generations, and today's evolving cultural milieu necessitating pushback not only to preserve the relevance and importance of the Christian faith in a post-modern era but foster growth through the Body of Christ. References to the religious interests of younger generations, in general, will be explored, including specific references to the nature, biases/stereotypes, and preferences held by young people within the categories of the Millennials and Generation Z. The strongest examples of literature will be included in the literature review, as deemed insightful, appropriate, and aligned with this thesis.

Methods, Approaches and Models

Perhaps the one most encompassing literature references closely covering the topic of this project was identified in the writings of Paul M. Gould, seeking to define cultural apologetics as both plausibly true and satisfyingly desirable. As of 2018, Gould based his book on his observations of the visible condition of the state of Europe leaning towards a society deeply

secular, morally and spiritually bankrupt.[8] J.P. Moreland states further in the foreword of

Gould's book that a "record of numbers of Christians—especially those thirty-five and under—

are leaving the church and abandoning belief in God and Jesus Christ."[9] According to Barna, a

polling organization tracking the role of faith in America, researchers tried to identify why

Millennials are abandoning the church and faith. Referenced are six reasons including the

overprotective nature of the church regarding dialoguing about anti-Christian ideas, shallow

teaching, antagonism to science and a failure to help reconcile believers with scientific claims,

the treatment of sexuality simplistically and judgmentally, church exclusivism claims, and how

the church is often dismissive of doubters. The conclusion is that these failures are indeed related

to the mind and the response should be the employment of apologetics to help answer people's

questions.[10] Gould's answer is the discipline of cultural apologetics, establishing the Christian

voice, conscience, and imagination within a culture so that Christianity is seen as true and

satisfying.[11]

It is important to highlight that Gould's leanings toward cultural apologetics do not

readily have the support of traditional apologists such as William Lane Craig, as quoted by

Gould. Craig concludes that "the cultural apologist is not concerned with truth, plausibility, or

justification of Christianity, but merely with showing the disastrous consequences of a godless

world," to which Gould wholeheartedly disagrees with Craig's position. Gould defends his

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[8] Paul M. Gould, *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2019), 13.

[9] Ibid.
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[10] Ibid, 14.
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[11] Ibid.

definition of "cultural apologetics," against any traditionalist pushback, considering it neutral and compatible with apologetic approaches including classical, evidential, cumulative case, presuppositional, or Reformed Epistemological.[12]

The essence of Gould's cultural apologetic model is based on the Apostle Paul as he engages the Greeks at Mars Hill in Athens and then compares the Greeks of Paul's time later with today's contemporary society. The purpose of his Mars Hill model is "to proclaim and embody the gospel in ways that are understandable to particular human cultures."[13] Gould is highly focused on the Athenian model of Paul in his publication, using this model to distill Paul's approach and arguing Paul carried out culturally contextualized apologetics that "takes place through the establishment of cultural connections with his audience and through the defense of the Christian faith against cultural objections using the Christian life as an appeal."[14] Specifically:

> The first way Paul forges the cultural connection is by the use of cultural points of contact and culturally contextualized communication that includes the use of specific language and forms that generate greater cultural receptivity from the audience. The second way Paul forms the cultural connection is by building up cultural solidarity with the hearers, which gains him admission into the hearers' culture, allowing him to speak as a cultural insider.[15]

From a Pauline perspective, Gould pins his academic writing on analyzing Acts 17:22-32 regarding Paul's visit to Athens and Mars Hill specifically. Gould dedicates two pages to describing Paul's cultural observations and actions in preparation for the Mars Hill discourse,

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[12] Gould, *Cultural Apologetics*, 21.

[13] Ibid, 25.

[14] Matt W. Lee, *Cultural Contextualization of Apologetics: Exploring the Application of the Apostle Paul's Model* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022), 4.

[15] Ibid.

identifying that Paul did his homework meticulously examining the culture he sought to reach with the gospel and where bridges could be built with the Athenians. Gould outlined what Paul felt could be accomplished by attempting to understand their cultural line of thinking and how to speak to them in a "philosophical" language Athenians could understand, stating that Paul:

(1) affirmed what he could affirm, and identifying a starting point with the inscription (TO THE UNKNOWN GOD, Acts 17:22-23);
(2) Paul outflanked the thinking of the Athenians, showing them that the God they worshiped as unknown was actually true and knowable (for in him we live, and move, and have our being. Acts 17:27 KJV); and
(3) Paul confronted their rank idolatry by giving a distinctly Christian view of reality regarding repentance and Christ's resurrection (he will judge the world in righteousness by that man he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:31).[16]

While Paul identified culture and exercised reason and evidential discourse in the Mars Hill example, from a contemporary perspective Gould references that building bridges to the gospel in post-modernity should be an expression of the three longings of the human soul – *truth, goodness, and beauty* in combination with the three guides of the soul which are *reason, conscience, and imagination*, pointing only to Jesus Christ as the source of one's longings.[17]

Nonetheless, a strong point of interest was Gould's work to develop various models for understanding an approach to use to minister to modern society, including these "four characteristics of disenchantment in today's society: the felt absence of God, a consumer culture, blindness and foolishness, and idolatry."[18] Gould tested these characteristics within his university classroom, assigning students a writing assignment regarding their worldview. After much debate in the classroom over their papers most would admit that there is a God, but when it

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[16] Gould, *Cultural Apologetics*, 26-27.

[17] Ibid, 28-29.

[18] Ibid, 52.

came to operationalizing their faith a sense of apathy existed with only a shrug and a sigh. Gould

summarizes this anticlimax reaction of young students as the following:

> The goal of life in our modern culture is no longer virtue toward an end
> (as the Greeks argued) or religion-oriented toward the divine (as the medieval
> argued). Rather, the goal of life is entirely subjective. It is found within the self.
> To be specific, the defining goal of an individual's life in this disenchanted age is
> satisfaction of their personal desires.[19]

In summary, Gould addresses a loss of reality prevalent in contemporary times, leaving go of

virtuous pursuits or a belief in a higher power. Self is promoted to the first position in the lives of

most young people. These disenchantments speak for themselves and as Gould's discussions

later move to the topic of re-enchantment that comes through returning to reality, and an

understanding of the delight in the signs of transcendence that humanity is confronted with

daily.[20] Gould further points to seeing and delighting in reality, the same way that Jesus does,

and invites others also to see and delight in this reality to which there is ultimately freedom and

fulfillment in Christ.[21] Gould points out that false re-enchantments empty of God are a danger,

identifying three main ones to include: contemporary humanism, augmented and virtual

realities, and neopaganism.[22] Gould further brings into the discussion the concept of "liturgies,"[23]

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[19] Gould, *Cultural Apologetics*, 53.

[20] Ibid, 62.

[21] Ibid, 82.

[22] Ibid, 86-90.

[23] Ibid, 179.

highly formed by the use of "technology as an ideology that conditions how we humans understand reality."[24]

Gould manifests in his discussion the Pauline parallel to Athens then and society today, which Gould identifies as "Our Athens" and labels as sensate and hedonistic. Gould's book is highly interesting and relevant to this thesis, but this researcher believes that Gould's portrayal of cultural apologetics as the unequivocal answer to approaching contemporary society's problems distancing Christians in post-modernity still requires additional mining of Paul's methods and approaches toward a more comprehensive toolkit for apologists that can be practically applied and utilized in combatting post-modern society's dismissal of Christian life as the greatest of all objectives. A deep look at culture becomes highly relevant in forming solid solutions. Where Gould's work starts this researcher departs toward identifying gaps and executing a decision-making process to facilitate the transfer of Paul's ancient apologetics into modern ones. The goal is to identify and translate Pauline's characteristics, approaches, and methods from early Christianity to Pauline-sanctioned characteristics, approaches, and methods appropriate for application today.

Similarly, Matt Lee has published his dissertation (and resulting book) on the exploration and application of the Apostle Paul's Model, titled *Cultural Contextualization of Apologetics: Exploration and Application of the Apostle Paul's Model*. The premise of his writing is that traditional Christian apologists' sincere efforts fail when cultural issues are neglected; hence cultural contextualization of apologetics is a must to consider, as Paul did (cited in Chapter 3, Gap Analysis Table, Elements # 5, Element #6 and Element #7). Specifically, Lee claims that

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[24] Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Sentinel, 2017), 219.

rational arguments do not accomplish what is needed to attract non-believers nor resolve

skepticism, as different obstacles are presented in a post-modern society and those are cultural

presuppositions.[25] Lee's book identifies a pattern of Paul's ministry including his

communications focused upon the elements of cultural connection (via cultural point of contact,

enculturated communication, and cultural solidarity) and assertion of the Christian message

against cultural objections through Christian life.[26] Lee lends interesting insights broadly

collected across Paul's apologetic speeches, specifically thirteen speeches in the Book of Acts.[27]

For example, Lee identifies Paul's use of Greco-Roman rhetoric with all its elements to elevate

his effect in his speeches, illustrating Paul's efforts to be culturally effective in his

communication.[28] Lee picks up and enhances where both N.T. Wright and Adolf Deissman left

off. Wright articulated that cultural context requires additional investigation in the works of

Paul,[29] and Deissman stated Paul's work was not led by fellow believers who were blindfolded

but were familiar with the institutions and customs of the Empire at large.[30] In general, both

Gould and Lee agree that there were deliberate methods and approaches defined by Paul before

and while acting on the mission field. Hence, one would deduce that Paul did not operate without

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[25] Lee, *Cultural Contextualization*, 10.

[26] Ibid, 12.

[27] Ibid, 85.

[28] Ibid, 48.

[29] N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1-2.

[30] Adolf Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East: the New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*. Translated by Lionel R.M. Strachan. (New York, George H. Doran, Co., 1927), 340-341.

at least a contingent plan. Paul must have given much pre-thought to how he would carry out his

mission work in the way that he did. Notwithstanding, these authors acknowledge that Paul's

methods and approaches led to Paul's planning, operationalizing of patterns and resulting models

well thought out by Paul then, and useful to contemporary application (cited in Chapter 3, Gap

Analysis Table, Element #3). The strength of this book by Lee is in the examples presented

through it regarding Paul's approaches, including Paul's strong characteristic of endowing

wisdom, as an itinerant sage, and the symbolic nature of Paul's endured suffering as a

manifestation of God's physical work, legitimizing the Christian faith to the world (see Chapter

3, Gap Analysis Table, Element #12).[31]

Another worthy source deserving a mention is the resource *Paul's Idea of Community:
Spirit and Culture in Early House Churches* by Robert Banks greatly drawn from Paul's letters

that describe the earliest of first-century understanding of the meaning and practice of

community, of which the author felt Paul's writings contained the most detailed information.

Banks looks at key aspects of Paul's approach, taking care to note how Paul arrives at and argues

from the basic principles underlying his understanding.[32] Banks addresses concepts and

approaches within the context of community and includes such topics as unity and diversity

among its members. An interesting key contrast in Banks from a cultural apologetic approach is

Paul's symbiosis between unity and diversity from the Scripture that does not acknowledge any

certain group according to culture, but instead, identifies Paul word's stating there are not any

distinctions or advantages regarding a person's heritage or national identity. God does not show

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[31] Lee, *Cultural Contextualization*, 52-83.

[32] Robert J. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: Spirit and Culture in Early House
Churches* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 20.

any partiality (paraphrased from Romans 2:11 which states, "For there is no respect of persons with God"). This was a truth Paul understood from the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 10:17). Of course, it is important to distinguish further that understanding culture is one thing, whereas finding preference due to culture is another.

This literature review would be remiss without a mention of the book by Joshua D. Chatraw and Mark D. Allen, *The Apologetics at the Cross*. This book puts in perspective that the persuasive power of a Christian's apologetic approach depends on the assumed cultural grid of the individual being spoken to.[33] Chatraw and Allen make a point that "understanding cultural plausibility structures is vital for apologetics."[34] Cultural frameworks affect a person's view on an issue, including the way evidence is interpreted or an explanation is received. A different cultural lens can cause one to interpret the world differently. These baseline assumptions are pre-reflective statements and unbelievers must be engaged appropriately to help them see that these assumptions are not universal, leaving some space for a deeper conversation about their beliefs. Chatraw and Allen propose an idea that aligns well with Gould and Lee's contributions that Christians need to learn to step inside unbelievers' cultural frameworks and work from the inside out, to be effective witnesses for Christ.[35]

Further resources demonstrating Paul's methods and models are helpful to better understand what was in the mind of the Apostle Paul as he devised his missionary strategy and plotted his travels, including the pathway of his missions. The recent book, *In the Steps of Saint*

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[33]Joshua D. Chatraw and Mark D. Allen*, Apologetics at the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 196.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid,196-197.

Paul, Walker portrays a chronological perspective of Paul's missionary work, which raises a

greater understanding regarding the type of person that the Apostle Paul was during his

journeys.[36] The limitations of this literature are that the concrete examples and details of his

approaches, methods, and models are not greatly identified throughout his book such that one

can point to Paul's methodology as a tool. The same applies to the book, *The Astonishing and*

Daunting Journeys of the Apostle Paul, which reads much like a travelogue of Paul's journeys

but with descriptions of such matters as the conditions in which Paul traveled and the challenges

Paul faced.[37] Both of these resources present the unique character of the Apostle Paul,

specifically how Paul went about his plans to minister to the multiple church plants throughout

his journey. While zeal has both negative and positive connotations, this thesis looks at Paul's

zealousness as a positive determined characteristic of Paul's personality. Both Walker and

Kloske mention Paul's unique personality and the contribution in which Paul's fervor for the Old

Testament adherence to the Jewish Law later evolved into Paul's apologetics for Jesus Christ as

the Messiah. The specific element of a determined Paul, including his role as an apologist, will

be further highlighted in this thesis (see Chapter 3, Gap Analysis Table, Element #1).

As Paul was an apologist (and a missionary), it seems prudent to look at those resources

closely aligning with the intention of this thesis, regardless of their categorization as missional,

as to whether the method and approaches of Paul's missionary work have much alignment with

Paul's apologetic methods and approaches. Stepping back a decade and a half, one finds a solid

resource by Eckhard J. Schnabel published *Paul, the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and*

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[36] Peter Walker, *In the Steps of St. Paul* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2019), 7-262.

[37] Tom Kloske, *The Astonishing and Daunting Journeys of the Apostle Paul* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2022), 1-129.

Methods, in 2008. Schnabel stated the following goal in his book: "to provide a close reading of the relevant New Testament text that helps us understand Paul's missionary work – proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and establishing communities of believers – in terms of the goals that he had and in terms of the methods that he (Paul) used."[38] In further review of the book, Schnabel states "mission or missions refers to the activity of a community of faith that distinguishes itself from its environment in terms of both religious belief (theology) and social behavior (ethics) that is convinced of the truth claims of its faith and that actively works to win other people to the content of the faith and the way of life of whose truth and necessity the members of the community are convinced.[39] The missionary approaches espoused by Schnabel conclude and portray a slightly different Paul who was not working with a grand strategy at all, but instead, his motivation was to "win as many as possible (1 Cor 9:19)." Schnabel includes a chapter specifically on the missionary methods of the Apostle Paul and concludes with a chapter regarding the similar nature of the task of missionary work in the 21st century. In this chapter Schnabel addresses Paul's methods and the relevance of his methods today in descriptive format, categorizing each as either a paradigm, principle, or rule. His lists are comprehensive and reflective of Paul's approach and how it may apply to missions in the 21st century. Schnabel writes authoritatively to the mission communities structured today, regarding Paul's contributions as also highly relevant to contemporary missions, "which need to be taken

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[38] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2008, 30.

[39] Ibid, 22.

seriously and which all need to be incorporated in a proposal for the missionary task in the modern-postmodern world."[40]

And finally, the historically iconic resource originally published in 1912 regarding Paul's methods is Roland Allen's, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours? A study of the Church in the Four Provinces*, to which Schnabel has endorsed as a must-read in the 21st century.[41] Allen sums up Paul's methods by stating that he had no preconceived plan of campaign; he went where the Spirit led; he sought for the open doors; he chose the centres most suitable for the gathering of converts and the propagation of the faith. While Allen states this fact, he also talks about definite plans Paul expressed by way of Ephesus that he would go to Jerusalem, and to Rome to follow.[42] While Allen's publication is thorough, documenting Paul's actions, methods, and approaches to Scripture, there remains varying opinion of whether there were plans or no plans, vacillating even within Allen's very well-known account of the Apostle Paul. It is a well-regarded and authoritative source, even given its age on the general topic of Paul's methods and approaches. While there are references to the same approaches of Paul, which should be applied to life at the time of this resource's writing, it is not written word-for-word as a model transferrable to post-modern times (although the content is extremely rich and detailed as to the true Biblical-referenced depository of Paul's methods and approaches). It does serve to remind us of and compare our current practices with what worked 2,000 years ago. In the final analysis, one might need to decide about Paul regarding his planning strategy, reviewing and consulting

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[40] Schnabel, *Paul*, 377.

[41] Ibid, 13.

[42] Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours*? (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2006), 13-15.

multiple sources to make a clear decision on the topic regarding how much planning Paul put into his ministry.

These more significant sources specifically aforementioned as authored by Gould and Lee on Paul's approaches and models were laid out with much of the early foundational research on Paul by such authors as Wright and Deissman, for example. "Deeper dives" into extensive and sophisticated models of Paul's methods and approaches, most likely a culmination of research preceding, are only beginning to take off at this point and over the last few years. One major observation is that there remains uncertainty regarding whether the Apostle Paul had a plan or strategy for carrying out his work. The authors expressed some agreement on parts of Paul's mission (for example, choosing a next location) but others felt he simply relied on the Holy Spirit as his guide. Hence, this quotation from Everett Berry utilized as a conclusive statement expresses the situation quite well:

> Although one cannot look at the settings of these early second-century Christian thinkers and say that American evangelicals are in the same exact cultural plight, there are undeniable points of commonality between the cultural incredulity of the second and twenty-first centuries. There were unwarranted accusations against the lifestyles of the early Christians, hostile attacks on central beliefs intrinsic to the coherence of the Christian faith, and even violent attempts to suppress the growth of converts to Christianity just as there are today around the world.[43]

The shift to a post-modern society and the digital age creates an alternative reality in opposition to Christianity. Gould references post-Christian society as a time when "talk about Jesus is the same as talking about Zeus or Hermes."[44] It requires both a different approach and understanding

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[43] Everett C. Berry. "How the Post-Apostolic Church Responded to Government: Gleaning Public Do's and Don'ts from the Second-Century Apologists." Criswell Theological Review 5, no. 1 (2007): 53-67.

[44] Gould, *Cultural Apologetics*, 20.

toward humanity, providing a complex challenge to the field of traditional apologetics. One key statement brought up by Gould is that "our words and our message must be understandable."[45] This is a key takeaway from Gould that will have ongoing importance in this thesis, including how Paul crafted his message to be understandable to the audiences and how contemporary church society can take full advantage of Paul's methods and approaches within the context of today's challenges by doing the same. Gauging a level of "understandability" will become a more important measure regarding how well people (from an apologetic perspective) can craft relevant missional messages regarding Christianity that will be met with sincere interest by the generations of unbelievers currently living in post-modern society.

Popular Culture and the Digital Age: Influencers of the Contemporary Mind

Now that cultural apologetics has been discussed, how does the apologist relate to understanding popular culture amidst contemporary post-modernist society and its elements and influencers in the 21st century. The cultural apologist spends time looking more at the cultural artifacts of society, such as sports, music, art, entertainment, social engagement, and politics as the cultural context in which society must be reached for Christ. Gould quotes Ken Myers who has hosted a forum for apologetics, the *Mars Hill Audio Journal*, and includes his understanding of the role of cultural apologists in such matters as understanding "sound bite philosophies embedded in the lyrics of popular songs, the plot of popular movies, or even the slogans in

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[45] Gould, *Cultural Apologetics*, 20.

advertising ("Have it your way," "You deserve a break today," "Just do it").[46] It is this impact of

popular culture per se that provides the clues for cultural apologists to form messages that can

counter the counter-culture that promotes "I" instead of "God" in today's post-modern societal

experiences, as an example.

Gould has alluded to this same idea in his book, citing the concept of James K.A. Smith

"that the ultimate factor critical to one's beliefs and worldview formation is one's desires."[47]

Smith further argues that human desires are shaped by "cultural practices as secular liturgies"

along with habits of the physical body instead of mere rationality.[48] Lee capitalizes on this idea

of cultural liturgies, stating "If cultural practices function as liturgies that shape one's desire and

worldview, unprecedented cultural practice stemming from an 'image-based digital world'

reduces not only an appeal for rational justification but also an ability to process it."[49] Lee further

references Root, stating that an "image-saturated world liquefies and thins out the ability to

construct meaning that connects to experiences and relationships outside the image-based

mediated machines themselves."[50]

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[46] This phrase is from a June 2005 fundraising letter by Ken Myers found in Michael Poor, "A Primer for Cultural Apologetics…," *The Humanitas Forum on Christianity and Culture*, November 7, 2013, http://humanitas.org/?p=2552.

[47] James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*. (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 1-5.

[48] James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 121-122.

[49] Andrew Root, "A Screen-Based World: Finding the Real in the Hyper-Real." *Word & World* 32, no. 3 (Sum 2012): 237-244.

[50] Lee, *Cultural Contextualization*, 2.

As early as "1976, more than a decade before the World Wide Web and the age of the Internet, the famed MIT computer scientist and artificial intelligence (AI) researcher, Joseph Weizenbaum, had noted the possibility if not probability that in the future we would reach the point of no return with the development of computer technology."[51] It was with this that the term "irreversibility" was introduced as an idea. He was referring to society's dependence on computers driving society and an individual's over-reliance on smartphones,[52] in which leading theologian, Ilia Delio concluded that even if we are not yet "literal cyborgs" through active participation in the digital culture then "metaphoric cyborgs" come to mind.[53]

Today's Cultural Milieu and the Challenges to Christianity

The Impact of the Digital Age on Religion

The situation is described in the literature as quite dire in terms of the relationship between digital and technology and religious disaffiliation, especially among those digital natives' part of the generation of Millennials and younger. It is an outrageous trend that has been referred to as altering the meaning of what it is to be human as well as spiritual or religious and alleging it is a trend that is irreversible. Bingaman mentions it is the job of future researchers to see if there is a clear causal link between the digital hardwiring, from one's earliest formative years, and the growing trend in religious disaffiliation.[54] For example, disaffiliation is among the

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[51] Bingaman, "Religion," 1.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ilia Delio, *Christ in Evolution* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 162.

[54] Bingaman," Religion," 11.

norms of younger Americans whereby young adults (18 to 29), or roughly 74 percent report that at age 17 or younger, they no longer identified with their formative religion, including one in four (26 percent) say they left before their teenage years.[55]

Insomuch, a more in-depth question remains as to what impacted early religious disaffiliation among younger Americans, specifically. Is one able to point directly to the use of technology or perhaps disaffiliation was a result of the lack of structure of the family and involvement in other extracurricular activities that helped to cultivate a separation from the church family on Sunday in favor of extramural sports activities? What comes to mind is the number of families who spend Sundays on the fields of their children's soccer matches, as an example. Or even more so is there a possibility of children just not being brought up in the church at all? Common today is a practice requiring the child to go through the major sacraments identifying them as Catholics by name only.

The digital age essentially brings about a cultural change that "disables one from making meaningful connections between language and symbols to reality," of which Root advocates that post-secular society requires a new perspective on faith formation."[56] Lowe and Lowe agree and inquire whether a significant link exists that must be further investigated as expressed by their statement, "what is the relationship between new media and theology?"[57] Furthermore, Lowe and Lowe state that consideration needs to be given by the church, its institutions, and organizations

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[55] Daniel A. Cox, *Generation Z and the future of faith in America*. Survey Center on American Life. March 24. Available online: https://americansurveycenter.org

[56] Andrew Root, "Faith Formation in a Secular Age." *Word & World* 37, no. 2 (2017): 128-141.

[57] Stephen D. Lowe and Mary E. Lowe, *Ecologies of Faith in a Digital Age*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2018), 4.

regarding the impact of the interconnected age or networked society on our concepts, paradigms, and practices of spiritual formation. So, what does this translate into in terms of understanding the truth of the gospel?

Gould, Dickinson, and Loftin raise a pertinent phrase using the example of the following response to Christian claims: "That's just your truth."[58] It alludes to the point that different views about the world beg the question of who has the right view about the world in terms of whose view is true and reasonable.[59] In this digital age, reality is a product of the information feed to which young people have grown accustomed, including the fact that among Generation Z this cohort has never known a time without technology. The question that remains is whether the lessons, methods, approaches, and models of Paul can make a difference amidst the generations identified that are so grimly represented by this literature review. Or is there a chance that the young people of this world's virtual reality can be altered with the reality of the "One True God," using the apologetic methods of Paul applied to contemporary society?

So, what is the Christian faith and church up against regarding today's post-modernist cultural milieu? Many post-modernist cultural issues are winning the minds and hearts of young people worldwide, the target population of this thesis, and to the detriment of their development of a spiritual life in Christ. The digital age has been well-summarized in the literature review as a major problem confronting today's culture. Very few human beings living today appear exempt from the implication of automation as countless lives are subjected to computers and technology in the 21st century. Nonetheless, the greatest proportion of the population impacted appears to be

[58] Paul M. Gould, Travis Dickinson, R. Keith Loftin, *Stand Firm: Apologetics and the Brilliance of the Gospel* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2019), 22.

[59] Ibid, 23.

the younger generations (Millennials and Generation Z) who are the focus of this contemporary Pauline apologetic toolkit.

Digitization is a reality that we observe as a major distraction to teenagers, youth, and adults. One can easily observe this behavior at the dinner table while walking down the street, and by observing other drivers operating motor vehicles on the roadways and highways while looking at their handheld phones. These are just the external manifestations of technology apparent in today's culture, so one can only imagine the real impact of internal ramifications, "brainwashing," taking place in the minds of the individuals utilizing technology, which is a topic of greater research and study well beyond this thesis.

A New Religion: Influencers in a Post-Modern Worldview

The post-modern worldview society is facing today is one in which a secular worldview is being promoted over Christianity. This researcher would argue that it is easy to blame only the elitists as what appears to confront us today is more of a "perfect storm," whereby the younger generations (Millennials and Generation Z) are caught in the crosshairs of societal advancement in technology, commercial and marketing interests, special interests, political interests, and sociocultural factors that impact upon their worldview and are piped through technology and social media using artificial intelligence and information feeds as a means of control. Essentially the altering of reality for users who are vulnerable and highly dependent on these technological sources of computers and phones is part of a greater plan to slowly erode Christian viewpoints from the digital scene.

This leads to a discussion regarding what further has formed the thinking of today's cultural milieu to which Christianity is up against in the 21st century. When one looks deeper into post-modernism, Jacques Derrida (among others sharing similar perspectives such as Jean-

Francois Lyotard's postmodernism's incredulity toward metanarratives, or "big stories" like

Christianity giving meaning to society) introduced the practice of "deconstruction." While

"Derrida's deconstruction and close relative post-structuralism emerged as a force among French

intellectuals during the Nazi occupation of France and the devastation of the Second World

War,"[60] Childers and Barnett in their book, *The Deconstruction of Christianity*, identify by name

the movement of "current Christian deconstruction set against the broad background of

postmodernism and explained both in terms of contemporary idiom and issues and basic biblical

foundations, helping the reader deconstruct the deconstructionists as a vital task."[61] While a

definition of deconstruction is not formalized per se, in its extreme form it is essentially the

abandonment of one's faith, although it could be essentially disagreement of one aspect of the

faith, like young earth creationism or dispensationalism, for example, while remaining

committed to one's evangelical faith.[62] Ironically, much of this is unraveling through social

media through stories and examples given through TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter, most likely

much of the activity being pushed out to the masses regarding doctrines or beliefs that begin

one's deconstruction of the faith. These questions give way to AI Chatbots delivering human-like

responses to human input. These forces help to build a case against Christianity questioning the

Bible as a trusted truth over digital means.

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[60] Alisa Childers and Tim Barnett, *The Deconstruction of Christianity* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Publisher, 2023), xiv.

[61] Ibid, xv.

[62] Ibid, 17.

As a threat to Christianity, Derrida who was an atheist himself entered a myth of objectivity,[63] through his quote:

> "What is called 'objectivity,' scientific for instance (in which I firmly believe, in a given situation) imposes itself only within a context which is extremely vast, old, firmly established, or rooted in a network of conventions… and yet still remains a context."

Thus, how this applies to post-modernism and Christianity, post-modernists question the Bible as a trusted truth, stating the writers as biased and not objective. Hence, post-Enlightenment Christianity as truth is purely objective and interpretations are the antithesis of the "real truth." Essentially, Derrida believed that there is no outside-of-text, or nothing free of context (meaning all experience is subjected to some level of interpretation).

Consequently, post-modernism is a term that the church often uses to describe such ideas as moral relativism, subjectivism, and the all-out threat to Christianity and the One True God. The discrepancy lies in understanding perhaps on both sides of the coin regarding better communicating the word "interpretation." Christians in stating that that Scripture is absolute truth tend to shun the word interpretation. Fully dismissing the Bible, seeing it as an interpretation of events makes the Gospel message an absolute impossibility in the eyes of post-modernists. What needs to be conveyed in the understandability of the message to those wrestling with post-modernist ideals is that the Bible is the inspired and inerrant truth regarding historical events that reveal to us the character of God, His purposes for mankind, His love, compassion, justice, mercy, and grace, opening us up to true communion with Him, the God who loves every one of us. What comes to mind in the Scripture is that to better understand the living Christ one must understand that the Word of God is living and resurrected Jesus Christ,

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[63] Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 2.

described in the Book of John as the "Logos," Word of God, Jesus Christ, in the Scripture, John 1:14, which states: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. To this one can add the Scripture verse, Hebrews 4:12 (KJV), which also states: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of thoughts and intents of the heart."

Hence, it is pointless to debate over absolute truth since truth can only be found in Christ. Christ is the alpha and omega, the beginning and end of all rationality in life. Ironically, many atheists were concerned in later life that Jacques Derrida himself had come to understand God. It is a juxtaposition, as Derrida often offered his understanding of God coming through first deconstructing the idea of God. Whether there was any hope for Derrida in his last days or not, one thing that pervades is post-modernist thought. It is alive and well in the text of the internet and social media, creating imagery and messaging to society and pushing forward with, to use Derrida's philosophy, "deconstructing" Christianity at every possible turn. This is much to the chagrin of the younger generations who are exposed to post-modernist philosophy primarily through instantaneous digital means (social media and internet), but also other sources of media, such as gaming, television, and film to name a few examples. The permeation of postmodernist philosophy is not just happening by chance. This is further why a contemporary Pauline Apologetic Toolkit is needed to address postmodernism's ideas rampant in today's popular culture.

Post-Modern Worldviews: Secular Humanism and Atheism

At this point, it is necessary to address the major worldviews in direct opposition to Christianity. Secular humanism as a worldview is the overarching worldview posing an

immediate threat to Christianity. The humanistic idea is that each is a mini-god unto oneself. The secular worldview is often synonymous with atheism, scientific materialism, and philosophical naturalism, although there is some confusion in terms of definitions especially when it comes to the topic of evolution. The reason why this is important to point out is because it is a worldview that throws a philosophical trick on society in understanding God-less claims and worldviews. Nonetheless, atheism in rudimentary definition states there is no God while philosophical naturalism and evolution are two additional and separate ideas. The philosophical naturalist believes that the natural world is all that exists and that therefore there is no God and there is nothing supernatural. Therefore, the philosophical naturalist believes that modern science is the primary, if not the only way to understand the truth about reality, which is nature, and nature alone. Science and the theory of evolution often add to confusion though they do not support the claim that there is no God and that nature is all that exists. Hence the fundamental and contradictory problem with philosophical naturalism is that its claim that the natural world is all that exists is not itself scientific.

According to Cliteur, an atheist is defined as someone who does not ascribe to the central tenets of theism, which is the belief in the conception of a specific God (as is what found in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam).[64] By default of being a-theistic, therefore one gravitates toward secular lifestyles. Atheists are not opposed to religion as such but only to the specific concept of God with a capital "G." Often the definition is even more simple, following Julian Baggini, atheism is the "belief that there is no God or gods."[65] To Richard Dawkins, who belongs to the

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[64] Paul Cliteur, *The Secular Outlook: In Defense of Moral and Political Secularism* (Oxford: Wiley & Sons, 2010), 16-17.

[65] Julian Baggini, *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3.

class of new atheists, belief in a god or gods or anything that slightly resembles theism is equivalent to believing in a myth. For example, as Dawkins states in his less-than-formal and matter-of-fact style filled with sarcasm, which is quite ignorant and offensive:

> The development of a myth can be very rapid, as we know from those fascinating cases that have started in our own time so that we've actually been able to watch their birth and development. There are many myths about Elvis Presley being seen alive, which make you think twice about similar stories of Jesus's resurrection.[66]

With the definitions provided above and the statement of Dawkins, there is most likely no further need to explain why atheism serves as a threat to Christianity. What is not new is that atheism and agnosticism, which is the belief that one can neither claim faith nor disbelief in God, have been around since the beginning of time, including during the time of the Apostle Paul, and so also to quote Ecclesiastes 1:9 (KJV), "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun."

The issue with those considered a part of the cohort of "New Atheists" though lies in the fact that in today's world and digital society, there is quite a substantial interest among these outspoken atheists to push secular agendas that limit references to Christianity, specifically "God" mentioned in public schools, for example. New Atheism questions the influence of faith both domestically and internationally, often calling attention to the influence of religion on violence or terrorism and is critical toward religious-motivated civil liberties. It seems that the New Atheists are focused on demonstrating the superiority of secular values on political life and crises, such as concerns of public health, HIV/AIDS, and the climate crisis. They subjugate themselves to be elitists on topics in which Biblical insights are fables or beliefs of the

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[66] Richard Dawkins, *Outgrowing God: A Beginner's guide.,* First ed. (New York: Random House, 2019), 57-58.

uneducated. Dawkins a once biologist reports that people often used to tell him that science is just another religion. He used to deny that but then started to think about what might happen if he accepted this proposition. Carl Sagan once predicted a new kind of religion and Dawkins almost endorses a kind of scientific religion. Steinhart refers to Dawkins's alternative for religion as spiritual naturalism, showing that the jobs once done by God can be done by natural entities.[67] Atheism has come to be recognized as an elitism, and to some extent, this secularism fostered by atheism is driving agendas in business, government, and educational systems. To summarize, so far with atheism as a threat, society is set up for the belief that there is no God and that science is a better religious alternative due to its rational and empirical approach.

This leads to further discussion regarding the belief in moral relativism. As stated above in the discussion about Jacques Derrida, the Bible is an interpretation and therefore biased. Hence, per the early discussion on interpretation, absolute truth is subjective. If truth is subjective, then one can conclude that all moral decisions are also relative. This leads to the discussion of moral relativism. Moral relativism states that there are no moral absolutes. Moral relativism dictates that what is right or wrong depends on culture, religion, time, or situation and "encompasses the view that the truth or justifiability of morality is determined by whatever standards or practices are established within a group or even by a single person."[68] In effect, this theory states that a moral claim is right if a person or their culture believes that it is right. C.S. Lewis tells in *Mere Christianity* the following:

> I know some people say the idea of a Law of Nature or decent behaviour known
> to all men is unsound, because different civilisations and different ages have had

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[67] Eric Steinhart, *Believing in Dawkins: The New Spiritual Atheism*. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 6-8.

[68] David B. Wong, *Moral Relativism and Pluralism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 3.

quite different moralities. But this is not true. There have been differences between their moralities, but these have never amounted to anything like a total difference. If anyone will take the trouble to compare the moral teaching of, say, the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindus, Chinese, Greeks, and Romans what will strike him will be how very like they are to each other and to our own.[69]

In direct opposition to Christianity, moral relativism rewrites for society all ethics and morals in line with secular society.

Moral relativism opens the door for opposition to Christian values and gives the right back to the persons to make their choices regarding lifestyles and behaviors that are essentially sinful yet justified by those in society who are pushing these philosophies. Each of these philosophies discussed then became like a new religion in society. It is not uncommon to see them being interwoven into the fabric of our daily lives and many Christians are tolerant of such philosophies to the point where they are going along with each of them without question, subscribing then to religious pluralism. Therefore, many Christians have joined the secular movement by agreeing that all religious opinions and ideas are essentially okay and as Christians, one should be tolerable, even if dealing with untruth. In summary, with the threat of moral relativism, what has been stated is that essentially there is no moral "right or wrong" existing in society, and therefore, all moral options are relative or subjective to the individual or culture making the decision or choice.

To this mix of threats opposing Christianity, one can add the growing religion of neo-paganism and the occult to mention a few. Unfortunately, society is such that with every new idea or concept, there is yet even a greater issue ahead to which society and Christian churches today must be challenged also concerning their tolerance. The secular worldview is trying to

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[69] C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New York: Harper One, 2001), 5-6.

eliminate the influence of the Christian faith on society at large unless something is done to bring Christianity back into the forefront of society.

The Threat to Christianity Summarized

So, what is the threat exactly? The threat is that the alternative worldviews are becoming so pervasive that without an appropriately activated church geared to contemporary and post-modernist culture, an entire segment of the world's population is in danger of abandoning Christianity. Notwithstanding, the threat to Christianity is real and the statistics reflect an unprecedented reality of a falling away and disaffiliation of the younger generations in the First World in particular. The philosophies of the day to which the realities of the younger generations are exposed through digital technology create alternative realities to Christianity which essentially endangers the growth of Christianity.

Hence, the purpose of this thesis is to unleash Paul's approaches, methods, and models, derived from the Scripture through a contemporary Pauline toolkit that can be utilized by apologists and church leadership alike to push back on the post-modern culture of today in favor of winning back the younger generations of Millennials and Generation Z for Christ. The hope is to bring about a "tipping point" for Christianity to the younger generations most affected by post-modern culture, which may then have an impact on older generations to renew their faith including family members of Millennials and Generation Z. Ideally, this renewed spirit of Christ in contemporary society amidst the younger generations will then serve to function as the missionaries of tomorrow, both in their own families and across the world.

So Why Paul Now?

Essentially, these are the moments in time whereby the church must continue to rethink and possibly diversify its approach to carry out the Great Commission. Apologetics can serve

many purposes, providing the discourse to win over intellectuals and the like, but the most important function of the apologetic community today should be to focus its approaches and methods on the youngest generations in a manner that is understandable to those who are exposed front and center to popular culture and digitalization.

The church and its leadership must further modernize how the gospel is conveyed to reconcile the false narratives and alternative worldviews that are pervasive in postmodernist culture by finding unique ways to reach the youth of the world who are either unbelievers and/or "falling away"/disaffiliating from organized Christian religion and the church at higher percentages than previously identified amongst previous generations. With a contemporary Pauline apologetic toolkit, the apologetics community will be better equipped with a fresh perspective regarding Pauline-approved tools for contemporary application proposed in this thesis project.

Chapter Two: Desperately Seeking Paul

Being Apostle Paul

Who is Apostle Paul in reality? Paul's biography is a complex one, as White states:

> Any Pauline biography worth its salt necessarily includes, beyond mere chronology, a narration of geographical movements; cultural and religious formations of a diaspora Jew; development of thought about God, Judaism, the nations, Torah, the Christ, and the self; relational intersections with other religious actors and grounds around the Mediterranean; and micro-histories of relationships with individual assemblies of Christ followers."[70]

Paul's biography is spread throughout his letters and epistles and data falls into several types of narratives, both canonical and non-canonical, as well as across other bodies of early Christian literature up to the 3rd century, including Pauline manuscripts and canons, such as Marcion's Apostolikon, and non-canonical Pauline pseudepigraphy, known *as 3 Corinthians and the Epistles to the Laodiceans*. These references validate Paul's existence, constructing a dense map of witnesses to places, events, and contacts in Paul's life that add to Biblical accounts.[71] To know that Paul exists and to comprehend the mind of Paul and what he intended is the fundamental building block on which this apologetic project is developed. It is important to understand the mindset and character of Paul, to understand his words, and why certain methods and approaches were used by him throughout his ministry.

While there are varying descriptions of the character of Paul, Kuhatschek reminds that "yet apart from Jesus himself, no one in the New Testament comes close to Paul's love for the

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[70] Benjamin L. White, "The Pauline Tradition," *in T&T Clark handbook to the historical Paul,* eds. R.S. Schellenberg and Heidi Wendt. (New York: T&T Clark, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2002), 39.

[71] Ibid, 40.

Lord, his passion and dedication to the church, or his willingness to endure prolonged suffering for the sake of the gospel."[72] Paul simply put himself out there for Christ sometimes against all logic. Paul had a long list of accomplishments that confirm his passionate and energetic dedication to the Christian message. The Scripture of 2 Corinthians 11:25-29 specifically cites all that Paul endured to bring the message of Christ in his missions including, shipwrecks, beatings/stoning, imprisonment, hunger and thirst, and dangers too many to mention.[73] There were not any obstacles to keeping Paul on point with the messages brought to the communities personally impacted by his calling. The same should be embodied in the mindset of apologists today who are in the unique position to truly tackle the issues and barriers to knowing Christ for the post-modernist unbeliever if the apologetics community can awaken themselves to the reality that traditional apologetics alone is not providing the answers to the questions that are being asked by most Millennials or those part of Generation Z. As Christianity undergoes attack today, the challenge is how to counterbalance that attack with God's truths that will capture the attention of the hearts and minds of these unique generations. As an apologetic task, this most likely will require some further rethinking and retooling of the discipline of traditional apologetics with new or lesser utilized/popular apologetic methods and approaches more fit for post-modernism. A Pauline apologetic toolkit formalizes a strategic direction not yet articulated from a programmatic perspective regarding the field of apologetics. This project is most likely not the norm in terms of laying out an apologetic strategic direction within the field of theology, but it is the result of new perspectives developed across the disciplines of the study of Paul, a

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[72] Jack Kuhatschek, *Paul: His Life and Teaching* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2010). 5.

[73] Ibid, 6.

study of apologetics, a study of post-modernism and a perspective on public policy/public affairs

that positions this thesis also to the discipline of public theology.

For example, Storrar in describing the discussion of the role of public theology states that

the task of public theology is to call Christians out of that world of mutual incomprehension into

the world of public citizenship in the company of strangers, asking do Christians only speak their

strange language or can they learn in the language of a stranger?[74] Indeed, Christianity is being

called out, much like Paul in a vulnerable position contemporary position, not only to act

determined in this post-modernist age, specifically to navigate these vastly competing

phenomena, but also to learn the language of the post-modernist culture. Likely the following

becomes the impetus:

> What is new and different about the church's present situation is its existence
> in a cosmos of constant communication: the global public sphere, where the new
> global communication technologies make it hard even for the most authoritarian
> regimes to silence all dissenting web bloggers and cell phone photographers. Like all
> other institutions, movements and religious communities, the churches are having to
> come to terms with this new local and global social reality, where third parties could
> always be listening to our deliberations, noting our failures and observing our follies
> but also encountering the gospel through our frail witness.[75]

In effect what is being experienced is much about the public square of post-modernism, which is

highly reflective of how Paul himself entered the life and times of the ancients he moved

between to preach the Gospel. At times Paul was thrown to the proverbial wolves. Likewise,

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[74] Dr. William Storrar is the director of the Center of Theological Inquiry at the Princeton Theological Seminary (NJ) and the first president of The Global Network for Public Theology (see www.ctinquiry.org/gnpt/index.htm). These papers are titled "Doing public theology in a global era, lecture 1: Public anger - the stranger's gift in a global era; lecture 2: Public spirit - the citizen's gift in a global era".

[75] Storrar, William. "The Naming of Parts: Doing Public Theology in a Global Era." *International Journal of Public Theology.* 5, no. 1 (2011): 23–43.

post-modernism has thrown Christianity and possibly even apologetics far afield from their usual mode of operation. What needs to come to the forefront is an acknowledgment from the apologetic community that this isn't comfortable, but then we need to move on much like Paul did by taking our apologetic position in post-modernism, also explaining the gift that apologetics has to share with the world, which is most importantly the grace of God for all humanity, including the saving grace of Jesus Christ for all of mankind.

In the same way, Paul pushed forward with full determination and commitment to the Gospel message above all. As Apostle Paul was gifted to preach the Gospel, he begins boldly in 1 Corinthians 1:17 explaining his gift given by Christ, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect (KJV)." Paul is stating a critical point that is foundational to understanding his methods and approaches. Paul states that he is not projecting clever speech to merely "wow" the audience to Jesus. Moreover, Paul's sincerity through words preached is not meant to overshadow the power of the Cross. This is a solid opening on Paul's part, as it is set to remind us that his efforts are not trickery or religious marketing in hopes of converting the masses to Christ. He is not softening his message to gain favor in the eyes of the Corinthians or going off-message to be accepted. Paul stands firm and starts out speaking in truth about the reality of the Cross. This is an important distinction to make because, in today's digital age, the masses appear to be easily influenced by moral relativism, specifically any perspective prevalent today through social media, the internet, television, and film, which ultimately condones ungodly lifestyles. This is the nature of our current age, as in the time of the Corinthians to whom Paul also preached.

Paul starts by immediately addressing the people of Corinth with this introductory clarification. He lays the boundary conditions and manages expectations, explaining his gift of

preaching the Gospel. Paul rightly places the Cross of Christ immediately front and center and describes the reactions to the message of the Cross both from the perspective of the unbeliever as well as the believer. In 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Paul describes these perspectives in Corinth, which is strikingly like society today:

> For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men (KJV).

As is seen similarly in the world today, the Cross of Christ is foolishness to the unbeliever and the wisdom of this world takes precedence over Christianity and belief in Him. These Scriptures remarkably align the time of Paul with contemporary times. The prevalent attitudes of today are essentially the same attitudes that were around in the time of Paul in the description of the unbeliever. Paul does not hold back. He boldly calls out both the Greeks and Jews for how each culture thought. His messaging is clear and poignant, and there is no mistake about it. Paul is determined to attack the root of each cultural barrier and misgiving about the message of the Cross.

Foundational Elements of Paul's Early Apologetic Framework

To further understand the Apostle Paul's early apologetic framework, one must first understand how Paul came to the Christian faith. Paul was Jewish and had preached the good news of God's underserved, powerful grace transforming him from a persecutor of Israel's Messiah and his people to an ambassador of God and a witness of Jesus Christ to all the world.

Paul's encounter with the crucified, risen, and glorified Jesus Christ shaped his ministry. An educated man, Paul studied under Gamaliel in the synagogue and was a learned member of Jewish society, "according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers (Acts 22:3)," but came face-to-face with the Lord on the road to Damascus where he then experienced his conversion.[76]

In scholarship, the language of Paul's letters has fallen into one of two camps, a first camp who saw Paul's letters as the language of the common people, specifically for ministry to the Gentiles, reflecting a predominantly oral culture and little formal education and a second camp of Greco-Roman rhetoric. Some scholars of the first camp argue that Paul's language was of a Jewish vernacular and was of a particular Semitic or Jewish Greek. This style was in opposition to a proper Hellenistic rhetorical style, which the second camp comprises in the language of aristocratic, advanced Greco-Roman rhetoric, and who understand Paul as writing in a highly sophisticated fashion according to Greco-Roman rhetorical handbooks.[77] Robertson finds agreement with the opinion of E.P Sanders[78] who always prefaces his work with the insight that it has "always been a major question of whether to read his letters primarily in the context of Greco-Roman culture or that of Judaism."[79] Robertson concludes that Paul's ability to

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[76] Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Paul the Missionary. in Paul's Missionary Methods. Robert L. Plummer and John Mark Terry, eds. (Downers Grove, Ill, IVP Academic, 2012), 29-32.

[77] Paul Robertson, *Paul's Letters and Contemporary Greco-Roman Literature: Theorizing a New Taxonomy* (Boston: BRILL, 2016), 27-30.

[78] Ibid, 11.

[79] E.P. Sanders, "Paul between Judaism and Hellenism," in St. Paul among the Philosophers, J.D. Caputo and L.M. Alcoff., ed.; (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 74-90.

communicate included a combination of education and training, seeming Paul combined his

talent to decide how to use his trained communication methods as needed:

> In contradistinction to both camps, arguing that Paul's language was not atypical
> within his wider Greco-Roman ancient Mediterranean context, that it was similar
> to other types of professional prose but was not a common spoken vernacular or
> a highly sophisticated rhetorical register, that Paul incorporated some features
> from advanced rhetorical theory into his writing, but we should not think of him as a
> trained rhetorician, and that I agree in many (but not in all) ways with certain minority
> assessments that conceive of Paul as a letter writer with specialized training in that
> field.[80]

In addition to the style and character of Paul, his early apologetics were uniquely set

amidst several competing forces of his time, including his Jewish heritage and training, his

conversion to Christianity, and the society of the time, which was heavily Greco-Roman in

influence. Paul seemingly straddled numerous influences upon him and within a space of about

10 years, he had greatly planted and mobilized Christianity amidst a geographical region at that

time which was an impressive undertaking and accomplishment. Notwithstanding the numerous

challenges Paul endured during his ministry and his powerful advice carried out through his last

words before his death are well-defined instructions to those concerned with preaching and

evangelizing the faith, including how to act and what to expect in the coming age, as follows in

2 Timothy 4:2-5:

> Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, Exhort with all
> longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound
> doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching
> ears, And they shall turn away their ears from truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But
> watch though all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof
> of thy ministry (KJV).

Paul predicted that a day would come in which sound doctrine would be replaced by the

lustful desires to follow the fables of this world. Paul knows well enough of the afflictions he

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[80] Sanders, "Paul," 30-31.

endured in the ministry, and he reminds Christian ministry to remain steadfast against every adverse circumstance that may befall those who are bringing the Gospel message to the ends of the earth. Paul's final words convey a strong but appropriate message that resonates and is applied to the task set before us, which is to continue to apply Paul's ancient yet timeless words to contemporary times.

Understanding Paul's Apologetic Style

While there are many elements of Paul's ministry style often identified and deliberated over in the volumes upon volumes of literature written about him, the one key defining characteristic of Paul is that his apologetics were always preceded by careful study and assessment of his targeted population.[81] While it is agreed that Paul lived in the earliest Christian times as an apologist, his apologetic method and approach are often diverse and debated. Paul receives references often as an orator in the major schools of classical and evidential apologetics. Presuppositional apologetics, a third school, only peppers the discussion throughout various literature sources, as presuppositional apologetics falls far from the tree of early Christianity and Pauline thought, and the philosophy of Paul's day, since it is indeed a school of apologetics developed out of reformed Christianity (although one might contend that it is on a most basic level the most Scriptural approach). Presuppositional apologetics is most heavily rooted in movements in the 20th century, undertaken by Cornelius Van Til, Gordon Clark, John Frame, and Greg Bahnsen. Nonetheless, in reflection of Paul's apologetics, it would most likely be agreed at minimum that among competing schools Paul was a man of great faith and reason.

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[81] Gould, *Cultural Apologetics*, 26.

The roots of Paul's classical apologetic perspective are deeply rooted in the culture of that period. The term apologetics itself derives from the ancient Greek word *apologia* (ἀπολογία)). From the perspective of classical apologetics, the Chapter 1 literature review outlined a discussion of Paul's methods and approaches in line with the discipline of cultural apologetics. By studying and identifying the culture sought to reach with the Gospel, there were opportunities for Apostle Paul to reach the people of Athens. In the Mar's Hill example covered in Chapter 1 cultural discussion, Paul, upon finding common ground and meeting at Aeropagus, outflanked the Athenians regarding their predominant theme of idolatry, specifically identifying with one idol's inscription "to the unknown God." Paul used this example to build a bridge to the people of Athens, informing them that their "unknown God" was true and knowable. He used the poetry of Greek philosophy, essentially their language, to speak to the Athenians.[82] Paul then confronted their rank idolatry, departing from the Greek philosophy, detailed in the Scripture verses of Acts 17:28-31, which states:

> For in him, we live, and move, and have our being: as certain also of our own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whoeth he has ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (KJV).

Within the above-mentioned example, Paul identifies through culture or has established an understanding of the opposing party's worldview. How does Paul deal with this? He identifies with them and even uses their own words from Greek philosophy to dispel their concept of the unknown deity, giving them instead the Christian worldview to experience and process through

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[82] Gould, *Cultural Apologetics*, 26.

Acts 17:31, which boldly identifies with, but quickly departs from the ways of the Athenians by establishing theism and through revelation in the Scripture introduces also God's known power to raise, "whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (KJV)."

To further the evidence of Paul's broad use of apologetic schools, a look at Acts 17 as told by Luke frames Paul's argument in an evidential apologetic format first in Thessalonica, where Paul entered the synagogue as a custom and for three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining to them that Christ needed to suffer and rise from the dead, saying "this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ (verse 3, KJV)." Paul further defends his claim that the Messiah promised in the Hebrew Bible would suffer and be raised again to new life. Paul's claims were truth claims requiring evidence and Paul is providing such evidence to his audience. Paul uses the Hebrew Bible as the inspired and authoritative word of God as an Old Testament reference from which to reason. One must keep in mind that Paul's apologetics were simply that. They were a style of defense that Paul espoused throughout his mission and the type itself was unnamed. It was not only what Paul said, but how he stated it that matters the most here.

While Paul did not ascribe to any one type of apologetics over another, Paul clearly speaks in the local vernacular of the culture he is presented with, to create understanding, and chooses his apologetic as labeled today as classical, evidential, or presuppositional based on what he finds will be most effective. One key feature of Paul is that he often draws attention to terms by juxtaposing key opposing concepts and ideas between a Christian Worldview in contrast with the worldviews he encountered along his journeys. The foolishness of men's wisdom is juxtaposed often with the knowledge of God or God's wisdom, particularly when it

comes to vain words and arguments. Paul's style was never given over to too many words, his

orations were poignant and appropriately chosen, regardless of Paul's speaking ability. Lee,

drawing on the work of Aaron Chalmers[83] and Craig Keener,[84] has delved deeply into the body

of literature in his book to discuss his role as an itinerant sage, a characteristic Jewish wisdom

figure of Paul's times that was valued for the rhetorical skills of being able to communicate

relevantly to different audiences.[85]

The Undertaking of Apologetics

Nobody knows for sure if the writings were meant as warnings of the Apostle Paul or as a

foreshadowing to the apologetic community, but the reformed believers a thousand-plus years

later tend to echo Paul's words to some degree. When mentioning John Calvin, Bahnsen

provides commentary on Calvin's perspective of apologetics and responds, "contentious disputes

arise from the fact that many think less honorable than they ought of the greatness of divine

wisdom and are carried away by profane audacity."[86] Calvin is commenting not of the unbeliever

with his quotation, but instead responding to the apologist who thinks and feels he is responding

to 1 Peter 3:15 through a most appropriate channel to this long-established charter foundationally

referenced by apologetics:

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer

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[83] Aaron Chalmers, *Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel* (Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press,2012), 68-87.

[84] Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 376.

[85] Keener, *The IVP*, 376.

[86] Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1998), 1.

to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear (KJV)."

Calvin opposed apologetic methods and Christian apologists who fall short of recognizing and submitting to the superiority of God's wisdom as revealed in the pages of Scripture…, "instead those who are marked with the same self-sufficiency and intellectual pride of autonomy, as the nonbelievers who are marked with the same self-sufficiency and intellectual pride…, an audacity that is profane..., not befitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ."[87] Calvin maintains that contentious disputes go nowhere, which should be discouraged as servants of God, echoing Paul's notes to Timothy which state in 2 Timothy 2:23-26:

> But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will (KJV).

In contrast, the approach that is most scripturally sound is cited in the following passages from the New Testament. Quoting the words of 1 Peter 3:15, one should give emphasis to this phrase and its meaning "set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts," hence Christ's ultimate authority over philosophy, reasoning, and argumentation.[88] Additionally, Matthew 9:4 states "And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil things in your hearts (KJV)?" Hence, from a Scriptural perspective, the heart is the seat of understanding strongly connected to the mind. In the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:5, if we are to "cast down reasonings and every high thing exalted against the knowledge of God" then we are to "bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (KJV)."[89]

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[87] Bahnsen, *Van Til's,* 1-2.

[88] Ibid, 2.

Parallel to Paul: Presuppositional Elements as Apologetic Practice

What is the significance of parallels to Paul and the area of presuppositional apologetics? The words of Paul give us a perspective on Paul's mindset as he approached his missions. Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 1:19-2, following the lead of Apostle Paul, a presuppositional defense of the faith mounts a philosophical offense against the position and reasoning of the non-Christian,[90] "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world (KJV)?" This theme is prevalent in the reformed mindset of Van Til's apologetic practice whereby "the task of the apologist is not simply to show that there is no eternal hope of salvation outside of Christ, but also that the unbeliever has no present intellectual hope outside of Christ."[91] Feinstein furthered extends this thought by stating that apologists often engage in the same level of argumentation as the unbeliever, heavily self-reliant on one's wisdom and typically relying on the "world's methods, thoughts and tactics in an attempt to obey this command…, dishonoring God every time they defend the faith."[92]

Van Til, often thought of as the father of presuppositional apologetics (although he is challenged in this title by Gordon H. Clark, as both parties came to their own views around the same period but independent of each other),[93] describes apologetics as the vindication of the

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[89] Bahnsen, *Van Til's*, 2.

[90] Ibid, 5.

[91] Ibid.

[92]Stephen Feinstein, *We Destroy Arguments: How Presuppositional Apologetics Empowers the Believer to Refute Unbelief* (Longwood, FL: Advantage Books, 2015), 2.

Christian worldview over against the non-Christian worldview,[94] or the "vindication of the

Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophy of life."[95]

In the most straightforward definition, presuppositional apologetics is a Biblical method of

defending the faith, considering what the Scriptures teach about fallen humanity and building

upon an apologetic defense consistent with this basis.[96] The root of the presuppositional apology

is epistemology, which is the theory of knowledge as an investigation of what distinguishes

justified belief from opinion. The philosophical lens through which one interprets and responds

to reality, is formed by one's theory of knowledge[97]

In layman's terms, Feinstein contends that fallen humanity rejects the Biblical God due to

a suppression of the truth in unrighteousness, he further deduces unbelievers will not submit to

Christ by the presentation of logic or reasoning. In contrast, those presuppositions and

underlying assumptions of reality dictate better how evidence will be interpreted and logic

utilized. As presuppositions suppress the truth in unrighteousness, unbelievers must be

challenged here at the presuppositional level. It is then when demonstrated presuppositions of the

unbeliever are deemed impossible due to failing to meet all necessary preconditions of

intelligibility that all alleged evidence is then considered moot, hence nullifying the

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[93]Douglas J. Douma, *The Presbyterian Philosopher: The Authorized Biography of Gordon H. Clark* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 74.

[94]Cornelius Van Til, *Apologetics Class Syllabus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, reprinted 1966), 1.

[95]Cornelius Van Til*, Christian Apologetics* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2003), 17.

[96] Ibid, 7.

[97] Bahnsen, *Van Til's*, 6.

nonbeliever/unbeliever.[98] While often misunderstood among apologists, presuppositional apologists still employ "logic and reason but never to reinforce the false autonomy of mankind, which would ultimately strengthen the positioning of nonbelievers/unbelievers to think they sit in judgment over God's claims."[99]

Presuppositional apologetics states that one cannot have either a direct proof for either God or Christianity; neither can make either one the conclusion of a noncircular argument versus traditional argument where premises are known independently of the conclusion and grounds for the conclusion.[100] According to Morley, Van Til pushes back on this type of argumentation stating "nothing can be known independent of God because truth is ultimately whatever God says it is."[101] God determines all reality, essentially He is in everything. A fallen man comes not from just ignorance but from rebellion. Therefore, it is not easy for the unbeliever to add a few adjustments or alterations to his argument to come to the knowledge of God, instead, the unbeliever must completely tear down and rebuild his worldview, making God the complete source and grantor of every fact.[102] Or as Van Til points out, "God himself is the source of all possibility, and, therefore, of all space-time factuality."[103] Presuppositional apologetics is an

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[98] Feinstein, *We Destroy*, 7.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches* (Downers Grove: IVP Academics, 2015), 16.

[101] Ibid
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[102] Ibid.

[103] Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1969), 12.
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apologetic geared toward unbelieving contemporary worldviews much like what is found in contemporary society today. Van Til uses the philosophy of Paul who approaches community similarly, which can be summarized in the words of Van Til, "if we are to win people, we must speak to them in their language."[104] The apostles did this when they used the Greek term *Logos* for Christ. Paul strongly embraces his mission communities similarly by finding common areas in which to connect and speak so that the hearer will understand.

How can contemporary society provide the message of Christ to those who are unchurched, and open-minded, but without significant knowledge of God? While traditional classical and evidential apologetics will always hold an important place in apologetics, one may conclude that presuppositional apologetics as a Biblical approach is the foundational starting point in which to hold these conversations through various means with contemporary audiences of the generation of Millennials and Generation Z (who appear not to be asking the same questions as those who require a traditional classical and evidential apologetic response).

Example of Paul's Presuppositional Approach to Defend the Faith

Since the Apostle Paul is often referenced as an early apologist, one might ask the question as to whether Paul's methods and approaches were ever presuppositional? How and where did Paul apply presuppositions focusing on God and revelation as the most effective approach to those communities of his time who had their presuppositions? To elaborate further the difference between classical or evidentialist versus presuppositional apologetics is that the classicists argue from a position of neutrality, presenting arguments that avoid any use of distinctly Christian presuppositions. Presuppositionalists claim there is no neutrality involving

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[104] Morley, *Mapping*, 63.

Jesus, and no compromising between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of this world. Trusting

God's world is the path to coming to a saving knowledge of Christ (John 5:24, 8:31, 15:13 and

Romans 10:17) and this requires presupposing that God's Word is the foundation of all human

knowledge, both truth and error (Deuteronomy 18: 18-19, 1 Corinthians 14:37, Colossians 2:2-4,

2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1: 19-21). Presuppositional apologetics therefore, like all human

inquiries into the truth, must presuppose the truth of God's Word.[105]

A rarely mentioned example referred to as Paul's presuppositional apologetic approach is

found in Galatians 5. John Frame has a definitional perspective on apologetics that speaks very

well to Paul's apologetics in Galatians. Frame's definition of apologetics states "the discipline

that teaches Christians how to give a reason for their hope."[106] Bahnsen further articulates that

presuppositional apologetics is defending Christianity as a whole, vindicating Christian theism,

and providing a basic method for answering every challenge brought to bear against the Christian

faith.[107] Which Frame contextually drills down further in placing this discipline for the glory of

God whereby "ultimately, is nothing less than the whole of Scripture, applied to the needs of the

hearers."[108] Galatians as an example of presuppositional apologetics accomplishes exactly what

Frame and Bahnsen articulate in terms of the Christian faith. The church of Galatia was

experiencing a definitional issue as to what is freedom in Christ at the time. While this was most

likely not unique only to this church, possibly Paul distributed his letter to the Galatians to other

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[105] John M. Frame, "Presuppositional Apologetics," The Works of John Frame & Vern Poythress, (frame poythress.org blog).

[106] John M. Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God: An Introduction* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994), 1.

[107] Bahnsen, *Van Til's*, 34-38.

[108] Ibid, 31.

churches as well.[109] Nonetheless, the issue at hand was to clarify with the new believers, highly

Gentile, what their relationship should be with the old Jewish laws. Specifically, the Jewish

worldview of the time was clashing with what Paul was trying to instill in the Christian

worldview and mindset. It is important to remain open-minded to understanding Paul's use of

presuppositional apologetics through the following course of events and words.

Of importance was that Paul's first converts and early Christian leaders were Jewish

Christians struggling with a dual identity, as "their Jewishness constrained them from being strict

followers of the Law,"[110] as their faith in Christ demanded a religious liberation and these leaders

then wondered how new Gentile (non-Jews) converts fit into the picture and could be part of the

Kingdom of God. This was a letter written to refute Judaism's influence at the time and to put

forth the pure Gospel of Christ. Galatians 5:1-6 reads:

> Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not
> entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be
> circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is
> circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto
> you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through
> the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither
> circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love
> (KJV)."

What did Paul do exactly? Paul found a bridge to the presuppositions of the Judaizers and

spoke boldly out to those who were willing to accept the bondage that the Law was put upon

them. He redirects the church to an understanding of the Old Testament teachings of grace,

further explaining the purpose of God's laws and the relationship between Law, God's promises,

and Christ. Paul defines that freedom is in effect the freedom to love one another and serve one

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[109] *Life Application Bible, KJV* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House), 2049.

[110] Ibid.

another,[111] as stated by Galatians 5:13-14: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (KJV)."

Ultimately, Paul invites the audience back to the Christian worldview. Paul uses his defense to set his worldview in direct contrast to the Judaizer's worldview or to expose the presupposition of the opposing worldview, which waters down a Christ model ultimately placing man in a position of truth over God. In effect, Paul is assuring the sanctification of the lives of individual believers and for the overall divine purification of the Body of Christ. Paul uses his apologetics to not only clarify his understanding of the Gospel message but also on how to live out the Gospel message.

Galatians has contemporary ramifications in terms of speaking out against modern-day contamination of the Christian Gospel happening within many churches supporting false doctrine set forth by competing worldviews to turn a blind eye to the sinful nature of men and corrupt the Gospel message through an attempt to honor "inclusivity." Many churches have opened themselves up to the practice of softening the Gospel message to concede to today's culture, while others have pushed back in the spirit of Paul's message to the Galatians, which is to strongly clarify the church's position on sin and message put forth in the Gospel in a loving way, while also putting forth love and service to others despite the competing perspectives between secular worldviews and Christianity. The Gospel must stand on the truths it outlines but the church itself must continue to minister out of love for humanity despite the state or condition of the human being, gently pointing to truth in its message despite the conflict created, which is

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[111] *Life Application Bible*, 2049.

merely a matter of interpretation and understanding perhaps falsely concerning the true mission

of the church. It is very easy for secularists today to push back on religion, accusing bigotry,

when the Scripture provides a firm position on the issues and matters at hand as the Word of

God. In conclusion, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 summarizes Paul's statement commenting on his speech

and plainly articulating his apologetic approach, as follows:

> "And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom,
> but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That faith should not stand in the
> wisdom of men, but in the power of God (KJV)."

Why Choosing the Right Apologetic Matters Today?

Choosing the right apologetic is a methodology of Paul that was a hallmark of his success

in early Christianity. Contemporary societal worldviews are diverse, just as in the time of Paul,

and with that as a baseline the apologetic of choice must be carefully selected before ministering

to the diverse unbelievers who are subscribing to the philosophies and underpinnings of atheism,

moral relativism, and other philosophies bringing forth numerous perspectives outside of the

Word of God. Apologists should be open-minded and optimized toward all apologetic methods

and approaches just as Paul was in his approach.

First, given the many worldviews of society today, one should be prudent in adopting a

method and approach after assessing the elements of culture, just as Paul did as he walked

around Athens before his apology at Mar's Hill. There will be a clear difference between

speaking to members of the target population who ascribe to atheism versus members who are in

the class of unbelievers who have had minimal or no exposure to the Christian faith. Both types

of parties exist and with each is brought a whole number of different aspects and circumstances

that make each occasion unique unto themselves. Due to many influences outside of the church,

the younger people of the Millennial generation and Generation Z have the least amount of

exposure to the Truth of God's Word. For many in this targeted population, the Word of God might be being heard for the first time.

As we have evidence that the Apostle Paul resisted "vain" chatter at all costs then, so would it make sense to do the same with today's society? Comparing ancient society with contemporary society is a worthy exercise to demonstrate the commonalities between Paul's world and the present one. Just as in the days of Paul, today's society is open to numerous false ideas and teachings that are coming from the age of the internet and are continuing to be propagated in the digital age. These falsehoods must be addressed one by one and the best method for doing so is through are grounded in a contemporary application of Scriptural references that mimic the ancient world of Paul, who is also mimicking and imitating the apologetics of Christ Jesus Himself. The ancient methods and approaches of apologetics must find a way to be handed down firmly, hence the mission of the Pauline apologetic toolkit.

Paul's Themes: Now What Did He Say About Doctrine?

As the discussion has focused on how Paul said it, we will turn further to the heart of the message of the Apostle Paul throughout his writing. There is infinitely more to the Apostle Paul as he carried out his works across the geographical distances where he preached and planted churches. What has been learned thus far is the characteristics of Paul as a fervent spirit for Christ with a strong and determined constitution (and sometimes zealous attitude) to carry out his mission. Paul was a bold leader for Christ and while he was flexible using multiple types of apologetics when needed, he was not without some planning and strategies that fostered his approaches and methods to carry out his ministry as he saw fit, varying with the culture presented to him.

One particular area not addressed was the recurring doctrinal themes throughout Paul's ministry, as these main tenets of the faith were further carried out by early church fathers, which were intentionally taught by Paul to establish common themes among the early church. The toolkit will capture also those common doctrinal matters as part of Paul's tools, methods, and approaches. While Paul was a Jew, there is much debate about how much he had progressed in doctrinal matters. There are mixed opinions regarding Paul's impact on early church doctrine. For example, some scholars still tout Paul's monotheism and commitment to his Jewish roots, while other scholars feel that Paul started to leave a trail of doctrine that laid the framework for the Triune God over a century later that became a firm doctrine of the church. For purposes of this toolkit, it is fruitless to debate one side or another, but instead to identify and cite the key major themes in Paul's messages that were most central to his apologetics and evangelization. These messages deeply embedded in the missions of Paul give the reader a sense of what Paul felt important to convey to his audiences, whether Jewish or Gentile.

Several key grand themes are introduced as they appear regularly in the writings and orations of the Apostle Paul and are uniquely doctrinal matters:

(1) Paul taught Justification by Faith. Paul emphasized one can be saved by faith; hence, salvation comes through faith in Jesus rather than adherence to the Jewish law or good works. Key verses are Romans 3:22-245 and Ephesians 2:8-9. While this is heavily debated by the New Perspectives on Paul academics, for purposes of this toolkit a traditional interpretation will be maintained.

(2) Paul taught Grace and Mercy. The significance of the grace of God in the process of salvation, as to how it is freely given. Romans 11:6 and Ephesians 2:8 are excellent references as such.

(3) Paul taught regarding Christ's Atonement. Paul spoke about the Message of the Cross and how Christ's death is humanity's forgiveness of sins and hence justification before God. This is articulated in Romans 5:8-11 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

(4) Paul taught the Resurrection of Christ. Christ's resurrection was central to Paul's teaching as it provides humanity's hope for eternal life also beyond the grave.

(5) Paul taught about the Body of Christ. Paul spoke about how the Body of Christ represents all believers, from all Christian faiths, emphasizing the unifying idea across Christianity with Christ as the head of the Body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and Ephesians 4:11-16 expound on this teaching.

(6) Paul taught that all freedom comes through Christ. This was addressed as tension presented itself to the early church regarding the law and freedom through Christ that come to believers, who should then be guided by love, not the law. Key verses of interest are Galatians 5:1 and Romans 6:14.

(7) Paul acknowledged the importance of the Holy Spirit. Paul highlighted that the believer's life includes the Spirit's indwelling, how the Spirit guides Christian life, and the various spiritual gifts of believers. The references are included in Romans 8:9-11 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

(8) Paul discussed Eschatology at large. The hope in Christ and our future lives with Him in eternity included a discussion of the resurrection of the dead, judgment, and God's eventual Kingdom. This was articulated by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.

These key doctrines and other teachings will be further discussed both within the Gap Analysis of Chapter 3 and in Chapter 4, whereby further analysis will form the findings of that chapter.

Ultimately this toolkit is designed to mimic Paul who followed Christ, by the Scripture set forth by Paul himself in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ (KJV)." In the next chapter, this toolkit intends to further identify all of Paul's greatest methods and approaches, detect any gaps in Christian society that serve as a barrier to the Great Commission, and communicate any updated 21st-century methods and approaches that Paul would most likely endorse for contemporary society if Paul were present today.

Chapter Three: In Search of Gaps

Introduction

The purpose of Chapter 3 is analysis leading to the elements required to present a

contemporary Pauline apologetic toolkit. Chapter 3 is largely a gap analysis. A gap analysis is a

method of identifying the difference between current knowledge, skills, and/or practices and the

desired best practice (or the desired state), as seen through the eyes of the Apostle Paul if he

were around today to perform this assessment. The mission/ministry practice gap is defined as

the problem in practice or the opportunity for improvement. The steps to conducting a gap

analysis are the following:

1. Define (Paul's Apologetic Methods and Approaches): What did Paul do in ancient times? What were Paul's effective ancient approaches/methods?
2. Measure (Current State): What is the current state of apologetics as it relates to missions/ministry in contemporary society?
3. Analyze (Identify Gaps): What is the difference between what Paul did in the ancient world and what should be done in contemporary times, as specific to the target population?
4. Act (Desired State): What is the desired state of missions/ministry using Pauline apologetic approaches/methods: What should be happening if applying scalable Pauline approaches and methods?
5. Improve (Changes Needed): Are gaps due to deficiencies in knowledge, skills/abilities, and/or practice? Why do you think the current state exists? What is the underlying or root cause? What evidence do you have to validate that a gap exists?

Since the literature is plentiful and speaks to Paul's ancient methods and approaches, the first

step is to identify the top ancient methods and approaches of Paul and the desired state of

contemporary application of Pauline-approved methods and approaches. Gaps are then identified

to determine the missing elements in contemporary society. The gaps are due to:

- Knowledge (doesn't know),
- Skill/ability (doesn't know how), and
- Practice (doesn't do in practice).

By addressing the gaps, one can show where improvements can be made by the apologetic community and Body of Christ at large to support the mission/ministry of reaching the target population of Millennials and Generation Z.

- Knowledge: the apologetics community/Body of Christ has/has not knowledge about the topics/subject
- Skill: the extent the apologetics community/Body of Christ can/cannot apply knowledge and skills (shows how)
- Practice: the extent by which the apologetics community/Body of Christ translates/is unable to translate knowledge and skills into practice through actionable items

By identifying the deficits of the present contemporary missions/ministry to the target population, the apologetic community/Body of Christ can determine appropriate target methods and assessment techniques for mission/ministry activity, specifically targeting young people worldwide who are considered members of the Millennials and/or Generation Z.

To understanding how to categorize gaps, the following examples of gaps are applied to the topic of target population:

- A gap in *Knowledge* example would be a general unawareness of the needs of the target population with little or no effort to provide customized outreach.
- A gap in *Skills* example would be a lack of trained ministry personnel (staff of appropriate age) geared and focused to reach the target population.
- A gap in *Practice* example would be no "central command"/organization designated specifically to facilitate outreach to the target population.

With these instructions in mind, a tabular format will be used to present the analysis of the work of the Apostle Paul and its application to contemporary times. In doing so, the framework will be established to further discuss findings which will be elaborated in Chapter 4.

Table 1. Gap Analysis: Paul's Ancient Methods & Contemporary Proposed

DEFINE	MEASURE	ANALYZE	ACT	IMPROVE
Paul's Ancient Apologetic Methods and Approaches/What did Paul do in ancient times? Paul's Target: Mediterranean population/highly Gentile	Current State of Contemporary Ministry	Voice of Target Population Reaction/Gap Analysis of the Ministry/Missions/Body of Christ. Target: Worldwide Millennials & Generation Z	Desired State of Contemporary Missions/Ministry/Body of Christ applying Paul-approved Methods/Approaches? **Paul-Sanctioned Contemporary Tool Proposed**	Change needed in contemporary ministry/missions/Body of Christ Improvement addresses and root cause from barriers of Knowledge, Skills/Abilities and Practice
1. Determined Attitude and Character, demonstrating love, compassion and humility Paul was known to be zealous first for the Jewish Law, but then for Christ. Paul encouraged love and service for one another in line with the true Gospel	Ministers, particularly church leaders, are often equated as being zealous and fanatical, using scare tactics. Portrayal of the message of Christ's love for humankind and the true message of the Gospel is not immediately evident.	Scaremongering to convince target population comes across as too zealous and is a turn-off. Feeling that the church stands in judgment solely. No feeling of love is present in the speech or presentation.	Apologists desired state is to "mimic Paul who mimics Christ" as determined to win souls for Christ by not appearing fanatical. Sharing Christ is showing love for one another through action (servanthood). Proposed Pauline Tool/Apologetic Character Self-Assessment: Pauline Character Self-Assessment Tool for apologetic and ministry staff to also understand the character and tone in which to work with this targeted population among others.	Preach love and demonstrate service to one another as a key Pauline message is suitable for Millennials and Generation Z today. This message must be crafted with Scripture that demonstrates Christ's love for humanity. Root Cause: A Gap in Practice
2. Key Leadership Component Paul exhibited a strong learned and educated leadership example, inspired by a revelatory personal encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus	--Fallen evangelists (-) --Clergy as pedophiles, or racist --Pastoral staff demonstrating Narcissistic tendencies (-) --Pastor staff outdated hair and clothing (-) --Church papal structure did not protect the churches success/failed its people (-) -Minister is often not approachable and seemingly uneducated.	Bad publicity means that target group is unable to take the modern church seriously and does not want to join in. These target groups are not easily won over when church environments do not seem real and genuine. Remember that Paul's revelatory encounter crafted his approach, making it real to his audience.	Apologists must train for leadership including recruitment that not only assesses desire but true inspiration for ministry. A minister should be one who is positioning himself to be as esteemed as Paul was to the early church. Pauline Proposed Tool/Apologetic Leadership Training : A Contemporary Pauline Leadership Training required for pastors and church staff to both learn and raise their	Ministers must demonstrate a real and genuinely positive persona and Gospel message to gain the confidence of Millennials and Generation Z. Ministers should be genuinely approachable and with education or training. Root Cause: A Gap in Skills & Practice

DEFINE	MEASURE	ANALYZE	ACT	IMPROVE
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			level of conscience and awareness to the issues of ministry for the Millennials and Generation Z.	
3.Planning of Approach and Locality of Ministry Paul included deliberate apologetic methods and approaches before and while acting on the mission field, leading to patterns and resulting models to advance Christianity. (Paul acknowledges also Holy Spirit as his guide, seeking open doors and centers most suitable for converting those to the faith).	Most discussions regarding God are heard in a church today and online discussions for a person seeking the Christian faith are not well-organized and are confusing for a newcomer. Where do I seek online as an unbeliever amidst the barrage of information? Who should I rely on to learn and understand the truth? Where or who is my Contemporary Paul, who can bring the Message of Christ online?	If you avoid entering a church, hearing the Message of Christ is easily avoidable by Millennials and Generation Z. Location appropriate might include virtual and online equivalents to church where the Gospel message can be heard in other formats.	Apologists must reach out to alternative locations for Millennials and Generation Z to gain exposure to the faith including: -Street Ministry, citing Presence in Netherlands who holds praise, worship and reading of Scripture in cities in the Netherlands, also other places in Europe -Virtual Online Ministry, including internet radio and Christian education (citing Orthodox Christian Network, Ancient Faith radio, as examples) -Ministry through radio, television (Super Bowl ads), and film, including advertising (citing ads at bus stops in City of Pittsburgh for Christian books)	Go where these populations groups are. Like Paul, the location he ministered was likely planned but often diverse (for example: on the street, in the church, and elsewhere…) Root Cause: A Gap in Skill & Practice

DEFINE	MEASURE	ANALYZE	ACT	IMPROVE
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			-Revisit revival settings/tent meetings (much like Mississippi did with a tent meeting) but perhaps in cities or other venues like stadiums. Pauline Proposed Tool/:Apologetic Ministry Planning/Location: Publish a list of contemporary locations for creative ministry to reach the target audience.	
4. Paul's was very wise and visited Synagogues to establish an approach, craft speech, develop discourse, rhetoric and writing skills. Paul identified with his Jewish roots, visiting the synagogue, and sharpening their argument with the Scribes on the Scripture. He identified with the educated and Paul sought to sharpen his ministry skills, developing an approach that should wisdom. While there is some debate, Paul combined both his Jewish heritage and education with competing forces at the time in Greco-Roman culture, including both	Ministers of the Faith are often not educated, unwise or actively trained to fulfill the mission of reaching others for Christ with an appropriate approach. A stereotype exists that Christians are uneducated and oppose intellectual pursuit.	The Christian faith is not well-respected due to a backwoods mentality that is outdated in contemporary times. The intellectual capabilities of minsters are often lacking to keep up with cultural changes in contemporary society. There is a burgeoning gap between the church and the digital age.	Proposed Pauline Tool/Professional Development: Apologists should prepare professional development and continuing education on apologetics and Christian witness, including evangelization. Gear training of Christian minister/mission/Body of Christ with proper education and training that can compete with the trends in contemporary society. The ministry needs to be attractive to this target group to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth.	Redesign curriculums for ministry to be more up to date with contemporary society and needs. This must happen at all levels of study that serve as entry points into ministry. Apologetic education must be provided also to the Body of Christ from ministry to lay staff. Root Cause: A Gap in Knowledge, Skills, and Practice.

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highly sophisticated rhetoric, and also Jewish vernacular, but most certainly some letter writing training.[112]				
4. Culturally Assess Paul examined and assessed cultural dynamics of a target group before ministry. (What is it that the Athenians had to hear about? The Unknown God)	--Often worship music is not fitting for target group and does not effectively set the scene for receptivity to the sermon --Sermons lack applicability of the target audience, or ministry wants a seeker-friendly church and is therefore unwilling to speak the truth on controversial topics (sexuality, abortion)	Contemporary culture is hard to locate and identify with as many if not most relationships are established online and in a digital format, and not through a physical church building.	Proposed Pauline Tool/Culture: Apologists utilize and consolidate resources and online tools that assist with assessing the culture of contemporary society, such as the issues that a person is grappling with in culture.	Gaining an understanding of the target population culture will give an entrée to discussions that are relatable and productive for the apologetic community. Much work needs to be done in this area and made available easily to those in the ministry. Root Cause: A Gap in Knowledge, Skills, and Practice
6.Culture and Focus Population: Although Paul did not exclude ministering to all who he encountered, Paul focused on ministering to everyone but targeted major cities where circumstances and challenges faced those communities. Paul started his ministry at the level of the synagogue where he sharpened his skills in efforts to reason with the Jewish learned and	Some church tries to appeal to unbelievers, but other churches are not reaching out at all to unbelievers due to their own insularity and comfort zone or concerns about not being able to accommodate many from today's culture. Possible challenge is preaching on controversial topics in contemporary culture. Overwhelmingly the target population mirrors Paul's experience, many without pre-knowledge/unchurched.	Outreach to unchurched is not routine and alternative venues need to be explored (like tent meetings) reference recent Mississippi meeting where young people committed to Christ or other face-to-face small groups and house churches to meet the unchurched	Proposed Pauline Tool/Understanding of Post-Modernism: Apologists need to gear Christian messaging and select resources specifically toward unchurched Millennials and Generation Z.	The ability to reach the unchurched requires a devoted strategy to understand today's culture and those who are most vulnerable, such as Millennials and Generation Z pervasive in unbelief. Root Cause: A Gap in Knowledge, Skills, and Practice

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[112] Sanders, "Paul," 30-31.

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then usually moved onto the Gentiles.				
7. Communication based on Cultural Contextualization Paul communicated in a language that was understandable and through multimedia (letters, epistles, in person, via messenger, using apologia, preaching, rhetoric as an oratory art, via example in his lifestyle, work and activity as a proclamation of Jesus Christ)	Confusion exists regarding what is Christian faith and where to tune in (-) for the best information. Communication about the faith is often not in a contemporary vernacular or accessible in the circles to which the target population is familiar with or accesses regularly for information.	Current media is delivering messaging that is anti-Christian through use of AI which is further alienating digital users from traditional church environments. Ministry must be carried out by these media sources to attract the interest of the target group. This is most likely the best chance of successful digital media ministry and leading target group to Christ.	Proposed Pauline Tool/Multi-Media Strategy: Apologists need to mobilize a worldwide multi-media unit geared toward various populations of focus today gaining the interest of and most readily relied upon by Millennials and Generation Z. Contemporary example equivalents that would be Paul approved include: Letters, Epistles, Books, Websites Via Messenger: Social Media/AI Using Apologia: Social Media/AI Preaching: Social Media/AI Rhetoric, oratory art: Film, YouTube, TedTalks	A concerted effort to use alternative media is needed, and the use of film is most effective (and distribution channels like Netflix for viewing). Root Cause: A Gap in Skill and Practice
8. Schools of Apologetics: Paul's utilizes apologetic methods, including classical, evidential and presuppositional throughout his letters and epistles.	The literature points out that there isn't always consensus about which apologetic method to employ. For post-modernism, 18th century rationalism of traditional apologetic methods not applying well to 21st century people who find it	Apologetic methods tend to be highly obscure, difficult to understand or maintain focus upon, and not used often to minister to the target population in post-modern era who find rational arguments problematic and	Apologists must increase the understanding of apologetics within the church, including training programs and post-modern curriculum and a potential online library specifically with tools for ministers, including laypersons in ministry at large. This post-modern apologetic curriculum must be	Raise awareness as to a post-modern and contemporary apologetic that can feature examples of apologetic arguments for matters such as the existence of God, etc. from a traditional standpoint but also deviate to meet the needs of the target population. Keep all arguments available through a media source to access and

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	restricting and outdated).[113] Presuppositional apologetics is not well understood as an alternative. There are other lesser-known approaches that are not as popular but should be brought to the forefront of investigation to apply to Millennials and Generation Z.	are deeply and images. Post-modernity is also more interested in a truth that proves itself capable of being lived out.	contemporary with methods and approaches that specifically meet the times and targeted populations identified in order to win them to Christ. Proposed Pauline Tool/ Apologetic Schools Curriculum: There are many resources but apologetic methods to witness to diverse populations require a tool to organize for the times. Academic material is disparate at best and need to be presented in a way that can be easily utilized and is meaningful and practical.	disseminate through various digital means, including AI. Make a training available for lay persons, as well as integrate apologetics training into all ministries at all levels. Root Cause: A Gap in knowledge, skills, and practice
9. Teachings of Paul along his Ministry Journeys The key teachings including apologetic discourse swayed the presiding worldviews of Paul's audiences toward the Christian faith (as is documented throughout New Testament Scripture). (See chart in Chapter 4, Findings for details)	Paul addressed each environment with a specific key message to the people of each region based on their struggles. That which was convincing of the people of Paul's day should be captured and shared with contemporary audiences using the Pauline perspectives and teachings.	The idolatry of today requires relevant preaching and teaching that will help to change the hearts and minds of contemporary idolatry current culture faces. Those in sinful ways need to understand the truth of God's word.	Apologists must fully understand and embrace the messages of Paul, bringing new insights to reaching a specific target audience. The challenges of Paul's times mirror today's society, and it is prudent to summarize as a tool. Proposed Pauline Tool/Library:	Bring Paul's thematic sermons to the forefront to deal with post-modernist contemporary culture in such a way to prevent a turning away from Christianity in favor of false truths. Root Cause: A Gap in knowledge, skills, and practice

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[113] Lee, *Cultural Contextualization*, 3, citing Alistair McGrath in his book, Mere Apologetics., Alistair McGrath, *Mere Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2012), 24-31.

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			An extensive apologetics library of ancient Paul geared for contemporary times that can equip churches and ministries with key teachings.	
10. Paul endured all circumstances for the Lord Paul endured endless suffering as an encouragement of believers, the qualification for the call through endurance, and the manifestation of God's work in a physical sense. Not all parties were immediately receptive to the message Paul presented. Paul endured rejection. In ancient times Paul was the central coordinating body although he relied on friends and others who were involved in helping him, so he had a larger team that assisted his efforts.	Today Christianity also appears to be in a position also of enduring all kinds of pushback and negative publicity. Christianity is not always popular. There is hope through Christ. If Christ was not the True God, then the modern church would not be under attack as it is. These attacks further legitimize the Christian faith. Currently, a strategy to reach this target population is not well-coordinated and as of now social media is used to both deconstructing the faith and persuading younger people toward alternative pseudo-religions and causes (Climate, Gender, etc.) without thought to Christian perspectives on matters.	Reach the target population on their grounds by enlisting all social media options most used by the target population, including Twitter or Gab, for example, and through use of AI (list to be determined). Realize that defending Christianity to the world will not be easy.	Apologists must be developed and acknowledge the apologetics community in which Christian media should be better aligned to institute counteract attacks with the goal of using digital media to advance Christianity among the target population, but global society overall. Proposed Pauline Tool: A central organizing body, a Pauline center, around Apologetics geared toward coordinating all aspects including funding, media, and other outreach efforts on social media to counter the attack on Christianity. To date, this is fragmented in its approach and should be revisited as a strategy.	Identify a plan to coordinate a large-scale apologetics strategy with a large media house who would be willing to take this on and coordinate it much like Paul did. Root Cause: A Gap in Skill and Practice

Summary and Conclusions

Much can be learned from this tabular gap analysis that identifies, analyzes, and reviews key characteristics of Paul's ministry that may provide valuable insights resulting in further discussions of possible resulting toolsets that the contemporary apologetic community might leverage to reach the targeted populations of Millennials and Generation Z worldwide. This can only be done through a deep dive looking at the reactions or gaps that the target population identifies between the current state of ministry versus the desired state regarding apologetic techniques that Paul would approve for contemporary ministry if he were present in contemporary times.

The stakes are high, and Christians are accountable to God for the efforts made to reach the lost. This gap analysis represents a methodical way to try to identify the root cause for the rejection of the modern church today. It is important to think comprehensively about how the ministry may align with the targeted population of Millennials and Generation Z to establish gaps and remove barriers that keep this target population from unbelief and out of the church. If these methods and approaches can be further developed, then a model Pauline toolkit can be made available to ministries everywhere so that these insights can further inform their strategies for carrying out the Great Commission. Chapter 4 will provide a thorough discussion of the "how-to" regarding this contemporary toolkit, identifying any findings and trends resulting from the gap analysis that will require remediation through recommendations to the apologetic community, church ministry, as well as through the broader Body of Christ, in terms of pushing forward on an apologetic toolkit. Chapter 4 will also delve deeper into the specific doctrinal teachings of Paul as part of the apologetic toolkit. This researcher hopes that even a portion of

the Chapter 4 findings can be utilized by interested apologists on some level as assistance in

reaching the target population.

Chapter Four: A Pauline Apologetic Toolkit

Paul's Apologetic Application in Contemporary Context

The Chapter 3 Gap Analysis laid the groundwork or the foundation for the discussions of

Chapter 4, which reveals the manner and practice in which Paul's apologetic application can be

carried out in a contemporary context mobilizing apologetics for post-modernist application

specifically, and especially for the target group of Millennials and Generation Z. To prepare for

presentation of findings and recommendations regarding a contemporary Pauline apologetic

toolkit, it is prudent once more to revisit and summarize our intent for application and laying out

methods and approaches to remediate a problem through a contemporary interpretation of

Pauline methodology.

In *Do We Still Need Paul: A Contemporary Reading of the Apostle*, O'Mahony

eloquently sums up the magnitude of the problem by stating mainline churches are in rapid

decline, with one exception within the Pentecostal movement which exercises less restraint

around an emotional dimension of believing and worshipping, whereas most Western churches

are reserved from the same expression of religious experience. O'Mahony speculates:

> Perhaps one of the reasons for church decline is simply that there
> is little in people's experience that corresponds with the wonderful
> proclamation and promise of the Good News. There are two gaps in
> reality. There is a gap between what is proclaimed and how people
> experience their world. The gap between head and heart is sustained
> by the dry didacticism of much common worship.[114]

O'Mahony, a priest from the Order of St. Augustine, makes a point indirectly when he speaks of

the success the Pentecostal movement has had regarding attracting, in particular, younger

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[114] Kieran J. O'Mahony OSA, *Do We Still Need St. Paul – A Contemporary Reading of the Apostle* (Dublin, Ireland: Veritas. 2009), 14.

generations. In plain terms, somehow the church is found to be more relatable perhaps to

contemporary times. In many cases the Pentecostal church has grown its congregations along

with the formats to which both the music and the messages are heard to a seemingly

contemporary one, keeping up with contemporary modalities, including technology. In many

cases, a contemporary pastor is not wearing a suit and tie but is in casual dress, even jeans, just

as many of the parishioners. Even his haircut is relatable. Except in backwatered places, the day

of the Pentecostal preacher in an outdated leisure suit is in the past and the parishioners are no

longer wearing their "Sunday Best" to join a worship service. To this break in traditional church

culture, Pentecostalism promotes Christ through a cultural pattern of digital and electronic

media, taking the use of media for religious purposes to an all-time high, seemingly a culture of

flow of words and people using highly technological media usage. Additionally, Pentecostals use

the word global in their identity and title.[115]

One theme that comes to mind and has been discussed throughout this thesis is the idea of

relatability. Is it a coincidence that the Pentecostal church can convey God's Truth better than

many Western churches today? In the least complicated explanation, culture impacts the

willingness of an individual to believe based on the collective mindset of a culture telling us

what is plausible and implausible. Hence, one fails to have genuine missionary encounters if one

fails to understand those we seek to reach with the Gospel. As Gould recited the words of 20th-

century missionary, Lesslie Newbigin, what was explored is this crucial question of our time,

asking:

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[115] Peter Horsfield, *From Jesus to the Internet: A History of Christianity and Media.* (Newark: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015), 273-274.

"What would be involved in a missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking, and living that we call "modern Western culture?"[116]

Gould cites that:

"This is *the* question to be asked of any post-Christian culture. Newbigin is interested in how we can talk to others about Jesus in a way that is understood by those becoming further and further removed from Christianity's language and worldview."[117]

The bottom line is as follows: words and messages must be understandable. In post-modernism, oftentimes talks of Jesus sound like talks of Zeus or Hermes; there is foolishness, implausibility, and a lack of meaning culturally.[118] This echoes that which was articulated by Gould, Lee, and Van Til all of whom echoed that one must speak in an understandable language. Overall, the idea of understandability is the premise for Pauline approaches and methods in an apologetic toolkit that addresses culture as Paul did, considering appropriate communication methods to be effective. Understandability not only alludes to tempering the message to the audience and population in a way that the Truth of Christ can be heard but also in the use of communication contemporary methods that get to the very hearts of the target audience. Coupled with advancements in digital, the message of understandability takes on an entirely new meaning. So, how did Paul engage effectively?

Paul's Gold Standard of Engagement

Once again it is important to look at Acts 17 specifically to understand Paul's useful standard in which he engaged his audiences. The Apostle Paul provides us a window into his model for engagement from his perspective and context of the first century. This context is

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[116] Paul M. Gould, *Cultural*, 19. Citing from Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 1.

[117] Ibid (Gould).

[118] Ibid, 19-20.

helpful for apologists to consider how one's tone, approaches, and methods to defend the faith can impact unbelievers today, leading them steadily to come to know Christ as one's Lord and Savior. While Paul's approach on location in Athens has been recounted twice earlier regarding Acts 17, what is further described here are the useful takeaways for apologists who are crafting their apologies and aligning arguments for the greatest impact, changing hearts and minds of unbelievers to which they are ministering to lead each to salvation through Christ. While one often reflects on the journey it is for the unbeliever to hear and be receptive, it is likewise a journey for contemporary apologists to learn the most effective methods of Paul that can penetrate 21st-century culture clouded by competing post-modernist ideologies, which are in effect philosophies of the day, so to speak.

For example, first-century Athens, Greece has striking similarities to contemporary 21st century society. Ancient Athens was known for its multiple philosophies of interest to its inhabitants, including Stoics and Epicureans, not to mention pagans. It was a dynamic center of learning in which philosophy and religion were the topics of debate in the public square of the ancient agora. If one is fortunate enough to visit ancient Athens today, one can see all around the remnants of this society, including the Parthenon, a monstrous temple to Athena, and nearby Mars Hill (Ἄρειος Πάγος), where Paul carried out his discourse with Athenians overlooking the city. What is remarkable is that every element of Acts 17 can be compared to society's current condition in contemporary times. Conflicting philosophies and religions are debated in today's contemporary society, particularly over the internet and social media holding the attention of many. Furthermore, contemporary society has built idols based on politics, sports figures, the music industry, and Hollywood. Similarly, in contemporary times, atheism and paganism collide with such rhetorical weapons as moral relativism and gender ideology on center stage.

Borrowing from a strong contributor in apologetics during his time as a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, Mikel Rosario (being mentored by Darrell Block, who was Executive Director of Cultural Engagement at the time at the Hendricks Center) has expressed online regarding materials that discuss cultural engagement. Although not published by Rosario in a book publication for citation, Rosario articulated strongly online in various messages that engaging culturally at Athens was for Paul a move made because of his love for the people in Athenian society. He toured before his apology took place in Acts 17.[119] Paul was identifying with the people in terms of culture, so he could better understand who he would be speaking to. But more importantly, Paul's heart was focused on his mission. To the Athenians, Paul saw all that would be possible if Christ was revealed to them. Paul cared about what was possible and his desire to address it was purely driven by his heart. He exercised love, caring, and deep compassion for the Athenian people. It was indeed an infilling of the Holy Spirit that drove his desire to love, care, and show compassion for the state of Athenian culture wrought with idolatry. Paul was impassioned to do something about what was observed, and in this same way, contemporary apologists must also embrace and engage with the same love for humanity.[120] There should not be any other motivation, including a need to promote oneself, project a know-it-all attitude, act pompously, or act out of selfish interests or vain thinking. Copan states that "Jesus and the rest of the New Testament offer a twofold exhortation against pride: show when

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[119] Mikel Del Rosario, "3 Cultural Engagement Lessons from Acts 17," *Voice: Dallas Theological Seminary*, April 15, 2014, https://voice.dts.edu/article/3-cultural-engagement-lessons-from-acts-17-del-rosariomikel/

[120] Ibid.

tempted to hide (e.g. Matt 5:13-16) and hide when tempted to show (Matt. 6:1)."[121] Copan's advice is to place our own individual public relations department entirely in the Hands of God, and this can easily apply to the field of apologetics also.[122]

Apologists must embrace and engage culture purely driven out of love. The Scripture of Matthew 22:37-39 creates a mandate to remind: "He said to him," Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and Prophets depend on these two commands (CSB)."

Additionally, Paul carefully crafted his discussions with the Athenians in a manner that was respectful yet inquiring about the confusion he noted regarding the idolatry of an unknown god. Paul exercised caution concerning challenging the Athenians. Paul prepared for rejection also that often comes with sharing the faith. Nonetheless, apologists should put their best foot forward sharpening their skills in speech and writing, while also finding an appropriate point of entry into a particular culture. This is not easy to do, but it should be remembered that introducing love and compassion, wisdom in discourse, and the ability to accept rejection or appear unpopular are the most important approaches to introducing the message of Christ. This was the Apostle Paul's standard for engagement that enabled him to continue to adjust both his approaches and methods toward improvement.[123] Let's look further at the resources, tools,

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[121] Paul Copan, When God goes to Starbucks: A Guide to Everyday Apologetics (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 30.

[122] Ibid, 30.

[123] Del Rosario, "3 Cultural."

methodologies, and recommendations that comprise a Pauline toolkit for contemporary application.

Findings & Recommendations: The Toolkit

The purpose of this section is to report the findings of the gap analysis in Chapter 3 and further connect those findings using the wisdom of Scripture to articulate Paul's ancient methods and approaches that should be applied apologetically through ministry to the target group of Millennials and Generation Z. This section is designed to report the findings of the gap analysis and recommendations for implementing each finding, including the method and approach that Paul would approve for contemporary apologetics to the targeted group of Millennials and Generation Z. While these approaches are grounded in scholarly research and Scripture for purposes of this thesis, there are also highly practical findings expressed in this chapter that are immediately usable as a reference tool for apologists but may also require some further development through follow-on efforts by the apologetics community. Ten major findings, summarized from the resulting gap analysis, are supported by scholarly research, rooted in the Scripture, and detailed as follows:

1. **Apologetics must come from the position of love, compassion, and caring, proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ:** Paul approached apologetics with an attitude of love, compassion, and caring. The New Testament provides examples where Paul further discusses the importance of love, and shares examples of love, compassion, and caring in interactions with others. The Scriptures Paul puts forth to enlighten one's understanding of love are plentiful and much can be said about love as expressed by Paul. 1 Corinthians 13 states the most complete form of love that comes as a spiritual gift to serve one another. Love is an action word to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (KJV) states the following: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Charity is replaced with the word love in the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) among other translations, stating in 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8: "Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs. Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all

things, endures all things (CSB)." Love promotes action as essentially an act of charity, sometimes to the most unlovable people. Humans must approach with humbleness and pour out our love for one another through hope believing that God is who He says He is, miraculously working out salvation and sanctification even amongst the most hopeless or seemingly desperate situations being faced.

Apologists should undergo a self-assessment tool to check one's own understanding of character, motivation, and tone, including compelling dedication to better understanding the targeted population of Millennials and Generation Z. Capturing a full understanding of Paul's view on love is necessary and beneficial to apologetics. Understanding and prepping a Pauline heart for Jesus is necessary to make a solid impression on the target population, showing and demonstrating sincerity and behavior that is Christ-like.

2. **Apologetic leadership must be assessed and trained for character and commitment that exudes Paul-like confidence, which includes the Holy Spirit helping to direct** Paul's strength and character as a leader impacted upon his apologetic method as he was on the road to Damascus and personally encountered Christ, leading to a transformation in personal beliefs and perspectives further shaping his messages and tone regarding Christ. Paul's transformational leadership positioned him to rise to the occasion to spread the Gospel in the first place. Paul's firsthand experience of being confronted by Christ was pivotal. In daily life messengers of the faith whose lives have been also changed because of one's commitment to Christ have also been called out. A more contemporary example would be C.S. Lewis, a converted atheist, who went on to author and lecture on his transformation to knowing Christ. For example, this also impacted his leadership ability as an apologist forging the Moral argument, otherwise known as the Law of Right and Wrong. The New Testament provides examples where Paul's leadership skills directly impacted his apologetics, including an understanding of the call to leadership. Romans 1:5-6 states, "Through him we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the Gentiles, including you who are called by Jesus Christ (CSB)." Paul claimed that apostleship was from Jesus Christ in which he was called and set apart to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles upon divine appointment.

Further thought and perhaps training in apologetic leadership would be a tool approved by Paul. Exactly how has your experience in life led to your ability to lead with Paul-like confidence? How has God called you out? Christ calls disciples from all areas of life, not because of perfection and one's ability to know all the correct answers the first time because their experience in life of coming to know God through their struggles has the power to help others change their own lives for better. Paul-like confidence translates into the ability to operationalize trust in God to work all things for good.

3. **Apologists must approach, plan, and manage their ministry intentionally:** Paul's apologetics were approached by him with intentionality in a logical, reasonable way. He engaged with various audiences, planned the location and method of ministry, and addressed the specifics of the culture at hand, adjusting his apologetic approach to what he noted as a keen point of entry for his discourse. Paul used logic, reason, and Scripture to defend his case for Christ. 1 Corinthians 4:1 provides the example when Paul writes, "A person should think

of us in this way: as servants of Christ and managers of the mysteries of God (CSB)." Paul is stating that this is how you should logically discern who is speaking from the Bible, professing a Scripture basis, going beyond the teachings adding to the Gospel message inappropriately. Furthermore, 2 Timothy 2:15 states, "Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth (CSB)." Apologists must be prepared to deliver their apologies in a Scripturally sound way, not adding, or detracting from the Gospel. One major factor for ministry today is the virtual ministry environment, but there are other options worth exploring also that will be discussed. Like Paul, apologists need to venture into where these population groups are located beyond the church, including street and virtual ministries (to be further explained in #7, see below) to bring about ministry in a way that builds flexibility to meet the needs of the target population.

4. **Apologists should be wise, sharply trained, educated, and intellectually aligned with strong speech (discourse, rhetoric) and writing skills:** The Apostle Paul learned under the Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) in Tarsus, the most major center of learning at the time, and was well-educated in Jewish law and traditions. Paul could have followed any path he had chosen. Paul chose to enlist his strong apologetic methods of speech, discourse, rhetoric, and writing to defend the Christian faith. Paul was talented, engaging culturally and adapting his message to communicate with diverse audiences. Having the abovementioned skills positively impacted Paul's ability to influence the ministry nonetheless, but Paul painted a picture of himself in 2 Corinthians 11:6, stating: "Even if I am untrained in public speaking, I am certainly not untrained in knowledge. Indeed, we have in every way made that clear to you in everything (CSB)." Then, how could Paul call himself untrained? Acts 4:13 gives a further clue, by stating: "When they observed the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and recognized that they had been with Jesus (CSB)." In the same vein, these disciples were designated as amateurs but with devotion to the ministry who had decidedly devoted their work as a Christ servant, instead of public orators or highly esteemed instructors of rhetoric. Therefore, the untrained are not such on a professional level that rhetoric can be used for destruction but instead for the common good, to which the disciples including Paul have chosen to devote their knowledge of skills.

5. **Assessment of culture is an important component and precursor of apologetics:** Paul engaged in a method and approach that involved assessment of the cultural context of his audience. Paul worked to resonate with the beliefs, values, and worldviews of those he was addressing, including the letters to various churches. Those approaches allowed Paul to communicate to the population of focus in a way that was relevant and understandable to the audience before him. The Athenians of Acts 17:22-23 is a fine example, whereby "Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said, "People of Athens! I see that you are extremely religious in every respect. For as I was passing through and *observing* the objects of your worship, I even found an altar on which was inscribed. 'To an unknown God.' Therefore, what you worship in ignorance this I proclaim to you (CSB)." Observing is the first step to assessing culture. The next step is realizing that we are all created in the image of God and hence even in Athens at the time, Paul tried to work with the local culture to show them that

God is not far from each of us, even if we are not all coming from the same perspective of God initially. The goal is to build a bridge, developing a point of contact with culture.

6. **Paul's apologetics addressed specific audiences or populations, but his goal was the proclamation of the salvation message for everyone.** Paul chose to primarily focus his missionary efforts on spreading the message of Christianity to the Gentiles of the Greco-Roman World, which was groundbreaking at a time when outreach was focused mostly on Jewish communities and synagogues that Paul sought entry to a new city and routine visits to synagogues. Apologetic ministry for the most part requires a distinct choice in terms of population, including the identification of a target population with unique characteristics capable of changing the course of history for that specific population. Paul identified with his own, the Jewish people, by spending time reasoning with them. But outwardly Paul's mission extended Christianity not only to the Jews but to the Gentiles of that time. Romans 15:18 states Paul's declaration of God's call on his life and toward what population of focus: "For I would not dare say anything except what Christ has accomplished through me by word and deed for the obedience of the Gentiles (CSB)." Furthermore, often Paul chose a specific town, region, or city to focus each mission on his journey. Likewise, it is necessary to also set one's focus in today's culture, increasingly complex due to various constituent ideologies and voices competing for the minds and hearts of Millennials and Generation Z.

7. **Paul's ancient apologetic communication methods and today's apologetic communication methods should be equally as diverse:** Paul employed multiple methods to carry out his mission and to disseminate the message of Christ. This includes reaching out through various communication mediums: letters/epistles, face-to-face meetings, via a messenger, apology, preaching, teaching, rhetoric/discourse, and leading by example. While this corresponding table has been partially informed through Ricky Bailey author of an internet-based article in the public domain that addresses Paul's tech in the first century and how Paul might utilize 21st-century technology for the glory of God,[124] this table has also pulled on reference throughout Scripture for its completion. Bailey's organization assesses the latest cutting-edge digital church, including digital virtual reality, AI, and metaverse, specifically. This is the most extreme version of the digital church with some very interesting overarching ideas that are geared much toward the targeted group who is the focus of the topic of this thesis. While every medium for the church does not fit all, apologetics must not turn a blind eye to these mediums because this is where a segment of the unchurched who know nothing about Jesus can only be reached in this type of extreme environment. Therefore, we will closer explore this to acknowledge the need for contemporary apologists to change with the times by adopting contemporary equivalent communication tools that align with Paul's ancient communication methods. As 1 Corinthians 9:22 states, "When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ (CSB)." This verse illustrates Paul's adaptability and willingness to adjust his approach to effectively communicate the gospel to different audiences.

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[124] Ricky Bailey, "How Paul's Use of Tech Informs How We Can Use Modern Tech," *thechurch.digital*.

Table 2. Paul's Communication Methods & Contemporary Equivalents

Paul's Communication Method	Paul's purpose for each method	Equivalent Communication Method for Contemporary Society
Letters (of Direction) and Epistles Via parchment, papyrus, and lead ink.	To keep in touch with churches and instruct them in theology and discipleship. To teach and correct, to encourage, to pray, and more. Paul was very specific to his audience in his letters. To provide some sort of exhortation and encouragement for the audience.	Paul's letters are transferred today as the Word of God, the Holy Scripture. Paul would wholeheartedly support the use of FaceTime (and Skype, among similar tools) to help in direction through interactive teaching. Blogs and Sermon videos are okay but do not immediately result in discipleship opportunities, whereas communities in digital spaces can produce discipleship. -Via a WhatsApp group chat daily reminder can be sent including Scripture verses and a message like, "love you guys, keep pressing toward the prize." -Commenting on a Facebook post with an actual prayer rather than stating "praying for you." Encouragement in a contemporary Paul and Timothy-method may manifest as regular calls and prayer daily for the work of ministry while separated. Epistle-like content can be carried out through television and film as a Pauline contemporary tool. Film serves as a medium for both effective teaching of lessons and encouragement through a Christian storyline that is compelling and can change provide an effective defense for the Christian faith that can be shown made available hundreds of millions if not billions of people worldwide.
Face to Face Communication (Personal Visit)	1 Thessalonians 3:10 (CSB) states "as we pray very earnestly night and day to see you face to face and complete what is lacking in your faith?" Paul seems to think that the Thessalonians are missing something that only comes through face-to-face communication.	Face to face communication may be one on one meetings to inspire the Gospel message or it may be small groups, or taking the message of Christ to the place where the target population is located. For example, meeting target population in small alternative group, street ministry through music. Paul's method encourages us to convey the message of Christ firsthand where the target group may be located, for example, on the street or in a shopping corridor in a large city, as an example. Face to face is most certainly within a traditional church setting where visitors can mingle with one another.
Via a Messenger (Mission of a Lieutenant)	Carriers over roads created using modern engineering to deliver letters at that time.	The contemporary Pauline equivalents may include email, text messages, phone calls, social media platforms and same-day or rapid delivery services, allowing for quick dissemination of messages through multiple mediums.
Apology	Defense of the faith that includes delivering a	The contemporary equivalent would be an apology that can be applied through various mediums. Acts 17 served

Paul's Communication Method	Paul's purpose for each method	Equivalent Communication Method for Contemporary Society
	reasoned argument for the Christian faith that refutes all objections within various cultural contexts.	as one of Paul's most famous examples of an apology. Broader apologetics as a training for ministry is founded in individuals and organizations dedicated to defending, explaining, and promoting the Christian faith in the context of contemporary organizations focused on apologetics, apologetic authors, and speakers, online apologetic platforms, academic apologetics, apologetics through social media, and through church. Apologetics should be integrated into every element of ministry, including the training of laypersons.
Preaching	Purpose was to advance the Kingdom of God, bring people to faith in Christ, build up the body of believers, glorifying God in all things.	Contemporary equivalent would include pulpit preaching in church, evangelistic crusades and revivals, street preaching, missionary work, online ministry, community outreach and personal evangelism. Preaching can be accomplished also through television and film in a more subtle way than pulpit preaching but with the potential to stir human emotions through an alternative medium that is very palpable to the target audience.
Teaching	Teaching was driven by his passion for the Gospel, his love for the church, and desire for believers to grow and live out their calling as followers of Christ. Paul's teaching designed to communicate doctrine, equip believers, correct error, misunderstandings, and false teachings, build unity, and prepare leaders.	Leverage blogs, websites, Skype, Facetime, and other communication technologies to provide sound teaching. Videos of sermons are effective but do not result in disciples, whereas communities in digital spaces can produce discipleship. Designed to teach, correct, encourage, pray, and provide a medium to create disciples, including traditional church environments. Teaching the Word of God can be accomplished through television and film, videos, podcasts easily with opportunities to subscribe to new releases provided by apologetic organizations or faith ministries including churches.
Rhetorical Speaking	Effectively communicate the message of the Gospel, persuading the audience to accept Christianity by making the Gospel accessible to diverse audiences, to persuade and convince, refute opposition, and enliven the hearts and minds and building of unity and fellowship.	Contemporary equivalents would be public speaking platforms including speeches, presentations, and lectures; rhetorical training techniques, media, and digital communication (channels, podcasts, blogs, videos, social media platforms), marketing and advertising via storytelling among other strategies, discourse and ideological leanings, and advocacy and activism that support speeches, rallies, petitions, and social media campaigns in defense of the Christian faith and values.

Paul's Communication Method	Paul's purpose for each method	Equivalent Communication Method for Contemporary Society
By example – The Proclamation of Jesus Christ through lifestyle, work, and activity.	Instruction to mimic Paul, as Paul mimics Christ. "Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ." 1 Corinthians 11:1 (CSB)	Televisions and Film can fill the gap of communication "By example," whereby writing stories about Christian topics and persons that are inspiring and motivate the recipient to seek further the Christian faith.

8. **Paul used various schools of apologetics as applicable to the relevant audience.** This table has its basis in Chapter 2, which provides a deeper discussion of apologetic methods and their application specifically in Paul's ancient approaches. Each school of apologetics has a purpose and situational application that better defines its application, particularly about the target population and the needs within today's contemporary society. Paul discusses his apologetics in the Scriptures when in his writings Paul presents arguments and defenses by explaining theology and responding to any objections that are presented to him. Such topics defended by Paul are the resurrection of Christ, God's righteousness, and issues of the law and grace, as a few examples.

Table 3. Schools of Apologetics and Approaches

Type/Schools of Apologetics and Citations	Purpose	Situational Application
Classical: A method of Christian apologetics using theistic arguments to substantiate God's existence. Classical includes the forms of cosmological, teleological ontological and moral arguments. Once God's existence is proven Christian theism is distinguish from examples. **Pauline Example: Acts 17:22-31**	Applied in situations where there is a strong desire for reasoned arguments and evidence in defense of the Christian faith. Anywhere that a persuasive defense is required/involved.	Intellectualism, Atheism, engaging skeptics, or critics (responding to questions such as the existence of God, the reliability of the Bible, problem of evil or doubt of Christ's resurrection, interfaith dialogues, university, or academic interests, online through various forums, training and equipping believers, and major public speaking events.
Evidential: A method of Christian apologetics emphasizing positive evidence in favor of the truth of Christianity**.**	Applied in situations where there is focus on presenting empirical evidence in defense of the Christian faith. In addition to empirical evidence, anywhere in context	Intellectualism, specifically scientific discussions, atheism whereby there is disbelief historically in resurrection and credibility of the New Testament accounts of its

Type/Schools of Apologetics and Citations	Purpose	Situational Application
Pauline Example: 1 Corinthians 15:3-8	where there is an emphasis on providing historical data, rational arguments to support truth claims and questions of skeptics and critics.	occurrence, arguing the truth of Christianity's central claim, Biblical reliability in question, countering scientific questioning as evidential apologetics that is seen as supporting a theistic worldview, discussions of miracles and plausibility of the supernatural.
Presuppositional: An epistemological school of Christian apologetics that examines the presuppositions on which worldviews are based and invites comparison and contrast between the results of those presuppositions. Presuppositional apologetics presupposes the existence of God as key to all knowledge and understanding foremost. Pauline with presuppositional elements: • 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Authority of the Scripture as key departure for defending the Christian faith. • Romans 1:18-23: Existence of God evident in creation • 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, Message of the Cross/foolishness in comparison; contrasting wisdom of world with wisdom of God.	Observed predominantly in Paul's letters and speeches that contained elements of presuppositional apologetics but did not employ this term per se. Paul aligned closely with this discipline.	Unbelievers with little Christian experience may gain greatest benefit from this approach. Presuppositional apologetics appeals to the authority of Scripture, exposes unbeliever's presuppositions, affirmed the importance of the Holy Spirit to understanding of truths, addressing the condition of the human heart, affirmation of God's sovereign power, relying on God's revelation, the authority of Scriptures and the necessity of the Holy Spirit to work to bring people to the faith. Presuppositional apologetics is highly relevant with much of the target population who has no or limited understanding the Christian message, even if this apologetics was unnamed at Paul's time. He used elements of it in his experience, emphasizing on the authority of the scripture and importance of having faith.

Type/Schools of Apologetics and Citations	Purpose	Situational Application
• Colossians 2:8, Paul warns presuppositions contrary to God's Truth.		
Other Apologetic Methods: Theological: Paul's concept of the gospel as God's grace, God's unconditional gift.[125] Experiential – Paul referred to his own experience encountering Christ on the road to Damascus, serving as a persuasive witness. Ethical – Paul emphasized the virtues of a life of faith and the fulfillment of moral transformation that accompanies conversion. Cultural Engagement – Paul engaged culturally to adapt his message and be effective. Pragmatic – Paul emphasized the practical benefits and positive outcomes of embracing the faith on individuals, families, and societies. Interpersonal – Paul demonstrated great patience and empathy as he sought to win people over to the faith	These less often utilized apologetic strategies may provide a strong apologetical witness for Christ.	Possible to utilize in any or all situations, as applicable.

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[125] Paul D. Janz. The Command of Grace: A New Theological Apologetics (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 3-5.

Type/Schools of Apologetics and Citations	Purpose	Situational Application
through genuine dialogue and real connection.		

9. **Paul's doctrinal teachings through each missionary journey should be utilized as a tool for winning souls to Christ for the target group.** This table has its key discussion at the end of chapter 2, which provides a summary of Paul's doctrinal messages and application. The hope is that this information will be helpful to lay persons or those interested in apologetics and in need of a quick reference that can be referred to during one's period of learning and appropriately operationalizing of one's apologetic skillset by using Paul's lessons as carried out through Paul's teachings, as firm examples to share and address the questions and concerns of the targeted population in defense of the Christian faith. There is a need for practical answers as a ministry tool to this target group.

Table 4. Paul's Doctrinal Messages in Ancient Times versus Now

Biblical Locality	Matter to Address	Paul's Main Doctrinal Teaching Then/Now
Galatians	Against the Judaizers doctrine of meritorious works	Then: Justification by Divine Grace through faith in Jesus Christ not works-based merit. Now: Focal point on maintaining purity of the gospel message, salvation by grace, freedom in Christ and gospel centered community and the importance of standing firm in the truth through the Bible.
1 Thessalonians	Encouragement and Comfort of Christian Living	Then: Second Coming of Christ including conversion/growth and exhortations emphasizing comfort and 2nd coming expectancy. Now: Encouraging perseverance in Faith amidst trials and challenges; emphasizing holiness and sanctification living holy and honorable lives, sexual immorality and other sinful behaviors, nurturing hope in Christ's return, building of church through love among believers, living as witnesses for Christ in this world.
2 Thessalonians	Correction on Second Coming resulting from false belief in Christ's immediate return to destroy persecutors	Then: Paul puts in context the timeline of end of age rebellion against God must take place first therefore return to normal Christian living. Now: End times teaching, encouraging perseverance amidst trials, warning against deception and false teaching,

Biblical Locality	Matter to Address	Paul's Main Doctrinal Teaching Then/Now
		work and diligence, and the discipline of the church.
1 Corinthians	Church Problems	Then: Solving of problems of church conduct, morals, and beliefs within the church (divisions, immorality, lawsuits, spiritual gifts, and the resurrection of the dead); stating that less than favorable conditions do not define church alone going forward. Now: Appeal to maintain unity and harmony, address divisions and urging believers to be like-minded, regardless of differences, and spiritual gifts.
2 Corinthians	Understanding of Paul's Ministry	Then: View into Paul's feeling toward himself and his apostolic ministry (and suffering) in relation to the churches he nurtured. Now: Embracing suffering and adversity, based on Paul's experience, pursuit of reconciliation and forgiveness, practice of generosity and stewardship, living as Christ ambassadors, standing against false teaching.
Romans	Gift of Righteousness Through Faith in Christ and plan of salvation for Jews and Gentiles	Then: Christian unity for justification of faith between Jews and Gentiles through a formal letter. Now: Understanding of the Gospel message, the virtues of righteous living, unity in diversity, mission and evangelism, God's sovereignty, and plan for salvation.
Philemon	Plea for a Runaway Slave	Then: Mercy based on slave (Onesimus) who became Christian. Now: Practice of forgiveness, promoting reconciliation, valuing every believer, living out the Gospel and advocating justice with the Christian community.
Colossians	Christ as the Head of the Church	Then: Highlights the divine person and creative redemptive work of Christ to daily life. Now: Affirming the supremacy of Christ, guarding against false teaching, living in Christ, promoting unity, and exercising love through the body of Christ and Christian living.
Ephesians	Church as the Body of Christ	Then: Responsibilities of the church are emphasized. Now: Call to Unity, maturity in Christ, and living out implications of being part of the Body of Christ, including healthy

Biblical Locality	Matter to Address	Paul's Main Doctrinal Teaching Then/Now
		church relationships, and the spiritual battle we each face against darkness.
Philippians	A Note of Thanks	Then: This is a personal note of thanks for support alongside news and exhortations from Paul, alleged favorite church. Now: The call to rejoice in all circumstances, maintaining unity and pursuit of Christlikeness in daily life, and persevering in the faith and partnering in the gospel.
1 Timothy	Regarding Timothy's administration of churches	Then: Includes greeting and warning of false teaching and illegalities, recalling Paul's own conversion to Christianity and the mission of the faith alerts Timothy to stay on a straight path to orthodox Christianity. Now: Ensuring sound doctrine, exercising Godly leadership, fostering Spiritual growth, unity, and love, and engaging in prayer and worship.
Titus	Organization and Admin of Cretan church by Titus	Then: Like 1 Timothy, warnings against false teaching and issues instructions on Christian conduct and doctrinal basis of God's grace and Holy Spirit. Now: The need for qualified leadership, teaching sound doctrine, emphasizing good works and Godliness, maintaining unity and peace, and engaging in Gospel outreach.
2 Timothy	Commission of Timothy to continue Paul's work	Then: Known as Paul's farewell letter regarding the critical mission to preach the word of God, and Paul's own confronting of his pending doom at the hands of the Rome. Now: Persevere in the faith, faithful teaching, and discipleship, passing on the faith, warning of false teaching, remaining faithful to the gospel.

10. **Apologists must be prepared to endure all circumstances, including pushback and rejection to spread the Message of Christ globally:** Paul endured endless suffering as an encouragement to believers, the qualification for the call through endurance, and the manifestation of God's work in a physical sense. Not all parties were immediately receptive to the message Paul presented. Paul endured rejection, suffering, and persecution, reminding us that trials and tribulations bring about growth and the opportunity for the Gospel to be made known to all the world. Paul's suffering was not in vain as he demonstrated authenticity, ministering on topics in a way that was convincing due to being able to foster deeper connections with those he met who were skeptical of Paul. Paul speaks of suffering

regarding Philippians 3:10-11, highlighting the redemptive value of suffering stating, "My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection among the dead (CSB)."

In ancient times Paul was the central coordinating body although he relied on friends and others who were involved in helping him, so he had a larger team that assisted his efforts. Likewise, today, Christianity is being deconstructed on social media, to which the target group is highly exposed, and Christianity appears unpopular and in question by a segment of secular society with the objective of further secularization in the United States, in particular. Europe has already undergone this transition in terms of industrialized nations. This will result in a continued culture clash. While secular society appears to capture the attention of the Millennials and Generation Z, there is a widening gap in church attendance that is concerning. While Christianity comes into question from the diverse perspectives of 21st-century society, there is a major need to form a coalition that can serve as a coordinating body for all things apologetic; hence becoming a strength to the apologetics community at large, while leveraging pushback on Christianity worldwide. Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 12:10, "So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong (CSB)."

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 4 denotes a contemporary Pauline apologetic toolkit that serves the unique purpose of preparing apologists for ministering to a targeted population of Millennials and Generation Z identified as the greatest percentage of unbelievers worldwide. The toolkit's findings are based on a gap analysis between ancient Paul's apologetic methods and the perceived state of Christianity today by the target group that is contributing to a record number of unbelievers or those disaffiliating with Christianity. Based on the identified gaps,

contemporary Pauline alternatives are presented, which the Apostle Paul would most likely approve today. In Chapter 5, recommendations will be provided to those in whom this toolkit can most support the objective of winning as many of this targeted population to Christ with the greatest potential fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Chapter Five: Why "The Way"

Recommendations to Speed the Adoption of Christianity

As a result of the information derived from this analysis, the question now becomes what major strides can be taken to move toward and accelerate the adoption of Christianity. From a target group perspective, the younger generations known as Millennials and Generation Z are the key to the growth of Christianity in post-modern times just by the sheer numbers making up these generations and data demonstrating high rates of unbelief and/or disaffiliation. Apostle Paul worked against all odds to ensure Christianity was planted in the Mediterranean regions and was up against great obstacles of his time, especially the Roman establishment. A similar parallel exists today whereby contemporary societal agendas support secularism over religious society at large, notwithstanding Christianity, including the political climate, techno-elites, non-government organizations, and other global philanthropic organizations supporting more secular agendas in society over religious alternatives also from a geopolitical standpoint. Perhaps there is a feeling that secularism will solve the often-pervasive public policy issues that persist in society including racism, terrorism, and violence. The Truth of God's Word is superior to any secular organization and institution because of the reality that the Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed societal scars through His incarnation, death, and resurrection. It is up to everyone to be convinced that the Christian faith is the answer to the confusion caused by contemporary ideologies most propagated through multimedia and internet alphabet soup that often gains the attention of Millennials and Generation Z most impacted by the digital age.

It is the hope that through this analysis the apologetic community will be able to advance the Gospel of Christ to the target population of the Millennials and Generation Z so that a greater

majority of the world can be won for Christ. If the target population can receive missional ministry and outreach calibrated with Pauline apologetics, then theoretically this population of young people coming to God will be positively impacted by Christ. This generation will then inadvertently serve to minister to those around them part of the older who may still need to come to Christ, or those who have fallen away from the church, such as parents who experience the change in a son or daughter. This phenomenon of a child helping to bring his parents to the reality of Christ is something that has been witnessed by the reader regarding several persons whom one knows personally both in the United States and in Europe.

Therefore, lives can be changed through the apologetic community reviewing their position and posture in Christianity, gearing it for contemporary times with unique and different challenges not seen before in the life of the modern church. There is much that can be leveraged for Christ, and this researcher asserts that the Christian faith has only explored the tip of the iceberg regarding the application of a contemporary apologetic. Hence, this is the purpose of this thesis is to heighten the awareness and limitations that the Body of Christ itself is placing upon itself. In the same manner, the potential to reignite a fire, if Millennials and Generation Z come to know Christ, will reflect also in the offspring of this generation to follow who will have the chance also to be brought up in the Christian faith. Notwithstanding, reaching these two population groups, known as this toolkit's target audience, may be integral to fulfilling the Great Commission overall, saving as many people as possible by implementing these recommendations. Being able to minister in a language that is understood and having access to a message is a life-changing element of Christianity and key to changing the course of today's digital society.

Bob Smietana, a Christian journalist, speaks out about how reshaping the church, particularly the American Church, matters significantly. In his recent book, Smietana gives an example of a software engineer, disaffiliated from the Christian church now, wearing the growing label associated with this group, known as 'None.'[126] Smietana tells the story about Llewallyn who now attends a secular congregation set up by two comedians, Evans and Jones, which salvaged the community part of religious affiliation now meeting every Sunday to build community and celebrate life together. Their motto is *Live Better, Help Often and Wonder More…, with an overall mission to help everyone reach their full potential*. Llewallyn proclaims how much furniture he has moved since this venture, Sunday Assembly, was set up in the Greater Atlanta area. The purpose of this group is to find a supportive community that capitalizes on the part of the church experience that Llewallyn now misses, which is the human side of what was church for him. The congregation gets together to sing, laugh, and hear inspiring talks while sharing a cup of coffee or a pint of beer. The group leaves out the God bits during this meeting every Sunday and this is not an isolated case or example.

Smietana recounts hearing how this movement got started in London back in 2013, leaving the God bits out to form an assembly whose first meeting drew over 200 people. Covid-19 negatively impacted its development until Evans and Jones carried out a pseudo-evangelical crusade to get the concept up and running, and within a few years over 70 groups were operating in the United Kingdom, United States, and other countries. In the United States this massive wave of the "Nones" formed in New York, Silicon Valley, Las Vegas, and even Bible belt cities like Nashville. It eventually appeared to be dissolving under Covid stress, but

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[126] Bob Smietana. *Reorganized Religion* (New York: Hachette Work Group, 2023), 144-146.

Smietana remarks that Llewallyn stepped up the efforts to develop some sustainability to the model.[127] Today numerous a couple dozen chapters still meet predominantly in United States, United Kingdom the Netherlands, and Australia.

While these meetings of Sunday Assembly currently have minimal impact in comparison to the strength of church communities out there, it still begs the question as to why members of the Body of Christ leave a sacred assembly of Christians to join meetings that are essentially very similar to the church environment but lack a discussion of God? Why is the church experiencing such disaffiliation in this manner? One such theory of this researcher is that as society advances and problems are solved through progress and essentially invention, more and more people are associating progress with the advancement of humanity's know-how, which is easily seen and experienced over a God who is not immediately visible in the same way. God is being crowded out in the minds and hearts of humanity due largely to science and human advancements that are immediately solving problems for society and placing humans over time in less dire situations. Notwithstanding, this theory could hold yet people are still searching for the truth, as is manifested worldwide, including the United States where philosophy degrees have doubled between 1987 and 2014, and continue to steadily rise, according to the American Philosophical Association.[128]

While some elements of society may be advancing, society is still filled with disadvantages such as drugs, crime, corruption, poverty, inadequate housing, and health care, and it appears that the gaps are widening. The point is that regardless of the digital age upon us, all

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[127] Smietana, *Reorganized*, 144-146.

[128]"Data and Information on the Field of Philosophy," *American Philosophical Association*, https://www.apaonline.org/page/data

options to develop a functioning church that meets the needs of the target population are still on the table. There is some recognition that the church needs to get to the root of its problems of losing congregants sooner rather than later if the Great Commission is going to be fulfilled. Apologetics is best positioned to identify and lead the change for the Body of Christ, because apologetics is positioned to inform all aspects of the ministry, including pastoral care, evangelism, and lay ministry, in addition to other organizations branded as Christian, or faith based. Apologetics feeds each aspect of the way the Gospel is delivered to the Body of Christ and is critical to fulfilling its mission of 1 Peter 3:15 in the 21st century. The world still needs to understand that hope comes through God and specifically the Message of Christ.

What is Being Informed through this Thesis?

Essentially this thesis serves to highlight the cross paths that the 21st century is having with 1st century Apostle Paul. While the Body of Christ often reflects if the Lord tarries, this thesis enlivens the Body of Christ to not lose faith and to take very large strides to bring the lessons of the ancient church back in line and into the experience of the contemporary church. There are overwhelming similarities between the communities of persons in society then and today, often distracted by the philosophies and ideologies that are far from the contentment that comes from knowing Christ. The time is now, and the work performed in this thesis should not be done in vain but to inform the apologetics community it is at the crosshairs of the Christian faith and can appeal on the level of philosophy, logic, reason, and faith to a world who desperately needs to know Christ. As this thesis all started only with a thought, an idea, and some research, the research produced a model that emboldens ancient Paul who successfully rooted and planted the early church, to do the same to expand the contemporary church through leveraged lessons still applicable in the 21st century.

A Contemporary Pauline Apologetic Model

The results of this paper wholeheartedly informed the development of this model based on the research, formulation of a methodology regarding the current condition of an identified target population, and the need to place apologetic methods within the cultural context of today's generation of Millennials and Generation Z. It was a long and arduous process at time without a clear direction as to how it might end, including whether helpful and worthwhile recommendations and conclusions could be imparted upon the Body of Christ to further the Great Commission as spoken by the Lord himself (as Christ ascended to be at the right hand of the Father in Heaven and the Holy Spirit descended to be a help each of us during the period of Christ's absence). It is through those words stated as the mandate for the workers within the Body of Christ through these Scriptures, discussing Christ's mandate to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Matthew28:16-20, Mark 16:14-18, Luke 24: 44-49, John 20:19-23, and Acts 1:8 and 13:1-4) that this model is founded, as follows:
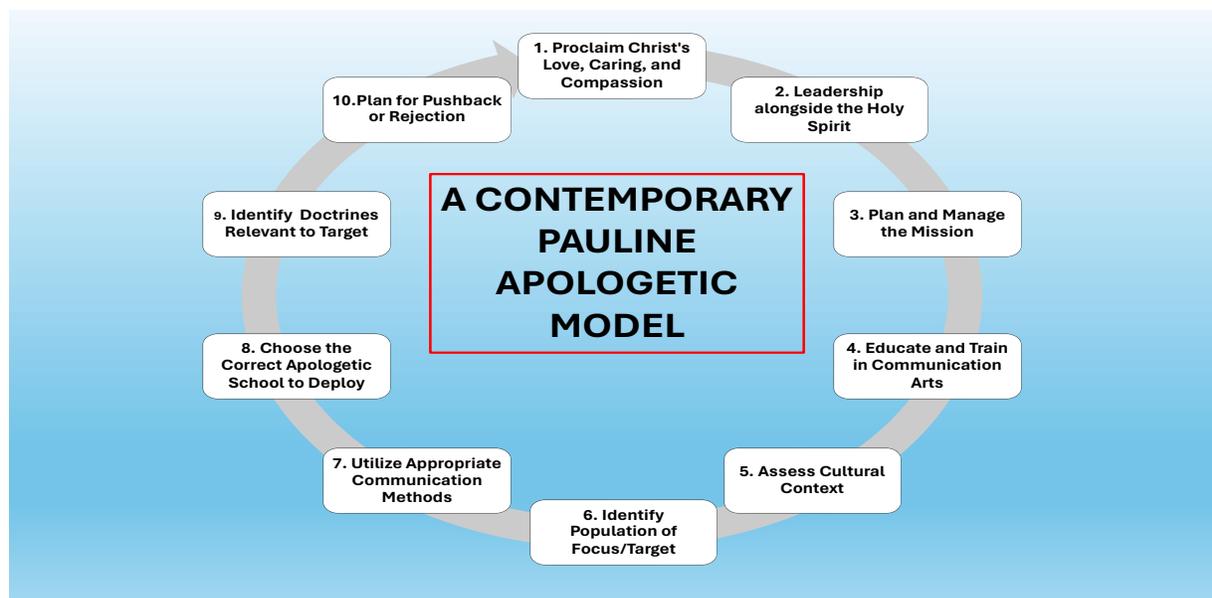

Figure 1. A Contemporary Pauline Apologetic Model

The elements of the model are derived from the ten findings that resulted from the gap analysis. When laid out in a circular flow chart, these findings form a model that can be implemented both to the target group and most likely all types of individuals who are in a state of unbelief or disaffiliation. This model forms an apologetic ministry tool that can be used to plan an apologetic exercise and approach from one's desktop based on the experiences of Paul. This model is highly relevant to the context of Contemporary ministry in the current digital age of the 21st century. Each step is ordered in a manner that makes the most sense and like the face of a clock, one can proceed through each. Step 10 is the critical step through which the apologists either have success or must proceed through another cycle of the apologetic model improving upon each last cycle with new materials and insights that can inform and produce a successful result that convinces someone regarding the existence of and hopefully the acceptance of God.

What Will It Take to Implement: How and Who?

There will need to be a mobilization of the apologetic community to disseminate a strategy that shares the Contemporary Pauline Apologetic Model. The following are suggestions for the implementation process of the Pauline model and the resulting toolkit. These suggestions are aligned with the findings of this thesis and should be considered as the place for the Body of Christ to spend its time and effort in redesigning an approach for reaching the difficult-to-reach generations of today. These suggestions are detailed below in a recap that is not only straightforward but also powerful.

For the Individual Apologist:

1. People will only understand the heart of Christ if the person conveying the message of Christ also has that same heart. Paul instructs so rightly to mimic him who mimics Christ.

2. Faith leaders must be educated and trained in the discipline, of speaking and writing, to compete against today's climate of intellectualism that is being fostered in the 21st century. Humanity is struggling with the same problems and issues repeatedly in the search for understanding God.

3. An apologist must also plan and manage his mission to include calling on the power of the Holy Spirit as a guiding force, much like Paul.

4. Doing the work that is required to match the needs of the target audience with the right tools, methods, and doctrines was a key ministry feature of Paul that needs to be unleashed today for the church to regain the interest of the community.

For the Apologetic Community:

1. More leadership, management, planning, time, and prayer (always needed) are essential, including devotion to this topic and more intentionality by the apologetics community at large to address these insights.

2. Coordination of a strategy and efforts by an apologetic coordinating body or a major Christian university like Liberty University would be beneficial to the apologetics community.

3. Additional production of films with positive themes of Christ using apologetics is needed and effective. More efforts by Christians to join in the arts to promote Christianity, including through education in film, production, and distribution of Christian film and programming via radio or television.

4. There needs to be more organization of resources for ministers (library or resource centers) of the faith, including laypersons involved in the ministry.

5. Apologetics requires additional work in the development of tools that can assist leaders with assessing their fitness for apologetics in terms of examining their heart for the mission and developing strong leaders in the field. Additionally, an entire cadre of materials that are equally important in this age is around the key cultural components, whether referred to as cultural apologetics, that are important to targeting specific audiences and unleashing the correct tone, approach, methods, tools, and doctrines to get to the heart of the unbeliever. As society becomes increasingly multi-cultural, there is a need to identify with those differences within the parameters of Biblical Scripture, of course, to deliver a correct message that leverages love and the heart of Jesus Christ in the field of apologetics. It is not an easy task in this complicated landscape, but it needs to have much greater attention than it has been receiving up to this point.

Where to Go from Here?

It is relatively simple. The apologist must embrace the wisdom of the Apostle Paul both

ancient and present. Matthew 9:35-38 states:

> "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in
> their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and
> healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But
> when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them,
> because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no
> shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is
> plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the
> harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest (KJV)."

Jesus gave us a model and Paul imitated Christ. Paul gave us a model and we are to imitate Paul.

Figure 2 further summarizes this thesis with an apologetic action plan in which the proclamation

of Christ's love creates the correct tone in which apologetics must be entered in contemporary

post-modernist society. This diagram would serve as a methodology and be used more so in an

impromptu manner by an individual apologist to remind of key steps.
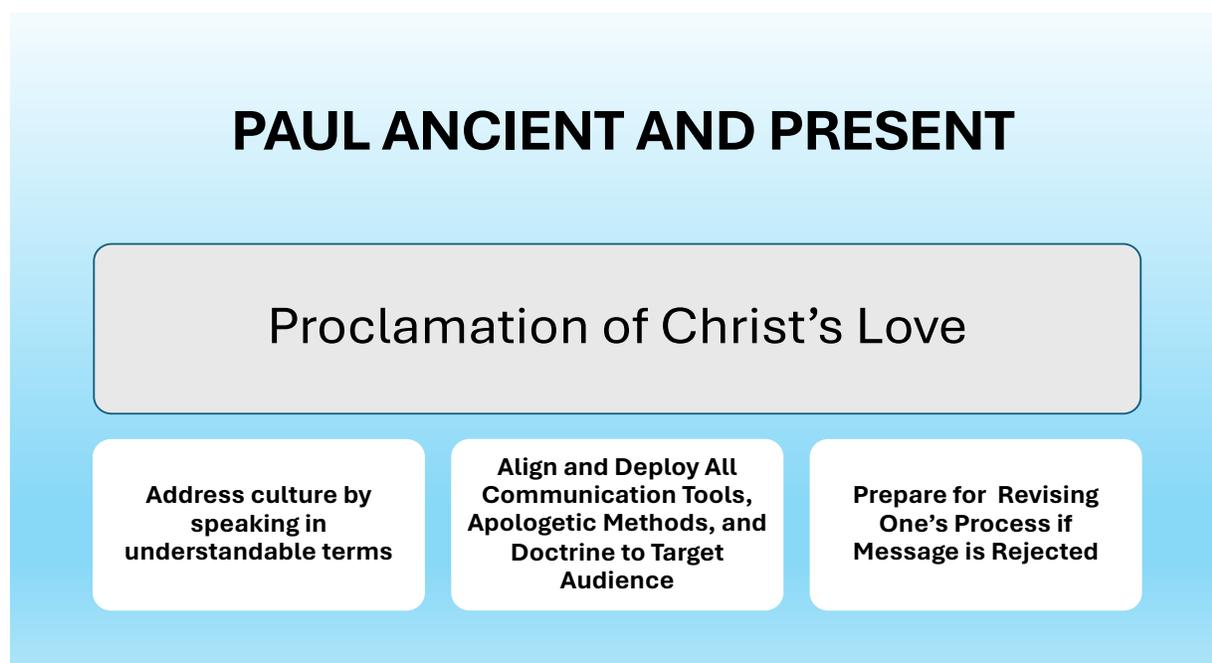
PAUL ANCIENT AND PRESENT

Proclamation of Christ's Love

| Address culture by speaking in understandable terms | Align and Deploy All Communication Tools, Apologetic Methods, and Doctrine to Target Audience | Prepare for Revising One's Process if Message is Rejected |

Figure 2. Pauline Apologetic Action Plan (Condensed)

A quick-ready apologetic action plan condenses the contemporary model bound by a proclamation of Christ's love and geared toward the culture, population, and target that is assessed by an apologist. Alignment ensues, relying on the physical resources an apologist can bring to the argument including communication tools important to the generation being addressed, apologetic methods geared toward the caliber of the argument necessary, and specific doctrines that need addressing in a community. The apologist may find success with his message, but also must be prepared in the instance that the message of Christ is rejected. Hence, the apologist may need to repeat one's process again until a different result is met. Often the apologist will be rejected time after again. The words of Christ come firmly to our ears in this case, as Christ kept it relatively simply by saying in John 8:11-12: "And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (KJV)." The ultimate choice is with the hearer, and these are the promises given by Christ to all who are open to hearing the Truth of God's Word.

Conclusions

Perhaps this is only the beginning in terms of this project. It is difficult to offer

conclusions. For now, the conclusions will focus on key recommendations focused on the major

stakeholders of this thesis. Getting to the bottom of the issue or matter of unbelievers in the

21st century does not necessarily conclude with a paper, but the "deep dive" into the topic

through this thesis should further open the minds of the apologetic community to engage in a

greater call to action regarding a predominant portion of the world's population who is for lack

of better words "slipping through some cracks" of the Christian faith. Major matters worthy of

heightened awareness currently are the following finer points surrounding this thesis. An

immediate follow-up point is how to apply this work to one's ministry in apologetics or any

complementary area such as pastoral care and evangelism. It is important to look at the following

big picture matters derived specifically and focused on the targeted population of Millennials and

Generation Z, as follows:

1. Successful use of apologetics amongst a population of focus or targeted group always requires consideration of cultural dynamics, engagement, assessment, and other strategies that fully need consideration before applying apologetics to the audience.

2. A recurring theme throughout this thesis is that language must be clear and understandable to the targeted population, as well as responses must be crafted to meet the needs of the audience specifically concerning understandability. Apologetics can easily end up talking over the head of the targeted audience, which is more suspected to happen with a great number of the Millennial and Generation Z community that is the focus of this effort.

3. Specific to the needs of the target population, the ten findings of Chapter 4 derived from Paul's ancient methods were determined to be very important to identifying and bridging the gaps between contemporary and ancient strategies. Hence, these ten findings should be closely examined to draw parallels to each and implemented as applicable for apologetics and Christian ministries in general, to begin to address winning this target group to the Lord specifically, and worldwide.

4. While this project has undergone a methodical approach to addressing the needs of the target population, there is infinitely more that needs to be accomplished, including additional research and development to address the further suggested tools.

The major recommendations for the apologetics community at large, which this toolkit was prepared to inform are as follows:

1. Apologetics can be learned and studied, but there is a level of preparation that is defined in the subtleties of this thesis, which can prove to be of great value to apologists, following 1 Peter 3:15, and setting aside for Christians the task of fulfilling the Great Commission globally.

2. Apologists should not stand in isolation from one another but need to be supported by a greater organizational mission globally to be effective in fulfilling the Great Commission. Apologetics must articulate its practical application, not reserving itself as an academic exercise alone.

3. The traditional apologetic community should not feel threatened by the fact that a "one size does not fit all" approach or school of apologetics can serve to be a "silver bullet" solution for every population of people to which apologists must be geared to defend the faith. There is room enough for all apologetic strategies to contribute to the apologetic discipline in defense of the Christian faith.

4. The apologetics community has not relegated keen points of contact like Paul to coordinate a global strategy. Paul did not work alone. Thus, the apologetics community must work together to carry out what God has called each member to do. It is hoped that further community will develop in the field of apologetics from the results of this paper.

Now let us go forth in faith believing that the message of the risen Christ will be carried to each household, heart, and generation. May apologetics serve to renew the unbeliever in the 21st century as a bold factor that makes a difference, providing the strategies to witness for today and tomorrow's evolving generations until the Lord God sends His Son Jesus to gather up the True Christian church.

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