

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

**Insurgency Apologetics: Refuting the Claims that Christianity is a White Man's Religion**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to  
the Faculty of the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

by

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**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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This action research project, with the utmost respect for the participants, aims to assess the ability of the members of Prince of Peace Missionary Baptist Church to counter the claims of Black religious identity cults, Black conscious community, and Black atheists who assert that Christianity is a religion that belongs only to White people. The study's main objective was to design an African-American church curriculum that addresses the purpose of this research. The new training curriculum aims to offer essential information to church members about the ancient African connection to Christianity that existed long before the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The expectation is that church members will be able to articulate the information the curriculum provides conversationally. The participants in this study, who are at least 18 years old, have graciously consented to participate. Each participant will take a theological assessment at the beginning and end of the course to evaluate their growth. The assessments will be confidential. The assessment/survey data will be recorded in an MS Access database architected by the researcher and visualized using the MS Power BI dashboard developed by the researcher.

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## Abbreviations

AES	An Exegetical Summary (Exegetical Summaries series)
BCC	Black conscious community
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BRICs	Black Religious Identity Cults
DAP	Defense, Attack, and Persistence
DMIN	Doctor of Ministry
ESV	English Standard Version
M.B.	Missionary Baptist (Churches affiliated with the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. generally abbreviate Missionary Baptist. As such, the noted “M.B.” will be used— <i>cf.</i> <a href="https://www.mtzionmbtoney.org/">https://www.mtzionmbtoney.org/</a> and/or <a href="https://www.youtube.com/c/NewMorningStarMBChurch/videos">https://www.youtube.com/c/NewMorningStarMBChurch/videos.</a> )
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NBCUSA	National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
POPMBC	Prince of Peace Missionary Baptist Church



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

From the time of her establishment and existence in the United States of America, the African-American church has witnessed and endured the onslaught of immoral acts and attempts to silence her prophetic voice. The African-American church has been attacked, oppressed, and even dismissed, yet she has managed to survive all the calamities deployed against her. Through the preaching of the gospel of Christ Jesus and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the African-American church has inspired and served those who comprise her membership and associated communities. Moreover, the African-American church has done this from her beginning. She continues to serve as the heart, nerve center, intellectual and economic impetus, and even militancy which mandated she stands up and speaks out against the power of the oppressive status quo. Such a posture correlates to the historical reality that she was not born in the sphere of conformity. Rather, she was born with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the audacity of faith to confront injustice and contend for the pursuit of autonomy, affluence, and achievement. Yet, suffice to say, it appears that growing segments of the African-American church, as observed via historical witness, have been distracted and deluded. Sarita Lyons says,

It's time for warfare! The church must call out the false teachings and attacks on the faith that have emerged from the Black conscious community [i.e., Hebrew Israelites, Moorish Scientists, Egyptian (Kemet) spiritualists, African mysticism, etc.] and feminist ideologies. ... It is time for warfare! Ephesians 6:11 tells us to 'put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil' (ESV). First Corinthians 15:57 says, 'But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' If we believe this is true, the church will not wave the white flag of surrender in the fight [to destroy strongholds].<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Mason, ed., *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2021), 155-156.

Considering this declaration of church militancy, the African-American church must not let the flames of her very establishment be quenched. She must wholeheartedly embrace the generational mantra that has served as a creed of courage. In other words, the African-American church must retain the audacity to carry out the purpose of her establishment and courageously cling to her 'If God said it, we believe it, and that settles it' mantra.

As a Holy Spirit-empowered community, the African-American church must do all it can to stand as a Christ-centric, self-aware, self-determined, and independent agency that endeavors to protect, empower, encourage, educate, and lead the African-American community. The African-American church must rebel against all societal and political pressures, working to pervert and subjugate her prophetic voice to speak God's truth with power. She must oppose the efforts of spiritual predators such as progressive liberalism, atheism, modern-day Arians/Modalists, and Black identity cults (e.g., Nation of Islam and Black Hebrew Israelites) to make her irrelevant and impotent. Via the counsel of the Holy Spirit, the African-American church must confront these enemies of orthodox Christianity at both the corporate and individual congregation level by all godly means necessary (*cf.* Jude 3, 17-23).

The apologetic mandate found in 1 Pet. 3:15-16; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Col. 2:8; and Jude 3 compassionately calls for the universal church to defend the Christian faith fervently, extend invitations to embrace the Christian faith and contend for the Christian faith at the corporate and local levels. This divinely ordained work of Christian apologetics unashamedly aims to show that the Word of God can help strengthen the African-American church's witness, effectiveness, and mission. This work highlights the importance of Christian apologetics in supporting and sustaining the hopes, dreams, aspirations, and foundations of the African-American community and the families that comprise her citizenry. Considering this, if the Prince of Peace Missionary

Baptist Church (POPMBC) is to fulfill her role in equipping members to defend their Christian faith, then a discrete apologetics ministry must be established to carry out this mission.

### **Ministry Context**

The local ministry context for this DMIN action research thesis is the POPMBC, located in Berkeley, Missouri. This church was founded in May 1923 in a small house on Scott Street in Saint Louis, Missouri. She is affiliated with the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated (NBCUSA), the largest African-American Christian denomination. As the second largest Baptist denomination in the world, the NBCUSA has founding roots that reach back to the Antebellum period.

The current pastor of the POPMBC is a gifted bi-vocational graduate of Liberty University and the Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. This researcher is a former supply pastor who served in the Third Episcopal District of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and now serves as an associate minister at the POPMBC. The church pastor has expressed their full support for this action research thesis and wants the eventual establishment of an apologetics ministry at the local church.

### **Cultural Setting**

Berkeley, Missouri, is an inner-ring suburb of North County Saint Louis and was incorporated in 1937. As of the 2020 census, 8,228 people and 3,103 total households lived in the city. The median age in Berkeley is 33.3, while the State of Missouri's median age is 39.2. The median annual household income approaches \$36,050 and underperforms the State of Missouri median household income of \$61,847. The city's racial makeup (including Hispanics) was 76.85% African American, 11.47% White, 0.53% Native American, 0.68% Asian, 4.75%



some other races, and 5.63% two or more races. 6.59% were of Hispanic or Latino origin. The distribution of adults weighs most heavily in the 20-44 age range (29.1%), followed by the 45–64 range (24.49%). Households with members under the age of nineteen comprise 33.89% of Berkeley’s city population.<sup>2</sup> Excluding the racial component (nearly 100% African-American), the members and regular attendees of the POPMBC mirror the age distribution demographic percentages.

### Church Programs

The POPMBC provides a Sunday morning worship service that combines worship through prayer, praise, provision, and proclamation. Bible study opportunities are available to members and attendees via small group ministries on Sunday mornings and at various times throughout the week. The Bible study sessions are open to all ages via small group ministries. The small groups function as teams that also participate in events outside the church's auspices. Online prayer services are available to all every Monday morning. Master classes are scheduled on an annual basis throughout the calendar year. Ministers are encouraged to participate in all training activities and video lectures sponsored by the Covenant Theological Seminary in Creve Coeur, Missouri. Also, new membership classes are available to all new members.

### Spiritual Culture

Since her founding in May 1923, the POPMBC has had a relatively small turnover of pastors (5 in 100 years). The leaders who have emerged to serve in the various church offices trend towards the more seasoned membership. Those serving in teaching positions are typically

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<sup>2</sup> “United States Census Bureau,” Government, Berkeley city; Missouri, April 29, 2023, [https://data.census.gov/profile/Berkeley\\_city;\\_Missouri?g=160XX00US2904906](https://data.census.gov/profile/Berkeley_city;_Missouri?g=160XX00US2904906).

trained and urged to employ their biblical knowledge and utilize study materials to teach God's Word (1 Tim. 3:2). The pastor practices narrative preaching, which is the predominant style in the African-American Baptist tradition, and often preaches sermon series throughout the year. This method of preaching presents the biblical text in the guise of stories/illustrations that provide clarity and the impetus to engage, involve, and invite the congregation's participation in the exploration of the text and its meaning to paint a picture of the gospel message.

Over the years, the POPMBC has grown to over 2,000 members and continues to reach the community. To improve her ability to serve as a relevant citizen in the community, the leadership and membership of the POPMBC have accepted the missionary challenge of being "A Church of Prayer, A Church with Power, A Church of Praise and A Church with a Purpose." Moreover, the church has always set forth its mission to make mature and exceptional disciples for the kingdom of God, who change the world for the better.

While the worship service experiences at the POPMBC can sometimes resemble those in Pentecostal churches such as the Church of God in Christ, the POPMBC's doctrinal beliefs are consistent with those in the Southern Baptist Convention's statement of faith (The Baptist Faith and Message<sup>3</sup>). As a determined God-fearing community of believers, the church seeks to build bridges that aim to help bring people to Christ Jesus and help them grow spiritually to live transformed lives (Rom. 12:2). The beliefs and empowerment of the Holy Spirit enable and encourage the POPMBC to carry out her purpose to be a disciple-making community that loves her neighbors as herself (Matt. 22:36-40) for the church and community-at-large are *imago Dei*. The acknowledgment of *imago Dei* in this context serves to help the POPMBC demonstrate the

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<sup>3</sup> Southern Baptist Convention, "The Baptist Faith and Message," Baptist Faith and Message 2000, February 29, 2023, <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/>.

gospel in a manner that gives rise to hope that supersedes hopelessness and provides the encouraging determinant for people (*coram Deo*) to place the fullness of their confidence and trust in Jesus as the Christ, and to express their allegiance to Christ Jesus.

### Role of the Researcher

Considering the ministry context and DMIN action research thesis, it must be noted that this researcher has a solid and growing relationship with the local church's (POPMBC) men's ministry due to serving as a lead facilitator for one of the men's small group teams. The growing relationship with the church's men's ministry was heightened shortly after joining the POPMBC. Despite being an ordained minister, this researcher immediately started serving in various events such as a greeter, church school participant, and foodbank volunteer. Moreover, the long-serving and respected lead facilitator of the men's small groups team had to relocate to another part of the country in pursuit of a job opportunity. As such, the lead facilitator role was thrust upon the researcher, and the opportunity to develop corporate and individual relationships has grown. In addition to serving as a Lead Facilitator for one of the men's small group ministries, the researcher was also appointed as the Director of Discipleship at the POPMBC.

As for relationships at the POPMBC, other opportunities to develop relationships with those outside of men's ministry became a reality when the church pastor and director of the Christian Education Ministry allowed the author to teach a short course on prayer. The researcher's relationships with church members extend from the church ministry leadership to the ushers to the typical members. This is critical for fostering and maintaining relationships within the church community, which is necessary for leading an action research intervention. Relationships and relationship building are vital for cooperation and collaboration within local church culture. After all, the researcher acknowledges and embraces the fact that "the vocation of

the church fosters relationship between God and God’s people [as well as pursuing relationships with the unchurched in order to make disciples].”<sup>4</sup>

As such, the dynamics of participating in relationships and cultivating relationships is crucial since the researcher’s project “should foster community development and dialogue. The [researcher], through the project, [is responsible for setting] the stage for dialogue.”<sup>5</sup> Yet, the fostering of dialogue must not lose sight of the fact that “the Holy Spirit is the church’s animator and guide”<sup>6</sup> and “Jesus Christ is the gospel.”<sup>7</sup>

Considering this researcher’s role, the relational component that undergirds the action research process provides the basis for effective engagement and implementation of a local church apologetic ministry that incorporates the look, think, and act phases of action research. The ministry context provides the best environment for this action research, for it is cyclical and causative by its investigative nature. Thus, this researcher asserts that the impact of the action research process seems appropriately suited for the POPMBC since it is specifically looking for ways to make effective disciples and implement an apologetics ministry.

### **Problem Presented**

The counsel of the Holy Spirit is a necessary aid in assisting the POPMBC in efforts to equip her members since she is tasked with being a disciple-making community whose members can adequately give a reason for their hope in Christ Jesus. Moreover, this assertion is supported

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy R. Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Dissertations*, Second (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022), 32.

<sup>5</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Dissertations*, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Kevin J. VanHoozer et al., eds., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 116.

<sup>7</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Third Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 983.

by 1 Pet. 3:15-16, which insists on Christians being able and ready to provide a credible reason for their confidence and trust in Christ Jesus with patient self-control, respect, deference, and conformity to morality as framed by Scripture. Regarding this mandate, many members of the POPMBC need help defending (apologia) the Christian faith and contending (epagōnizomai) against claims made by Black religious identity cults and the Black conscious community.<sup>8</sup>

The proposal to implement an apologetics ministry at the POPMBC that focuses on equipping members to defend the Christian faith against the false claims of the BCC and BRICs should be seen as an extension of the “Great Commission” issued by Christ Jesus. This extension draws its warrant from Matthew 28:18-20 where the Lord declares, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Considering this extension, Vocab Malone says, “Apologetics in evangelism is crucial: it clears the ground so there’s an open pathway for the gospel. Souls are at stake. People cannot believe in something if they do not think it’s true.”<sup>9</sup> The problem at the POPMBC is the absence of an apologetic ministry to help members defend Christianity against BRIC and BCC false claims. This critical ministry is needed because “[apologetics] is a part of spiritual warfare, and

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<sup>8</sup> Black religious identity cults and the Black conscious community will be referred to as either BRICs and BCC or BCC and BRICs throughout this research action thesis.

<sup>9</sup> Vocab Malone, *Street-Level Apologetics: Passion for the City, Clarity for the People* (West Salem, OH: Firesmyth Press, 2022), 9.

every [POPMBC member must understand] the necessity of knowing one's enemy ... With regard to apologetics, [the] enemy is fallen humanity."<sup>10</sup>

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to implement an apologetics ministry to help POPMBC members defend Christianity against false BCC and BRICs false claims. The pursuit of implementing a Christian apologetics program at the church must consider member training, acquiring/developing training materials, and measuring results. These considerations are critical for helping church members understand how to defend the Christian faith from a practical and personal perspective.

In support of the church's evangelism efforts, each member trained by the apologetics ministry will be able to increase their ability to help the POPMBC carry out her mission of making and developing mature and exceptional disciples for the kingdom of God, who change the world for the better. In this regard, Tony Evans says:

[Intricately] woven into the evangelism emphasis of [African-American] evangelism is the call for sound biblical teaching and discipleship (helping Christians bring every area of their lives under the lordship of Jesus Christ). A great need exists in the contemporary [African-American] community for discipleship to address the comprehensive spiritual development of each individual. [African-American] evangelicalism sought, and continues to seek, to pursue this discipleship process. [African-American] evangelicalism seeks to instill a different narrative in the [African-American] culture by emphasizing personal responsibility and morality, family values, and living according to the wisdom of Scripture. It augments biblical discipleship in various ways by using the strength of personal relationship through one-on-one discipleship, a characteristic already innate in the [African-American] church, as the start point.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen Feinstein, *We Destroy Arguments: How Presuppositional Apologetics Empowers the Believer to Refute Unbelief* (Longwood, FL: Advantage Books, 2015), 29.

<sup>11</sup> Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced: A Kingdom Race Theology for Reconciliation, Unity and Justice*, ed. Kevin Mungons (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2022), 243-244.

### Basic Assumptions

A few basic assumptions apply to this DMIN action research thesis project. The Insurgency Apologetics curriculum will equip class participants to understand and identify Black conscious community and religious identity cults worldviews. As such, this researcher assumes participants will be able to defend the Christian faith against the general claims of BCC and BRICs adherents that assert “slave masters” imposed Christianity upon the enslaved persons to keep them in line. It is primarily based on this faulty [and disingenuous claim] that Christianity is deemed the [religion of the White Man]. Christianity is nothing more than a shackle to be shaken off as one returns to their true ethnic roots.”<sup>12</sup> Embedded in this assumption is the expectation that participants can counter and expose this proclamation for its poison.

The second assumption is that the POPMBC will embrace the prospect of having a discrete apologetics ministry to help her members reason and contend for the Christian faith. This assumption also expects the class participants to engage in the courses to gain understanding and preparedness, whereby they can respond to the peddlers of BCC and BRICs’ demonic dogma. This researcher assumes that each class participant will honestly and openly participate in the surveys needed to quantify the research data.

The last assumption is the belief that the participants want to grow in their ability to “give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Pet. 3:15 NIV), and that they will approach the class with this attitude. The realization of these assumptions will serve to be a blessing to the POPMBC, the surrounding community, adherents of BCC and BRICs, and maybe even the world (Acts 17:6). The presupposition concerning such

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<sup>12</sup> Malone, *Street-Level Apologetics: Passion for the City, Clarity for the People*, 109.

a realization is that the church will have members who are better equipped to engage adherents of the BCC and BRICs faithfully and defend the Christian faith with compassion, conviction, cleverness, and even covert contention to evangelize.

### **Definitions**

This DMIN action research project concerns itself with the Christian apologetic ministry at the POPMBC. Consequently, it is imperative to define critical terms that will be discussed throughout the proceeding exposition. These terms include apologetics and the Black conscious community.

*African Memory.* The characteristic way of looking at history from within the special experience and outlook of the continent of Africa. Memory does not here refer to the contemporary African memory alone, but to a two-thousand-year-long history of a way of remembering. ... It is how Africans, taken as a whole, have historically viewed events and persons, and how they still characteristically remember them.<sup>13</sup>

*Apologetics.* As Steven Cowan points out, apologetics “is concerned with the defense of the Christian faith against charges of falsehood, inconsistency, or credulity. Indeed, the very word apologetics is derived from the Greek apologia, which means ‘defense.’ ... As it concerns the Christian faith, then, apologetics has to do with defending, or making a case for, the truth of the Christian faith. It is an intellectual discipline that is usually said to serve at least two

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *The African Memory of Mark: Reassessing Early Church Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic (InterVarsity Press), 2011), 27.



purposes: (1) to bolster the faith of Christian believers, and (2) to aid in the task of evangelism.”<sup>14</sup> Considering this understanding of Christian apologetics, Zion McGregor declares:

Apologetics “is the immune system of the Black church. It drives away false teaching and restores truth to the throne of the mind. False teaching is displaced not by the accommodating subjectivism that masquerades as truth but by biblically dependent, theologically sound, historically corroborated, and practically experienced truth. Prior to Dr. Martin Luther King’s leadership of the civil rights movement, W. E. B. Du Bois, for half a century, promoted the notion that the pursuit of truth must be the primary goal of Black people. If this indeed must be the primary goal of [African-American] people, the Black church must be ground zero for all that is true.”<sup>15</sup>

*Black conscious community.* The conscious community as immersed in the context of African-American society has been described by Adam Coleman as a “‘nebulous entity,’ some of which have specific belief systems, but the majority of which has no formal creed or organization ... these include the Hebrew Israelites, Moorish Scientists, Egyptian (Kemetic) spiritualists, and practitioners of African mysticism.”<sup>16</sup> Eric Mason says, “[the BCC] offers cheap costumes for us to wear in an attempt to give us that vintage feel, clothing us in inauthentic garb to ‘enhance us.’ There isn’t anything wrong with celebrating African-American identity, but we can’t at the same time deny who God has made us to be in our innermost being.”<sup>17</sup>

*Black Religious Identity Cults.* Black religious sects which espouse and proclaim pseudo-intellectual ideologies that challenge the African-American embrace of Christianity. In their quest to package Christianity as a “White man's religion,” these religious heretics have established themselves as enemies of Christ Jesus. Their labeling of Christianity is disingenuous,

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<sup>14</sup> Steven B. Cowan, ed., *Five Views on Apologetics, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2000), 8.

<sup>15</sup> Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel*, 59-60.

<sup>16</sup> Mason, 130.

<sup>17</sup> Mason, 227.

and their intentional/unintentional failure to recognize and acknowledge Africa's tremendous impact on shaping the historical Christian mind and theological foundations. Concerning the intentions of Black religious identity cults, Mason says, "[their] false teaching is just as deceptive and damaging as the serpent's. Paul refers to twisted teaching like theirs as witchcraft in Galatians 3:1 [and similarly, 2 Corinthians 4:3-5]."<sup>18</sup>

*Classical Approach.* The classical method (classical approach) is a Christian apologetic methodology that insists on "employing natural theology to establish theism as the correct worldview. After God's existence has thus been shown, the classical method moves to a presentation of the historical evidences for the deity of Christ, the trustworthiness of Scripture ... to show that Christianity is the best version of theism, as opposed to, say, Judaism and Islam."<sup>19</sup>

*Cumulative Case Approach.* The cumulative case approach is a rational Christian apologetic methodology that "understands Christian theism, other theistic religions, and atheism as systems of belief. ... The model for defending Christianity is not to be found in the domain of philosophy or logic, but law, history, and literature. This does not mean that the apologist may ignore the deliverances of philosophy or logic, but that the nature of the case for Christianity is to be found in a different field."<sup>20</sup>

*Evidentialist Approach.* Evidentialism (evidentialist approach) is a viable Christian apologetic methodology that argues that "the most significant historical events in Christianity—particularly the resurrection of Jesus—are matters that can be established through proper

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<sup>18</sup> Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel*, 232.

<sup>19</sup> Cowan, *Five Views on Apologetics*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Cowan, 151.

historical argumentation, even apart from any prior arguments for the existence of God.”<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, another advantage of evidentialism concerns the presentation of the gospel. This advantage is demonstrated by its inherent ability to “[strengthen] believers who have questions or even factual doubts and in laying a theological foundation on which to build (along with the application of additional, nonapologetic methods) for those who have certain emotional struggles concerning their beliefs.”<sup>22</sup>

*Hebrew Israelites.* A group of people who have allegedly reclaimed their true identity as the true identity as the true Hebrews of the biblical narrative. Many “Hebrew Israelites” center their praxis on (nominal) law-keeping and often disavow many classic Christian beliefs and practices.<sup>23</sup>

*Kemetic.* A nebulous worldview attempting to rediscover and practice the ancient spiritualities found within Ancient Egypt. Adherents are sometimes called “Kemetics,” “Kemetic Spiritualists,” or “Egyptologists.”<sup>24</sup>

*Minimal Facts.* This argument is not dependent upon debating the reliability of the entire New Testament; however, it demonstrates its strength via “appeals to particular claims in the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament [by enlisting a set of NT minimal facts] that are accepted for good reasons by the majority of critical New Testament scholars, both liberal and conservative, on the basis of certain criteria.”<sup>25</sup> Regarding the application of the minimal facts argument, Gary Habermas says, in his opinion that “the strongest case for the resurrection

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<sup>21</sup> Douglas R. Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, Second (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic (InterVarsity Press), 2022), 63.

<sup>22</sup> Cowan, *Five Views on Apologetics*, 121.

<sup>23</sup> Malone, *Street-Level Apologetics: Passion for the City, Clarity for the People*, 191.

<sup>24</sup> Mason, 191.

<sup>25</sup> Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, 584.

appearances of Jesus involves the use of those data that are both well-grounded and that receive the support of the critical community. ... It meets critics on their own (common) grounds, using their presuppositions and their methodology.”<sup>26</sup>

*Moorish Science.* A religion whose adherents are often, but not always affiliated with the Moorish Science Temple of America. The MSTA was founded in 1913 by Timothy Drew, who was also known as the Holy Divine Prophet Noble Drew Ali. Ali claimed that Blacks should be called “Moors” or “Asiatics” and practice “Islam” as a way of life.<sup>27</sup>

*Nation of Islam.* A religion whose adherents claim their unorthodox version of Islam is the true religion for the Black man. The NOI teaches that God (Allah) is a man, namely the Black man. Founded by Wallace Fard Mohammed in Detroit in the 1930s, this religion places an emphasis on Black nationalism.<sup>28</sup>

*Presuppositional Approach.* Presuppositionalism (presuppositional approach) is a Christian apologetic methodology that maintains “rationality presupposes the God who has revealed himself in Scripture.”<sup>29</sup> However, this apologetic approach also argues that “the Christian should presuppose the entire Christian worldview and reason from this conviction with unbelievers. ... It claims that unless a person presupposes Christianity, he or she cannot make any sense of the world morally, logically, or scientifically, since Christianity alone supplies the required conditions for these areas of life to be intelligible.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Cowan, *Five Views on Apologetics*, 115-116.

<sup>27</sup> Malone, *Street-Level Apologetics: Passion for the City, Clarity for the People*, 192.

<sup>28</sup> Malone, 192.

<sup>29</sup> John M. Frame, *Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief*, ed. Joseph E. Torres, Second Edition (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 2007), 247.

<sup>30</sup> Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, 57.

*White Man's Religion.* A common misnomer used to describe Christianity as a Eurocentric belief system used to oppress or beguile African and indigenous peoples as well as their true identity.<sup>31</sup>

*Whitewashing.* An attempt to stop people from finding out the truth about a situation. This is essentially hiding the facts in order to control or even change a narrative.<sup>32</sup>

### **Limitations**

This DMIN action research thesis project has constraints beyond this researcher's control. Such limitations begin with a class size; the class will consist of active participants in the church's small group classes. The action research thesis project will also be unable to limit Insurgency Apologetics class participants to any specific demographic beyond the adult small groups' classes. The action research thesis project will span multiple one-week sessions. As such, all participants' consistent full-time attendance cannot be assured.

This research project will be limited by the scarcity of previous research conclusions focusing on apologetics and the African-American church to allow for a broader investigation. Furthermore, while the POPMBC has agreed to provide adequate classroom space for this research project for the course's anticipated duration, the researcher has no control over the church facilities and suitability for conducting class sessions. However, this researcher will endeavor to take necessary action to ensure the project happens well.

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<sup>31</sup> Malone, *Street-Level Apologetics: Passion for the City, Clarity for the People*, 195.

<sup>32</sup> Jerome Gay, Jr., *The Whitewashing of Christianity: A Hidden Past, A Hurtful Present and A Hopeful Future* (Chicago, IL: 13th & Joan, 2020), 19.

### **Delimitations**

Considering the noted limitations, the primary anchor material will be original to this researcher but not some ancillary portions. The church's small group class membership will be targeted for participation in this DMIN action research thesis project. The proposed classes will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. on scheduled Saturdays until the course study and review are completed.

The scope of this research action will be confined to helping participants defend the Christian faith against the common claims of the BCC and BRICs. The evidentialist apologetic approach will be employed, while the classical, cumulative, presuppositional, and reform epistemology will be excluded from this research action. This research restricts the project data gathering scope and class size to members who attend weekly small group sessions. Class participants will be encouraged to ask this researcher questions and answers. Finally, the class participants will be encouraged to ask this researcher questions and answers, and they will also be informed about the importance of their full-time attendance.

### **Thesis Statement**

A discrete Christian apologetics ministry will help disciples of Christ comply with the biblical mandate drawn from 1 Pet. 3:15-16; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Col. 2:8; and Jude 3. Moreover, this ministry will help the POPMBC members become better Christian witnesses and disciple-makers. As Zion McGregor contends, this intervention is warranted because apologetics "is the immune system of the [African-American] church. It drives away false teaching and restores truth to the throne of the mind .... [The] pursuit of truth must be the primary goal of [African-American] people. If this indeed must be the primary goal of [African-American] people, the

[African-American] church must be ground zero for all that is true.”<sup>33</sup> So therefore, this researcher proposes implementing the Insurgency Apologetics project to help equip church members to defend the Christian faith against claims made by the BCC and BRICs.

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<sup>33</sup> Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel*, 59-60.

## CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Literature Review

Christian apologetics offers a multitude of approaches, each with its unique significance. The Classical Approach, the Cumulative Case Approach, the Presuppositional Approach, and the Evidentialist Approach are among the main ones. Reflecting on these diverse methodologies, Voddie Baucham, Jr., aptly remarks, “Apologetics is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. Our goal is the gospel.... We are not out to win arguments; our goal is to win souls.”<sup>1</sup>

Regarding methodology, the Classical apologetic approach emerges as a powerful tool for engaging with Black atheists or agnostics. This is particularly crucial as they grapple with the findings of the late evolutionist Harold Morowitz of Yale and former professor of biology and natural philosophy at George Mason University. Morowitz estimated the probability of “the formation of the smallest and simplest living organism to be one in  $10^{340,000,000}$ .”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, they must confront the estimations of the late renowned atheist and evolutionist Carl Sagan, who put “the chance of life evolving on any single planet at one in  $10^{2,000,000,000}$ .”<sup>3</sup> These odds are staggering, considering the average human body's 37 trillion cells. Furthermore, they must reckon with the statement made by Stephen C. Meyer in his book *Return of the God Hypothesis*. Meyer said, “The probability of producing even a single functional protein of modest length (150 amino acids) by chance alone in a prebiotic environment stands at no better than a ‘vanishingly

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<sup>1</sup> Voddie T. Baucham, Jr., *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 168-69.

<sup>2</sup> Harold J. Morowitz, *Entropy for Biologists: An Introduction to Thermodynamics*, First Edition (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1970), 99.

<sup>3</sup> Carl Sagan, ed., *Communication with Extraterrestrial Intelligence* (Boston, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1973), 46.



small' 1 chance in  $10^{164}$  ... physicists estimate that there are only  $10^{80}$  elementary particles in the entire universe."<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the Evidentialist approach offers a practical and effective method for teaching apologetics in an African-American church. This approach allows Christians to focus on the minimal facts surrounding historical evidence, bypassing the establishment of theism.

These minimal facts, which are the backbone of our discussions, include:

- Jesus died after Roman crucifixion [cf. 1 Cor. 15:3; Luke 23:1-33; John 19:1-23].
- The disciples had experiences that they thought were actual appearances of the risen Jesus [1 Cor. 9:1; 15:3, 8-11; Luke 24:34; Gal. 1:11-2:10].
- The disciples were thoroughly transformed, even willing to die for this belief [John 20:19-29].
- Thomas (also known as Didymus), a disciple who refused to acknowledge the resurrection of Jesus, makes the declaration after the resurrected Jesus physically confronts him ... "My Lord and my God!" [John 20:24-28].
- The apostolic proclamation of the resurrection began early when the church was in its infancy [1 Cor. 15:3-9 probably dates from the early to mid-30s AD.... Gospel of Mark is usually placed at AD 64-69].
- The disciples' public testimony and preaching of the resurrection occurred in Jerusalem, where Jesus had been crucified and buried shortly before [Gal. 1:18-2:10]. Jerusalem is the last geographical location where the disciples would preach about the resurrection if Jesus's grave were still occupied. Anything other than an empty tomb would have made the resurrection message a moot point.
- James, the brother of Jesus and a former skeptic, became a Christian due to an experience that he believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus [Mark 3:21; John 7:5; 1 Cor. 15:7].
- Saul (Paul), the church persecutor, became a Christian due to an experience that he believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus [1 Cor. 15:1; 15:8; Acts 9:1-9; 22:1-11; 26:9-19; Gal. 1:16].<sup>5</sup>

Utilizing this approach sharpens the argument, reduces the sheer amount of information to engage, decreases the level of contention, keeps the focus on facts agreed upon by researchers and philosophers regardless of religious orientation, and helps church members keep their focus

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen C. Meyer, *Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries That Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2021), 175.

<sup>5</sup> Gary R. Habermas, *The Risen Jesus & Future Hope* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 9, 23, 26-27.

on the gospel and the reason for the hope they possess. The other benefit of employing this approach is that it is wholly linked to the resurrection of Christ Jesus, which is the central key to Christianity and New Testament testimony. Otherwise, without the resurrection of Jesus, then blessed assurance of hope and salvation morphs into hopelessness and condemnation, as conveyed in 1 Cor. 15:12-19. However, thanks be to God that the resurrection of Jesus did occur, as evidenced by the minimal facts and testimonies. As such, the blessed assurance of hope and salvation is certain for those who embrace Jesus as the Christ, as confirmed in 1 Cor. 15:20-27, 54-57. The researcher believes this approach to apologetics represents the best method upon which to append the proposed historical/evidential tenets of ancient African Christianity. This expanded framework streamlines the amount of information POPMBC members need to internalize.

### Church Vision and Mission

Scripture makes it clear that the vision and mission of the church are to carry out the commission mandated by Christ Jesus. This mandate issued by the Lord is the proclamation that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself,” which entails the invitation: “[On] Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:19-20 NIV).” The scope of this evangelizing work is universal, for it entails making disciples regardless of ethnicity (Matt. 28:18-20), who will be taught the truth of God’s Word and its power to transform lives. They are to be encouraged to live purpose-driven lives and even be prepared to give a reason for the Christ-centric hope they have (1 Pet. 3:15-16; Jude 3). This is essential because “Jesus Christ is the only foundation on

which to build all cultures. As Christians, we have Christ in us. In Christ, all people are united. All people have the same value. The same price was paid for all—the precious blood of Jesus.”<sup>6</sup>

The apostle Paul notes in Eph. 4:10-16 that the church must be equipped for a specific purpose. In this instance, the rationale refers to the building up of a community (ekklésia). Hence, the church’s mission mandate is to turn the world upside down via the gospel’s advancement by all godly means necessary (cf. Acts 17:6). Considering this mandate, the efforts of Eric Mason, Vocab Malone, Thaddeus Williams, Thabiti Anyabwile, Tony Evans, Voddie Baucham, Jr., and Antipas Harris will be used in this research to support the case for establishing a discrete apologetics ministry at the POPMBC.

The evaluation and synthesizing of these voices of color will lend credibility to this research action’s aim to help others counter the false claims of the BCC and BRICs and support the vision and mission of the POPMBC. Also, the inclusion of their voices will aid in helping this researcher and course participants better understand how defending the Christian faith can serve as a valuable tool in communicating with the incumbent community. This communication will help POPMBC make mature and exceptional disciples for the kingdom of God to change the world for the better. After all, as Doug Logan declares, “It’s not enough to know the Bible or the culture; we must also build bridges into the lives of our neighbors by finding common ground.”<sup>7</sup>

The church’s mission is determined by the vision of her founder, Christ Jesus, who does not want her to lose sight of her responsibility to carry out overt and covert acts to subvert the anti-ekklésia with the militant declaration that ‘Jesus is Lord’ (i.e., Ps 110:1; Mark 12:36; Luke

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<sup>6</sup> Wellington Boone, *Black Self-Genocide: What Black Lives Matter Won’t Say* (Duluth, GA: APPTTE Publishing, 2016), 158.

<sup>7</sup> Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel*, 213.

6:46; Acts 2:36; 10:36; Rom. 10:12; and Rev. 17:14; 19:16). This same act of militancy includes infiltrating every segment of the POPMBC community whereby bridge building can be performed to make connections. This infiltration must begin by fueling an apologetic insurgency within the ranks of POPMBC members. As such, church members will be aided in turning the false claims of the BCC and BRICs upside down for the gospel's sake. Militancy in this context is warranted because “[the] job of the church is not to adopt the culture, or to merely assess and analyze the culture, but to set heaven within the context of culture so that culture can see God at work in the midst of the conflicts of men. [Moreover], the biblical church exists to advance the kingdom, not simply to defend it.”<sup>8</sup>

Regardless of its local shadings, the church's mission must involve corporate and individual engagement. As such, the quest to be culturally relevant is necessary for the church to be the center and leader of host communities. Cultural relevancy must have clear biblical support to avoid “[getting] caught up in cultural trends, whether to the left or the right, [and missing] the heart of the gospel. As a result, the unity found in Christ is fragmented, and too often the gospel is left out of the picture.”<sup>9</sup> Consequently, it must be acknowledged that biblical relevancy is not acultural or monocultural in any facet. God's Word by its very nature challenges and “[calls] into question every human culture ... [because] biblical truth is transcultural. ... The Christian faith is endlessly culturally versatile or ‘translatable.’”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Evans, *Oneness Embraced: A Kingdom Race Theology for Reconciliation, Unity and Justice*, 318.

<sup>9</sup> Erwin W. Lutzer, *No Reason to Hide: Standing for Christ in A Collapsing Culture* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2022), 173.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Watkin, *Biblical Critical Theory: How the Bible's Unfolding Story Makes Sense of Modern Life and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 582-583.

The church's mission as it pertains to the POPMBC and other African-American congregations must not ignore or deny the horrors of slavery and the "incalculably destructive results [inflicted upon Americans of African descent] and to the soul of [America]."<sup>11</sup> The contagion (sin) that gave birth to the peculiar institution known as slavery has metastasized into the same poison that BCC and BRIC adherents are using to challenge African-American church members. Proclaimers of the false that Christianity is the White man's religion tend to have a negative view of Christianity because of the actions of so-called disciples of Christ who refused or failed to recognize that the very people who were targets of slavery were also created in the image of God. The church's mission must emphasize identifying people as *imago Dei* while adhering to God's Word and the truth of history.

#### The Need for Apologetics

The challenges African-American Christians face because of their Gospel beliefs are a testament to their resilience and unwavering commitment to Christianity's principles. Despite persecution, having an active and engaging faith has often invoked needed societal change. The leadership of the Prince of Peace Missionary Baptist Church (POPMBC) recognizes the challenges her members face. It even acknowledges that "the more [she] brings God's influence into the [congregation and community], the more orderly that culture will be."<sup>12</sup>

As the POPMBC endeavors to transform a community that faces tremendous struggles and ungodly influences through the values of responsibility, peace, unity, and equality that the Gospel espouses, it becomes more apparent that her members need apologetics. This

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<sup>11</sup> Joseph Barndt, *Understanding and Dismantling Racism: The Twenty-First Century Challenge to White America* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 17.

<sup>12</sup> Tony Evans, *Kingdom Disciples: Heaven's Representatives on Earth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2017), 226.

commitment is rooted in a deep-seated belief that opposing the challenges of BCC and BRIC adherents is undoubtedly necessary to help convince the unconvinced (those opposed to Christ Jesus) and even cause them to consider the cause of Christ. The African-American church needs an apologetic approach that encourages and fuels “[a] reverent and devoted faith [which] is militant, aggressive. [This approach must make the link to ancient African roots of Christianity that] relentlessly pursues God and rejects with great prejudice all [the false BCC and BRIC challenges] that does not come from Him.”<sup>13</sup>

Despite the apostolic call to defend (apologia) the gospel, prominent proponents of the Christian faith object to what they perceive to be a practice of polarization or going around the Holy Spirit. Even at the POPMBC, this researcher must drive the point home that while the church depends on the counsel of the Holy Spirit for empowerment, discernment, and even the acquisition of an understanding of particular matters, the church at a corporate and local level is still required to make the case for Christ Jesus. Apologetics is needed in this regard to counter the false claims of the BCC and BRIC adherents, which are intended to disparage and defeat the evangelistic witness and works of African-American Christians.

This researcher will endeavor to address anti-apologetic ministry sentiments that, by nature, can be summarized into the view that “[belief] cannot argue with unbelief: it can only preach to it.”<sup>14</sup> The counter to this prevailing opinion will be drawn from the apostle Paul’s declaration that Christians “... do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

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<sup>13</sup> Matt Walsh, *Church of Cowards: A Wake-Up Call to Complacent Christians* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2020), 54.

<sup>14</sup> Antony Flew, *God & Philosophy: An Audit of the Case for Christian Theism* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 9.

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5 NIV).

The conflict is inevitable when another look at 2 Cor. 10:3-5 links apologetics and spiritual warfare. Douglas Groothuis counters objections to apologetics via the following observation that points out that ...

God is an apologetical God, the Bible is an apologetical book, and Christ is an apologetical Christ. Therefore, it is imperative for Christians to defend and commend Christianity ardently, knowledgeably, and wisely. ... Christians must offer a genuinely Christian worldview so that unbelievers can discern just exactly what is being defended and how it differs from their own worldviews.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the appeal of apostle Peter in 1 Pet. 3:15-16 conflicts with those who oppose apologetics, for it serves as the scriptural cornerstone for emphasizing the need for believers to be prepared to defend their faith. In this biblical passage, Peter says, “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to answer everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander” (NIV). The endorsement of giving a reason for the hope that disciples of Christ possess is paramount for churches such as POPMBC to establish an apologetic ministry whereby members can be equipped.

Apologetics, derived from this Petrine passage, is not about winning arguments but about being faithful to one's convictions and communicating them effectively. It is an invitation to deeply understand one's hope in Christ Jesus and articulate it to others. The passage suggests that every disciple of Christ should have a personal understanding of their faith that can be shared

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<sup>15</sup> Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, 704.

whenever the opportunity avails itself. This is certain and justifiable because apologetics is a natural outflow of a life lived in Christ. When Christians live by their faith in Christ Jesus, their lives naturally provoke questions and even give rise to challenges from those around them. Christians must be alert when answering these inquiries because these questions can be used to help build the bridges needed to win souls to Christ.

When dealing with challenges, BCC and BRIC adherents pose the context of 1 Pet. 3:15-16 also speaks to how members of the POPMBC should engage from an apologetic approach. POPMBC members should engage in a manner that reflects the character of Christ, which is the most effective way to communicate the gospel's transformative power. In essence, apologetics, according to 1 Pet. 3:15-16 is about being ready to share the gospel's hope in a confident, compelling, and compassionate way. It is about living out one's faith so that it invites questions and then responds to those questions with the gospel's truth, shared in love. This passage encourages believers to be proactive in understanding their faith, to live it out authentically, and to communicate it with grace and truth.

The need for an apologetics ministry at the POPMBC is profound because the relationship between apologetics and evangelism is deeply rooted in Christianity's expansion and influence. The relationship between these two components of Christian practice is synergetic. Apologetics supports evangelism by preparing the ground via addressing doubts and objections that may hinder individuals from embracing the gospel and considering 1 Pet. 3:15, the essence of apologetics within the evangelistic mission is about offering a defense of one's hope in Christ that engages the mind and spirit in the divine calling to make disciples of all nations, even convincing BCC and BRIC adherents to become disciples of Christ.



The POPMBC and other churches, in general, must recognize that apologetics can often lead to evangelistic opportunities that all churches should consistently pursue. The interdependency of apologetics and evangelism is a valuable missional tool since they witness the gospel's transformative power and the reality that Christianity is not the domain of any one culture but representative of the Kingdom of God, which is multicultural by commission and unified by plan and purpose. In this way, apologetics and evangelism are not competing endeavors but complementary, enriching the other in the shared goal of spreading the Christian faith.

In the African-American church context, where BCC and BRIC adherents challenge the despise and challenge the claims of Christianity, apologetics becomes increasingly significant in evangelism. By addressing the historical connections of the African-American church to Africa's ancient Christian roots and contributions, as proposed by this researcher, apologetics facilitates a familial linkage rather than a justice-based discussion that seeks to refute the claim that Christianity is a White man's religion and subsequently tear down any lingering race-centered strongholds used to disparage African-American embracing of the Christian faith.

The relationship between apologetics and evangelism is one of mutual reinforcement. Apologetics fortifies the evangelistic message with reason and evidence, while evangelism brings the message of hope and salvation that apologetics seeks to defend. Collectively, they form a symbiotic approach to fulfilling the Great Commission that enables winning debates and souls.

As for the POPMBC, she should seize the moment to build bridges to the gospel when the occasion arises, for her members are "[challenged] by Scripture to have ready an *'apologia'* to present to any unbeliever who asks us the reason for our faith (1 Peter 3:15). [We] know our

faith to be true primarily through the witness of the Spirit, we must show our faith to be true through rational argument and evidence.”<sup>16</sup> It is at this point that an apologetic ministry established at the POPMBC to equip members to defend the Christian faith can ally itself with the declaration that “[the] Church [founded by the Lord] is the only society on earth that exists for its nonmembers.”<sup>17</sup>

### African Legacy

BCC and BRICs take advantage of every opportunity to claim Christianity is a “White man’s religion.” Contrarily, a Kenyan-born scholar named John Mbiti observes,

Christianity in Africa is so old that it can rightly be described as an indigenous, traditional, and African religion. Long before the start of Islam in the seventh century, Christianity was well established all over North Africa, Egypt, parts of Sudan, and Ethiopia.’ Those who say Christianity is the “White man’s religion” are simply wrong. The assertion is simply baseless. It demonstrates ignorance of history or a deceptive motive.<sup>18</sup>

The identity claims concerning African-Americans and Christianity are based on the trans-Atlantic slave trade and particularly slavery in America. These claims serve as the basis for attacking African-Americans and entities that embrace the gospel of Christ Jesus. Astoundingly, groups such as these consistently overlook (intentionally?) the contributions of Africans to Christianity centuries before the establishment of an idea that became the nation called the United States of America. Concerning this issue, Brandon Washington points out that “[BCC and BRICs like to argue] that Black people embraced the church only because it was forced upon them during North American slavery... However, historical facts proclaim without debate] that...

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<sup>16</sup> Cowan, *Five Views on Apologetics, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology*, 43.

<sup>17</sup> George G. Hunter III, *The Apostolic Congregation: Church Growth Reconceived for a New Generation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), xiv.

<sup>18</sup> Malone, *Street-Level Apologetics: Passion for the City, Clarity for the People*, 107.

[the] Black Ethiopic church, which has been influential and predates the transatlantic slave trade by centuries!”<sup>19</sup>

Acts 6:8-10 supports the ancient African connection to Christianity, for in this passage, there is evidence that African Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria even had a synagogue in Jerusalem called Synagogue of the Freedmen. Sad to say, the African synagogue led the charge to kill a deacon named Stephen (a disciple of Christ) by stirring up the people, the elders, and the teachers of the law and producing false witnesses. In Matthew 27:32, another African named Simon (Simeon) of Cyrene is presented in biblical history as having a critical connection to Christianity. Despite the propaganda spewed by BCC and BRICs, the refutation of their false claim is easy to understand and communicate since some of the first disciples of Christ were African. Moreover, the refutation includes evidence that points to the early transmission of the gospel spread from Africans to Europeans rather than what is presented in the BCC and BRICs narrative that is used to attack African-American Christians and Christianity as a whole. Jerome Gay, Jr., President of The Urban Perspective, said, “When we look at the historical record, we see that true Christianity, instead of being forced on Black people during slavery, was in fact gladly and enthusiastically embraced and spread by and through our African ancestors’ centuries before American slavery.”<sup>20</sup>

The historical evidence shows that Christianity has been connected to Africa from its beginnings. This connection is substantial and must not be ignored, for it provides the basis for the identity many seek in the African-American community. It also provides an irrefutable case

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<sup>19</sup> Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel*, 202.

<sup>20</sup> Gay, Jr., *The Whitewashing of Christianity: A Hidden Past, A Hurtful Present and A Hopeful Future*, 185.

for refuting the false claim that Christianity is a White person's religion. The case is rooted in the evidence presented in Acts 11:20-26. Biblical scholar Thomas Oden says, "[Acts 11:20-26 is sufficiently important to emphasize because] it makes it clear that the first Christians in Antioch included Africans, and they were the ones who first communicated with the Gentiles or Hellenists. This is a decisive moment in the history of Christianity, and foundational for the history of early [African] Christianity."<sup>21</sup> This same scholar says, "Acts 11:20-21 has profound ramifications for early African Christianity. [The Cyrenians were among the first to act assertively on the belief that the lordship of Christ called for the worldwide fulfillment of the Great Commission to non-Jews.] ... The text shows how the Christian mission moved from Jerusalem to Cyprus, Cyrene, and Antioch through African leadership."<sup>22</sup>

Concerning this movement that occurred during a period of persecution in Jerusalem, Acts 13:1 introduces Lucius as a disciple hailing from Cyrene, a historic city situated in North Africa's Libya. Interestingly, this is also the birthplace of Simon of Cyrene, as mentioned in Matt. 27:32, Mark 15:21, and even Luke 23:26. When examining Acts 13:1 alongside Mark 15:21, Acts 11:19-21, and Rom. 16:13, ancient Christian history indicates that some of the Antioch church founders were African. Therefore, it is not mere speculation to associate Simon of Cyrene with Simeon (Simon) the Niger. Simeon's lack of association with a specific place implies that his origin had already been provided to the intended audience.

The Latin-derived term Niger strongly suggests that Simeon is of Black or dark complexion. Considering the reference to Cyrene and the use of the Latin-derived term "Niger,"

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Early Libyan Christianity: Uncovering a North African Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic (InterVarsity Press), 2011), 89.

<sup>22</sup> Oden, *Early Libyan Christianity: Uncovering a North African Tradition*, 90.

it is reasonable to assert that both Lucius of Cyrene and Simeon the Niger journeyed from the same place or region of Cyrene in Africa to Antioch. This declaration also includes Simon's sons Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21; and Rom. 16:13). Thus, regardless of one's stance on Simon of Cyrene and Simeon (Simon) the Niger, it is indisputable that the church in Antioch was a significant and multicultural congregation of Christian disciples.

Jerome Gay, Jr., President of The Urban Perspective, said, “When we look at the historical record, we see that true Christianity, instead of being forced on Black people during slavery, was in fact gladly and enthusiastically embraced and spread by and through our African ancestors’ centuries before American slavery.”<sup>23</sup> Proponents and proclaimers of the false claim that Christianity is a White man’s religion seldom take into consideration the following historical notes:

- An African was present on the road to the crucifixion.
  - Africans were present in the Cyrenaic synagogue in Jerusalem.
  - Africans were present in the first missionary journey north toward Antioch predating Paul—to Samaria and Antioch.
  - An African—the eunuch from the court of Candace baptized by Philip—was present in the first missionary journey south toward Ethiopia.
  - Africans were present in the debates leading to the major decision about circumcision for Gentile believers.
  - Africans were present in the growth of the first international church in Antioch.
  - Africans were present in the preparation and ordination of Paul to be an apostle.
- Africans were present in Rome before the arrival of either Peter or Paul.<sup>24</sup>

In history, it is noted that the influence of Christianity in Egypt was so significant that it paved the way for its expansion throughout the Nile region and the interior. Ancient Christian history recalls that John Mark, the writer of the Gospel of Mark, was born in Cyrene and founded

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<sup>23</sup> Gay, Jr., *The Whitewashing of Christianity: A Hidden Past, A Hurtful Present and A Hopeful Future*, 185.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Early Libyan Christianity: Uncovering a North African Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic (InterVarsity Press), 2011), 84-85.

the church in Alexandria, Egypt. Moreover, the spread of Christianity in Northeast Africa was so extensive that it reached deep into Africa to the kingdoms of Aksum (Axum) and Nubia.

Jerome Gay, Jr., President of The Urban Perspective, said, “When we look at the historical record, we see that true Christianity, instead of being forced on Black people during slavery, was in fact gladly and enthusiastically embraced and spread by and through our African ancestors’ centuries before American slavery.”<sup>25</sup>

Philip Jenkins says, “Nubia’s churches and cathedrals were decorated with rich murals in the best Byzantine style, showing their dark-skinned kings in royal robes. Its main cathedral at Faras was adorned with hundreds of paintings of kings and bishops, saints, and biblical figures—images that lay forgotten under the sands until rediscovered in the 1960s.”<sup>26</sup> The Christian kingdom of Nubia lasted until the rise of the trans-Atlantic slave trade period. In 1504, Islamic expansion brought and ended this era in Nubian history. While Islamic expansion led to the demise of the Nubian kingdom, the echoes of Christian memory remained. The land of Nubia was termed by Muslim invaders as Sudan (land of the Blacks). Sudanese Muslims endeavored for centuries to silence the Christian voice but failed. A civil war commenced in 1983 and lasted until 2005 when the predominantly Christian south of Sudan broke away from the Muslim-controlled state government and established a new country called South Sudan. As such, Christianity has reestablished a foothold in the southern region of ancient Nubia.

The expansion of Islam in Africa correlates to the vast extension of slavery of African people. However, according to several BRICs, Islam is the natural religion of African people,

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<sup>25</sup> Gay, Jr., *The Whitewashing of Christianity: A Hidden Past, A Hurtful Present and A Hopeful Future*, 185.

<sup>26</sup> John Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand - Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2008), 54-55.

and Christianity is a religion of the White man. The ignorance of such a claim is so appalling to basic intellect that, amazingly, numerous African-American intellectuals have succumbed to this farce. The contagion of the peculiar institution of slavery in Africa spread from African Muslim areas in the Mediterranean coastal region to Western Africa. It is here that history reveals that African Muslim tribes/kingdoms proactively pursued opportunities to sell Africans to Europeans during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Many of the Africans that were sold into slavery were removed from the continent of Africa and brought to the Americas.

Some of these African Muslim societies that were responsible for this ultimate betrayal of African people were in Angola, Bight of Benin, Bight of Biafra, Gabon, Ghana (Gold Coast), Kingdom of Kongo, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal/Gambia, and Tanzania. It must also be noted that the Kongo (Bakongo) people who converted to Catholicism in 1491 sent multiple complaints to the king of Portugal regarding slavery in the early 1500s. However, due to civil war and invasions by the Jagas forced the Kongo to reach out to Portuguese for assistance. This request for aid led to the imposition of coercion by the Portuguese, British, Dutch, and French. The Kongo were forced into either trading slaves or even being traded themselves. Sad to say, this scenario involved other tribes too.

Christian apologetics is the premier tool for the African-American church to combat false teachings and misinformation spread by certain Black Religious Identity Cults. This tool derives its authority and purpose from the Word of God and is highly effective in proving and reproofing the gospel's claims while defending the Christian faith (as seen in 2 Tim. 3:16 and Jude 3). As such, the African-American church must utilize apologetics to dismantle spiritual strongholds in their community through biblical/historical evidence and compelling reasoning, ultimately helping individuals recognize their inherent value as created in the image of God. The utilization

of apologetics must be done to speak the truth in love to those who attack the Christian faith and to engage, interrogate, inform, encourage, and even invite. In this regard, the connection between truth, love, and discipleship (cf. Ephesians 4:14-15) is faithfully and culturally relevant from an apologetic context. This tool derives its authority and purpose from the Word of God and is highly effective in proving and reproofing the gospel's claims while defending the Christian faith (as seen in 2 Tim. 3:16 and Jude 3). Therefore, the African-American church must utilize apologetics to dismantle spiritual strongholds in their community through factual evidence and compelling reasoning, ultimately helping individuals recognize their inherent value as created in the image of God.

Identity claims concerning African-Americans and Christianity that are derived from the trans-Atlantic slave trade narrative are insufficient. The general claim must span from Antioch to African-America. The focus of the general claim must be the ancient African roots of Christianity as well as the contributions of Africans to the universal church of Christ. The African-American church must lead the charge in proclaiming, teaching, and highlighting the Antioch to African-America narrative. Sharing this narrative is not the task of community, fraternal, or government organizations. Responsibility for expanding the Antioch to African-America narrative must start with the African-American church and associated educational institutions. The researcher asserts that this Christian apologetic methodology represents the best overall approach. If the justice narrative must be applied to the Antioch to African-America narrative, it must be biblical (Christ-centered) rather than social (societal/neo-Marxist-centered). Such an expansion from the forementioned narrative must include both urban and non-urban



African-American contexts because “[the] practice of apologetics is essential in reaching our [urban and non-urban] communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>27</sup>

#### Justice (Biblical vs. Social)

The remaining thread heard throughout the African-American voices in the literature concerns the concept of justice. Entities such as the Black Conscious Community (BCC) and progressive liberals often appeal to social justice in a manner that demeans the mission pursued by evangelical and non-liberal African-American churches. Such entities tend to profess concern and compassion for the plight of the downtrodden and those whom the weight of oppression has harmed. Their cumulative proclamation is that the goodwill of humankind can remedy what they deem as injustice. Folks such as Rev. Joseph Harrison Jackson, Booker T. Washington, and George Washington Carver are viewed as ‘sellouts’ for pursuing justice via Christocentric means rather than societal-centric objectives. This categorization is an injustice to those who seek justice through Christocentric measures.

A Christian apologetic approach serving the African-American church, such as the POPMBC, must also benefit churches outside urban areas. Churches in both locales have been impacted by injustices that must be addressed rather than ignored or denied. Moreover, these same churches must deal with the reality of being a prophetic witness to the universal cause of Christ Jesus while also seeking to be culturally relevant. This assertion goes without credible challenge, for a defensive church is one trapped in the ‘wilderness of fear’ and serves no cause other than support for the status quo. The church, as founded by Christ Jesus, refuses to settle for the status quo because its divine commission mandates societal engagement, insists on exerting

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<sup>27</sup> Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel*, 205.

the right to make a biblical stand for what is right, and even serves as the consciousness in the community. The historical context where the African-American church is situated can no longer ignore the problems that are working to demoralize, defeat, and destroy the Christian foundation that has dramatically served as the motivating impetus for the host community to press forward despite the strongholds erected to hold down or push backward.

Cultural relevancy must spur the African-American church to lead the charge to proclaim the truth of the gospel while seeking to lead in combating all challenges that aim to sever identifying with the universal church of Christ Jesus. Churches such as the POPMBC must employ a Christian apologetic approach that informs and equips members to refute the claim that Christianity is a White man's religion. Such a necessity is warranted because "many young people of color across North America, all over Europe, and throughout Africa are often wary of Christianity because of current religious alignments with divisive politics, not to mention the global history of pain already associated with branches of Christianity."<sup>28</sup>

It must be admitted that many who shroud themselves in Christian garb have done horrible things in the name of Christianity. These horrors must be acknowledged rather than ignored, for BCC and BRIC adherents use this evil to convince "[many African-American] young people [to] believe the Bible and Christianity are responsible for the oppression, hate, and destruction of identity such ideological superstructures have caused."<sup>29</sup> There is a growing movement among the African-American community to view opposition to injustice as rejecting Christianity. This perspective may seem reasonable at first glance, particularly when examining

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<sup>28</sup> Antipas L. Harris, *Is Christianity the White Man's Religion: How the Bible Is Good News for People of Color* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 3.

<sup>29</sup> Harris, *Is Christianity the White Man's Religion: How the Bible Is Good News for People of Color*, 16.

the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. For example, Sir John Hawkins, a prominent figure in this evil and peculiar institution, commanded a ship named *Jesus* that was used to smuggle African slaves on multiple occasions from 1562 to 1568. Additionally, he orchestrated a campaign that led to the capture and sale of 300 Africans from Sierra Leone to Spanish plantations in the Americas.

Nevertheless, considering this injustice, the pursuit of justice is appropriate and commendable, but it is problematic when dissociated from biblical Scripture. Social justice that is intentionally disconnected from biblical Scripture is an injustice. Consequently, “the current concept of social justice is incompatible with biblical Christianity”<sup>30</sup> and is tantamount to being a miscarriage of justice. The adherents of justice divorced from the centrality of the pronouncements of Christ Jesus need to be reminded that “[The] gospel—not just the so-called social gospel—mandates justice, equality, love of neighbor, humility, and impartiality... The Black-conscious community [and progressive liberalism are] not the curator of culture and justice. God is.”<sup>31</sup> Hence, the writer of Prov. 28:5 says, “Evil men do not understand justice, [but] those who seek the Lord understand all” (NKJV). As such, it is necessary to point out that justice tied to identity and centered on something other than the grace of God is an injustice. Social justice is a miscarriage of biblical justice and must be wholeheartedly opposed by the church (Jude 3). Biblical justice as established via Scripture (cf. Isa. 1:17; Deut. 15:7-8; Ps.11:2-3, 82; Gen. 2:15; and 2 Thess. 3:10) is rooted in the *imago Dei* rather than *imago mundi*. This makes

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<sup>30</sup> Voddie T. Baucham, Jr., *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe* (Washington, DC: Salem Books, 2021), 5.

<sup>31</sup> Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel*, 136.

social justice incompatible with Christianity, for it is inextricably linked to identity and conforms to societal perceptions. In contrast, biblical justice is tied to God's righteousness and grace.

While social justice is a counterfeit philosophical system designed to imitate biblical justice, it lacks the transformative power to spur missionary action to forge relationships with God and people. Meanwhile, biblical justice feeds on the God-given imperative to love others, sacrifice for others, share the gospel with others, form relationships that exhibit Christian compassion, and even participate in *koinonia*. In this fashion, the practice and pursuit of biblical justice is the work of mission, the audacity to reconcile, and the awesomeness of being reconciled (cf. Isa. 58:1-12; 2 Cor. 5:18-19). Social justice is rooted in *imago mundi* and divorced from the gospel. Moreover, this view of justice as it pertains to a Christian apologetic approach that aims to equip members of the POPMBC and, subsequently, other African-American churches must not be based on social justice.

When establishing a Christian apologetic approach that includes urban and non-urban African-American churches, the issue of cultural relevancy demands an Antioch (first century) to America (current century) linkage rather than using colonialism and the trans-Atlantic slave as the starting/focus point. Otherwise, more significant harm is inflicted by ignoring the ancient contributions of Africans to Christianity. Injustice cannot be overcome by injustice. Ancient African Christianity provides the undeniable connection that enables African-Americans to be African with memory and to be members of a universal family that worships the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40), Simon the Niger (Acts 13:1), and Lucious of Cyrene (Acts 13:1). The biblical witness further strengthens this connection that some of the first followers of Christ Jesus that were called Christian were African members of the church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-26).

Biblical justice demands the recognition of the connections between Africa and Christianity for the seeking of the truth and to stand for what is right, which must always be the standard for both church and society. Truth as it pertains to the matter of Christian apologetics and the African-American church enables the ability to be culturally relevant in an era where a “growing number of youth and young adults are opting for subcultural identity groups (i.e., gangs) and alternative religious groups such as science and consciousness groups ... the Nation of Islam, Black Israelites, Wiccans, and varying forms of witchcraft to guide them in self-discovery and their search for success.”<sup>32</sup>

Biblical justice respects personal dignity, whereas social justice tramples the dignity of some to grant it to others. Many in the African-American community need biblical justice to resolve the pain of generational hurt. The African-American church has the God-given ability, mandate, and experience to rally behind such a cause and work to help provide healing and dignity. However, due to the *imago Dei*, all churches should be steadfast participants in pursuing biblical justice, which is required to extinguish the flames of injustice and challenges to the gospel of Christ Jesus.

### Spiritual Warfare

Ephesians 6:10-18 speaks about being equipped to deal with the plight of spiritual warfare. From the context of this passage, Christians are not expected to retreat in fear but rather to remain firm in the fight against strongholds. The fight described in the Ephesian text is an ongoing struggle that requires faith, prayer, and Holy Spirit-inspired determination to overcome every obstacle in the name of Christ Jesus. Success in this arena is critical because “[it] can be

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<sup>32</sup> Harris, *Is Christianity the White Man's Religion: How the Bible Is Good News for People of Color*, 14.

very difficult to find [oneself] without a sound faith foundation.”<sup>33</sup> The fight is waged on both an individual and corporate level with weapons that can undoubtedly aid in helping Christians conquer much more than they ever dream or dare to imagine.

This has meaning to the African-American church, for Padre Pio once said, “that the devils are so numerous that if they all took bodily form, they’d blot out the sun. This is a horrific thought. But the true Christian does not deny it just because it is scary. Instead [they take] shelter in Christ, and [they march] on.”<sup>34</sup> Surely, this has meaning to the African-American church, for Paul tells us that the weapons at our disposal can overcome strongholds and win battles. He exudes the well-tested “audacity” of a tried-and-true Christian soldier when he declares in 2 Cor. 10:4, “[The] weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds” (NIV). From the moment of her founding in America, the African-American church understood that “[She] must strive in prayer and courage to witness to the power of Christ to transform hearts and lives. The [African-American] church must not retreat, but face opposition with [her] eyes fixed beyond this world to the next.”<sup>35</sup> After all, the African-American church, just like the church at large, is designed to thrive amid difficulties, disadvantages, deficiencies, and doubts because the head of the universal church says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness ... (2 Cor. 12:9 NIV).” This is good news for “[In] the midst of our praying, giving, and working, we are compelled to proclaim Christ, who alone has the ability to bring complete freedom. We are compelled to fight in all

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<sup>33</sup> Harris, *Is Christianity the White Man’s Religion: How the Bible Is Good News for People of Color*, 14.

<sup>34</sup> Walsh, *Church of Cowards: A Wake-Up Call to Complacent Christians*, 2020), 93.

<sup>35</sup> Lutzer, *No Reason to Hide: Standing for Christ in A Collapsing Culture*, 2022), 283-284.

these ways with the truth of the gospel on our minds, the power of the gospel in our hearts, and the love of the gospel in our hands.”<sup>36</sup>

The apostle Peter warns 1 Pet. 5:8, “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (NIV). Therefore, in matters of spiritual warfare, the POPMBC and other African-American churches must remain vigilant in identifying and meeting challenges to the Christian faith and host communities. This same call for cautious observance includes the identification of the subtle influences that appear as good, but analysis via a Christian worldview reveals its ungodly plot. Attentiveness to spiritual matters is essential for aiding POPMBC and other African-American churches in addressing the needs of members and society. Such needs include cultural relevancy. To refrain from being faithfully attentive to the needs of church members and society runs counter to the prophetic mission of the African-American church and lends credibility to the efforts of Satan to hamper and diminish the mission of the church of Christ.

The prophetic mission of the African-American church calls for speaking the truth with Holy Spirit empowerment, leading in articulating, demonstrating, and equipping others to see and address matters from a Christian worldview. This mission enabled the African-American church to speak against slavery, make a stand for equality (not equity), demand access to quality education, and call for desegregation and fair housing, among other vital issues. The same mission of being relevant has not diminished but increased. The ‘therefore’ of Matt. 28:19 demands that African-American churches consistently stay engaged with their communities to demonstrate relevancy to the targets of evangelism and discipleship. The church at large, even in

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<sup>36</sup> David Platt, *Counter Culture: Following Christ in an Anti-Christian Age* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum (Tyndale House Publishers), 2017), 130-131.

the African-American context, must use its divine empowerment to advocate for what is right and, according to 2 Cor. 10:4-5, work towards dismantling every argument raised against God's Word and every attack waged against God's people and every effort to thwart cultural relevancy. POPMBC and other African-American churches employ a culturally relevant apologetic approach to refute the claim made by BCC and BRICs that Christianity is a White person's religion, for as the apostle Paul frames 2 Cor. 10:4-5, the mind is a spiritual battleground. Therefore, he is urging the church to do and use whatever is necessary to "[bind] up all [every] wrong.

The prophetic mission of the African-American church, both by design and circumstance, urgently calls for the implementation of an apologetic ministry. This mission, with its local and community-wide impact, is a divine assignment that must be prioritized. The local centrality of this mission is crucial in spreading and defending the gospel, as it has the power to rescue people from misunderstanding, bring them into a community of empowerment, and equip them to overcome strongholds. This mission also enables individuals to give a clear reason for the hope they have in Christ Jesus.

The preparation of Christian disciples to engage in spiritual warfare via apologetics (2 Cor. 10:3-5) must lead to a militant discipleship that cannot be contained by the false claims of BCC and BRICs, for the church regardless of cultural context, has a mission to go any and everywhere preaching and teaching the gospel and mentoring all "to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people. (Jude 3)." This militancy represents the intentional and proactive rebellion against those who are working to disparage and distort the gospel of Christ and the historical connections between Africa and ancient Christianity. Militancy in this regard must motivate African-American churches such as the POPMBC to



“establish ‘beachheads’ or bases of operation for the Kingdom of God wherever [they reside and engage]. ... The outward effect of this [militancy] in Christ is perpetual moral revolution until the purpose of humanity on earth is completed.”<sup>37</sup>

The prescribed militancy calls for challenging challengers of the historic Christian faith because “a reverent and devoted faith is militant, aggressive. It relentlessly pursues God and rejects with great prejudice all that does not come from Him. This sort of aggression is what is needed in these times. Anything less, and [churches such as the POPMBC] will be swept up on the secular tide and washed into a life of doubt and unbelief.”<sup>38</sup> Such a militancy to defend the Christian faith and contend for the gospel of Christ Jesus is not exceptional or praiseworthy. Its moorings are reasonable and expected, as evidenced by the actions of the first Christians who saw these pursuits as acts of normalcy (1 Pet. 3:15-16). The establishment of an apologetics ministry to help Christians prevail in spiritual warfare is imperative because the inability “to meet the [BRICs and BCC adherents] on their own ground—would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defense but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.”<sup>39</sup>

The very nature of faith as framed by biblical scripture is expressed by active participation, vigilance, and courage to meet challenges to Christianity with challenges that aim to cause change of allegiance from anti-Christ to pro-Christ. The POPMBC and other African-

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<sup>37</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2006), xiii-xiv.

<sup>38</sup> Walsh, *Church of Cowards: A Wake-Up Call to Complacent Christians*, 2020), 54.

<sup>39</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory: And Other Addresses* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1980), 58.

American churches must not neglect their responsibility to promote spiritual development, deepening of personal relationships with a relational God who just happens to apologetical. After all, the foundation of church militancy as it pertains to spiritual warfare recognizes that “God is an apologetical God, the Bible is an apologetical book, and Christ is an apologetical Christ. Therefore, it is imperative for Christians to defend and commend Christianity ardently, knowledgeably, and wisely. ... Christians need to defend a view of truth itself that comports with biblical revelation, reason, and common sense.”<sup>40</sup>

### **Theological Foundations**

The theological underpinnings of apologetics within the African-American church are deeply rooted in a history of resilience and a unique interpretation of biblical narratives that resonate with the community's collective experience as a people group. This tradition often draws from the transformative consciousness of African-American prophetic thought, which includes the adaptation of biblical traditions such as those found in Exodus-Deuteronomy, Isaiah-Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel-Revelation, to convey a theology that is both responsive to the lived experiences of African-Americans and reflective of a deep commitment to the Gospel.

Historically, the African-American church has employed apologetics to defend the faith against the backdrop of racial injustice and to affirm the dignity and worth of the African-American community as created in God's image. This apologetic approach is not merely defensive but is also characterized by its assertive stance on social issues. For instance, during the Civil Rights Movement, African-American churches employed apologetics to advocate for equal rights (opportunities) and inalienable dignity of all individuals, drawing from the prophetic

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<sup>40</sup> Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, 704.

tradition that emphasizes God's concern for the oppressed and God's active involvement in human history for the sake and cause of Christ.

From this perspective, it can be argued that the African-American church's apologetic framework should function as the community's nerve center, constructive conscience, and safety net. In this capacity, the Prince of Peace Missionary Baptist Church (POPMBC) and other African-American churches must intentionally share the good news of the Gospel of Christ Jesus with the unchurched and disenfranchised believers via testimony and demonstration. In this capacity resides the Holy Spirit-empowered impetus to engage those who need a connection to Christ Jesus and encourage them to change their spiritual address. The engagement is to demonstrate compassion, which seeks to disrupt and dismantle the strongholds that prevent those who need the Lord from surrendering to the Lordship of Christ Jesus. This approach to theology enables the POPMBC and other churches to prepare their members to refute BCC and BRIC adherents who criticize them for being Christians, for being traitors (sellouts) for embracing Christianity, which is erroneously or ignorantly deemed a White man's religion. Failure to address these challenges would mean neglecting the church's primary purpose to pursue the "transforming [of] unconvinced [BCC/BRIC adherents and other] people into wholehearted followers of Jesus."<sup>41</sup> This theological foundational understanding recognizes that apologetics is not the African-American church's initiative or choice but its mandate to work towards equipping members to always be prepared to defend their hope in Christ Jesus and contend for the Christian faith.

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<sup>41</sup> Hunter III, *The Apostolic Congregation: Church Growth Reconceived for a New Generation*, 89.

Defending and contending for the Christian faith warrants the acknowledgment of the gospel's support for *imago Dei* rather than *imago mundi* (cf. John 14:8-11, 20, 23; 15:4-7; 17:20-23, 26) gives rise to hope that supersedes hopelessness and provides the encouraging determinant for people (*coram Deo*) to place the fullness of their confidence and trust in Jesus as the Christ. After all, the "gospel centers on Jesus, the King. He provides the transformative power associated with the gospel by dying an atoning death and by sending the Spirit that unites us to him."<sup>42</sup> This allows everyone who responds to the gospel in a manner that will enable them to embrace Jesus as Messiah to hear the counsel of the apostle Peter, who urges Christians to "... [always] be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks [us] to give the reason for the hope that [we] have" (1 Pet. 3:15 NIV). This same hearing of godly counsel also applies, whereby disciples of Christ Jesus are urged "... to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people [saints]" (Jude 3 NIV).

Defending and contending of the gospel is intended to inspire the sharing of the hope possessed by the people of God from both a corporate and individual reality as a means of carrying out the mission of God. Sharing in this framework serves to encourage Christian disciples and strengthen the resolve to show the credibility of Christianity. Moreover, sharing in this framework infers Christians should:

[and must be] confident, energetic, engaging, and active in bringing the gospel to bear in conversations with non-Christians."<sup>43</sup> After all, the urgency of "[making] the case for Christianity is about far more than delivering true content. [Christians] must not neglect the relational aspect. [Christians] are called to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15)."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 44.

<sup>43</sup> Baucham, Jr., *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word*, 27.

<sup>44</sup> Paul M. Gould, *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 138.

The history of the African-American church demonstrates her God-given ability to be a beacon of hope amid hopelessness, resist when told to desist, stand up during struggle, and lead her community while following Christ Jesus. Making the case for Christianity within the context of the African-American church can be drawn from the pivotal role she has served in shaping the religious landscape of Christianity within the United States. For the overwhelming course of her existence, the African-American church has served as a place of spiritual instruction and renewal and as the center of the community to shelter, organize, and advocate for the application of biblical justice and equal opportunity. Evidence of her impact is revealed via the challenges of slavery, segregation, and secularism. The African-American church's contribution to Christianity is profound, endeavoring to "see people as valued human beings who are deserving of being heard, then making space for their voices to be heard, and be willing to contend with the truths that emerge."<sup>45</sup> The contribution is significant for her role in promoting Christianity, which seeks a relationship with a relational God, a worship experience that inspires and empowers, and opportunities to overcome when oppression is the observed status quo. The contribution is incredible for the African-American church. She offers a powerful example of faith in action and the transformative power of a community that realizes it has come a long way yet still has a trek to traverse.

Making the case for Christianity within the context of the African-American church warrants the determination to stand firm on the gospel without trepidation or embarrassment. After all, the apostle Paul says in Rom. 1:16-17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the

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<sup>45</sup> Leah Gunning Francis, *Ferguson & Faith: Sparking Leadership & Awakening Community* (Saint Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015), 154.

Gentile. For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith [steadfast allegiance].’”

The life and ministry of the African-American church should demonstrate what it means to live a Holy Spirit-empowered and transformative life founded upon a personal faithful allegiance to the one who is both King of kings and Lord of lords, the Son of the living God. The impact of such an apologetic approach must aim to consistently demonstrate the gospel’s transformative ability to rebel against the rebellious, instilling hope and inspiration in the audience. The church must remember that refusing to conform to worldly expectations constitutes a militancy tantamount to waging spiritual warfare. Paul’s reference to power in Rom. 1:16 provides the needed inspiration to help carry out the commission issued in Matt. 28:18-20 and contending for the faith as called for in Jude 3.

#### Attacked Because of the Gospel

African-American Christians, as evidenced by the testimony of various members of the POPMBC, have been intellectually and spiritually attacked and even dismissed by adherents of the BCC and BRICs. Even the testimonies of Christian apologetic scholars such as Eric Mason and Vocab Malone lend support that the African-American church is experiencing challenges from the BCC and BRICs. Of course, other challenges exist, such as the onslaught of liberalism and injustice. This perversion is obvious as noted by Friedrich Nietzsche in his analysis of Christianity. He alleges, “[Christianity is] a sacrifice of all freedom, all pride, all self-confidence of the spirit, at the same time, enslavement and self-mockery, self-mutilation. Christianity denies

the will of power ...”<sup>46</sup> However, the primary charge used to confront the African-American Christians is that Christianity is a White man’s religion. For example, Malone says he encountered influences in college “that attempted to persuade [him] that Christianity is at odds with [his] Black skin.”<sup>47</sup>

The difficulties Vocab Malone encountered in college are not unique to the African-American community, given the lasting impact of the peculiar institution (slavery) in America. Unfortunately, this wound persists, and regrettably, some members of the African-American community and liberal establishments profit from disseminating the baseless claim that Christianity excused the enslavement of Africans in America and aided in the subjugation of the slaves and their descendants for roughly three centuries of chattel slavery. This claim is a lie despite the allegation that “Christianity is one of the most perfect black slave-making religions on our planet. It has completely killed [African-Americans] mentally.”<sup>48</sup>

This narrative gives credence to the claim that “[in] American life, race will always be an opportunity for evil.”<sup>49</sup> However, the entirety of such a narrative is a complete fabrication, as Augustine of Hippo, also known as Saint Augustine, noted. This African theologian from Hippo (Algeria) described the enslavement of humans as being the antithesis of God's plan for humanity and a rejection of love, as its rationale arises from sin. The Bible denounces chattel slavery inflicted on Africans during the trans-Atlantic slave trade and is therefore anti-Christian,

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<sup>46</sup> Leon J. Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas, TX: Spence Publishing Company, 1999), 35-36.

<sup>47</sup> Malone, *Street-Level Apologetics: Passion for the City, Clarity for the People*, 131.

<sup>48</sup> Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America* (Phoenix, AZ: Secretarius MEMPS Publications, 1973), 70.

<sup>49</sup> Shelby Steele, *A Dream Deferred: The Second Betrayal of Black Freedom in America* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial (HarperCollins Publishers), 1998), 114.

despite the horrific acts of those who professed to be Christian. The falsity of this same narrative gives birth to another falsehood that argues “[the] only thing that will hold the [African-American] is the belief in Whites as a people of divinity. [African-Americans] hold to [their] religion (Christianity), which they use to deceive everyone they possibly can. It was through Christianity that they got their authority over [African-Americans].”<sup>50</sup>

Biblical scripture declares in 1 Tim. 1:8-10 (NIV), “[we (all faithful Christians)] know that the law is good if one uses it appropriately. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers--and for whatever else is opposed to sound doctrine.” This passage promotes the just and compassionate treatment of individuals and condemns the practice of abducting and trafficking individuals, which still occurs in Africa. The seeds of the deliverance of slaves are rooted in the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) and the history of God’s people. In Exodus 20:2 (NKJV), God says, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Exodus 20:15 (NKJV) says, “You shall not steal.” The word steal (ganab/klepto), according to Jewish understanding, can be viewed as ‘kidnap/kidnapping.’ As such, Ex. 20:15 can be interpreted as “Thou shall not kidnap a human being.” These two verses, taken together, mandate the denouncing of those who kidnap and sell (trade) individuals. Exodus 21:16 views the act of kidnapping and trading of individuals as a capital offense and calls for the execution of the kidnapper.

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<sup>50</sup> Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, 47.



Biblical scripture's rejection of chattel slavery is also supported in Genesis 1:27, which teaches that all people are created by God and made in His image. The Apostle Paul proclaims in 1 Cor. 6:9-10 (NIV), "[do] you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." Moreover, history shows that wherever Christianity spread and became widely accepted, slavery was abolished through the efforts of Christians who refused to conform to societal dictates, even in America through the endeavors of abolitionists.

Sarita Lyons, when reflecting on what the apostle Paul was imploring in 1 Tim. 6:12 and the spiritual assaults leveled against the African-American Christians, asserts that "The church must come against any lifeless lifeboat [such as liberalism, feminism, sexual deviancy, racism, and non-Christ-centric social justice theologies that dare] to carry [the African-American community] away from the truth, waging war under the blood-stained banner of Christ—the true Ark of Safety!"<sup>51</sup> This war demands the African-American church to speak truth with power for her legacy and charge faithfully calls for her to stand when no one else will, speak up when no one else will, exercise her right to fight for what is right, and prepare her members.

Adherents of the BCC and BRICs that venture such a false and duplicitous claim against Christians are enemies of Christianity. They are waging spiritual warfare against the church by attacking what they perceive as weak links. The African-American church must be prayerful and lean on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to fight back with courage and conviction, for

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<sup>51</sup> Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel*, 156.

precious souls are at stake. Yet, the African-American church must also be cautious in this battle, for “the biblical church exists to advance the kingdom, not simply to defend it.”<sup>52</sup>

Despite all the false claims against Christianity and the African-American Christians, the church must move beyond deceptive accusations. Just as Bartimaeus (formerly blind man) in Mark 10:46–52 was able to reconcile himself to the realization that he had to counter the crowd so that he could encounter and follow Jesus, the African-American church must depend on the counsel and empowerment of the Holy Spirit to wage a steadfast insurgency to refute challenges to Christianity while simultaneously seeking to build bridges of understanding. The goal of insurgency apologetics is to help the African-American church defend the gospel and persuade a non-seeker to become a seeker and eventually a disciple of Christ by all and any Holy Spirit-inspired means. So, this DMIN action research project aims to implement a discrete apologetics ministry called Insurgency Apologetics to help African-Americans fight the good fight of defending the Christian faith while also trying to adhere to the divine commission issued in Matt. 28:18-20.

In summary, the theological foundation for apologetics at the POPMBC and in other African-American churches has historically been built upon a legacy of prophetic witness, a determination to be a force for the pursuit of freedom, a breeding ground for the development of African-American leaders, a commitment to being disciple-making disciples, a refuge for strategic planning, a safe place for dreaming and achieving great things, a commitment to the goals of biblical rather than social justice, and fortitude to move the entire African-American community forward. This foundation must make room for embracing an apologetic approach that

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<sup>52</sup> Evans, *Oneness Embraced: A Kingdom Race Theology for Reconciliation, Unity and Justice*, 318.

contends for the Christian faith and connects the African-American church to the ancient African roots of Christianity while remaining anchored in the transformative power of the gospel message. Yet, this foundation must consider that refutation should be done in a manner to open the door evangelism and disciple-making.

### Attack for the Sake of the Gospel

When confronted with the claims made by the BCC and BRICs against the African-American church and its members, it is imperative that the church responds in a manner consistent with biblical principles. This is not a war of the church's initiation, but it is a spiritual battle that must be waged. The church must employ all biblical means, both overt and covert, to counter the false teachings and attacks on the Christian faith. The church must act with audacity and determination, resolutely tearing down every stronghold erected by the BCC and BRICs.

The apostle Peter prescribes a method the African-American church can use to combat the BCC and BRICs. The combat should be waged with covert evangelism. He implores Christians to respond in the following manner when their faith is challenged:

[R]evere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander (1 Pet. 3:15-16 NIV).

As Peter implores Christians to defend their faith, he is not calling for an overt hostile counterattack or disengagement from society in this passage. He is calling for a covert insurgency for Christians that is also compelling to the challenger. According to the BECNT, "Faith [as implied in this Petrine passage] does not close doors to relationships with other people

out of either fear or hate. It turns, rather, in openness to others just as it turns to God.”<sup>53</sup> Hope, as framed by the context of this passage, refers to the expectation, confidence, and trust Christians have because of Christ Jesus. In this context, hope “is an inward [expectation] that transforms the outlook. It is a future-oriented confidence or expectation.”<sup>54</sup> Considering this passage’s use of faith and hope, Voddie Baucham, Jr. says, “[We] must know what we believe. This is ‘the hope that is in [us].’ This is the object and substance of [our] faith. Without this, there would be no reason for anyone to ask [us] anything about God or the gospel, since without this, [we] would not be a Christian. ‘For in this hope we were saved’ (Romans 8:24).”<sup>55</sup>

The mandate issued in 1 Pet. 3:15-16 represents a defense of the gospel, but Jude 3 calls for offensive action. Jude 3-4 (NIV) says, “... I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people [the saints].” According to the BECNT, Jude, while under constraint, “[was] not content merely to disseminate information about the dangers of the heretics but is calling the church to decisive action.”<sup>56</sup> Due to “ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord” (Jude 4 NIV), Jude urgently implored the church to contend for the Christian faith. Jude’s usage of the word “contend” indicates that he wants Christians to unite and do more than defend their common faith in Christ Jesus. He wants them to intervene in the

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<sup>53</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 230.

<sup>54</sup> C. David Abernathy, *An Exegetical Summary of 1 Peter*, 2nd ed., Exegetical Summaries (Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, Academic Publications, 2008), 131.

<sup>55</sup> Baucham, Jr., *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word*, 44.

<sup>56</sup> Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 55.

struggle to support, proclaim, demonstrate, and fight for the gospel's sake. This struggle was not a one-time event; instead, it is "aiming to establish the true gospel ... it is to be continual."<sup>57</sup>

The verse Jude, just like 1 Pet. 3:15 serves as a theological foundation and cornerstone for Christian apologetics. In this context, 'the faith' refers to the core doctrines of Christianity, which believers are urged to defend against false claims that could distort its message. Adherents of BCC and BRIC often make such claims, which are intended to threaten the integrity of foundational beliefs held by African-American Christians. Apologetics, via the aid of the Holy Spirit, enables disciples of Christ to defend the Christian faith, contend for the Christian faith, and dismantle spiritual strongholds designed to inflict harm on those who embrace the Christian faith.

The theological basis of Jude 3 suggests that the tenets of the Christian faith are conclusive and complete and not subject to revision or reinterpretation. This irrevocability of the Christian faith provides a stable framework for building a solid defense that enables the disciples of Christ to contend for the gospel. Thus, apologetics from the standpoint of Jude 3 serves as a necessary response to BRICs and BCC challenges that threaten the integrity of these foundational beliefs held by African-American Christians.

Contending for the Christian faith mandates that apologetics play a role in the internal life of the POPMBC. Equipping members to refute false claims against the Christian faith is essential for the spiritual health and unity of the church. The theological foundation of Jude 3 provides a scriptural basis for establishing an apologetics ministry at POPMBC. It underscores the

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<sup>57</sup> Harold Greenlee, *An Exegetical Summary of Jude*, 2nd Edition, Exegetical Summaries (Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, Academic Publications, 2008), 17-18.

importance of preserving the message of the gospel and the ancient African connection and contribution to Christianity for disciple-making opportunities in the African-American context.

The apologetic mandates issued by Peter and Jude are jointly confirmed by Paul's reference to weapons in 2 Cor. 10:4, which are divinely empowered and dual-purposed for defensive and offensive implementation. This implies that apologetics, via the agency of the Holy Spirit, is fully capable of destructing strongholds and bulwarks of erroneous constructs. These mandates issued by Peter and Jude form the basis for which the African-American church must act when confronting the BCC and BRICs' false and fraudulent claims. While fighting in a battle that the church did not start, the church must defeat the enemies of the gospel. The church must be united in the fight against enemies of the gospel, and she must victoriously act in a manner consistent with the Holy Spirit-inspired discernment and empowerment (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 8:31-39). So, while some Christians oppose Christian apologetics, sincere Christians must acknowledge that God and the Word of God are apologetical. As such, it must also be recognized that "[apologetics] is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. Our goal is the gospel.... And that gospel is 'the power of God unto salvation' (Rom. 1:16). We are not out to win arguments; our goal is to win souls. As the proverbs teach, 'Whoever wins souls is wise' (Proverbs 11:30)."<sup>58</sup>

The theological foundation of 2 Cor. 10:4 is deeply rooted in the necessity of participating in spiritual warfare. The context of this passage calls for Christians to be encouraged and engaged in dismantling spiritual strongholds. This verse serves as another piece of the apologetic cornerstone for Christian apologetics. In 2 Cor. 10:4, the 'weapons' are spiritual.

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<sup>58</sup> Baucham, Jr., *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word*, 168-169.

These strongholds are metaphorical for arguments and pretensions that set themselves up against the knowledge of God's Word. As such, the theological underpinnings of this text and 1 Pet. 3:15-16 and Jude 3 call for the POPMBC and other churches to equip members to refute BCC and BRIC adherent strongholds.

The verse underscores the reality that God is an active agent in helping Christians tear down strongholds. As the leading agent in the apologetic approach to refuting and overcoming challenges to the Christian faith, it must be noted that the spiritual realm holds precedence over the world's perspective. As shaped by this verse, apologetics defines Christians' approach when discussing their faith. Rather than relying on human logic alone, the apostle Paul reminds “[Christians] that the weapons of [spiritual] warfare rely on God's might to pull down strongholds.”<sup>59</sup> Concerning the establishment of an apologetics ministry at the POPMBC, educating members on how to refute BCC and BRIC adherents is paramount and possible for “[the weapons used to contend for the Christian faith] are mighty because they not only come from God, but they come through Him. [God's] power empowers the weapons. [God's] might is what makes them spiritually lethal.”<sup>60</sup>

The theological foundation of 2 Cor. 10:4 is integral to establishing a POPMBC apologetic ministry, as it establishes that the defense of the Christian faith is grounded not in worldly wisdom but in the power of God. This foundation shapes how Christians engage in apologetics, insisting that all approaches rely on the Holy Spirit for enablement, empowerment, equipping, and encouragement. According to this text, the benefits of having a discrete

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<sup>59</sup> Clarence Earl Walker, *Breaking Strongholds in the African-American Family: Strategies for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 49.

<sup>60</sup> Walker, *Breaking Strongholds in the African-American Family: Strategies for Spiritual Warfare*, 50.

apologetics ministry involves the establishment of a training program that assists members in building bridges between faith and reason, providing a space for learning how to refute the claims of BCC and BRIC adherents, and, ultimately, the sharing of the transformative message of the Gospel. This is incredibly profound because “[when] God’s army uses His weapons properly, they are effective.”<sup>61</sup> This action research projects aims to help POPMBC member learn the necessary information to refuse false BCC and BRIC claims.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

The theoretical foundations of apologetics are deeply rooted in the philosophical, theological, and rational discourse that seeks to articulate, defend, and substantiate the tenets of the Christian faith. Evidential apologetics, for instance, is a one-step approach that emphasizes the use of evidence to demonstrate the truth of Christianity. This approach utilizes the presentation of evidence derived from empirical observation of history and reasoned arguments. In apologetics, the Holy Spirit is understood as a guiding force, leading individuals to the truth of Christianity and the saving knowledge of Christ Jesus. The relationship between apologetics and theology is also significant, with apologetics often seen as a precursor to theology, defending the basic principles and assumptions upon which Christian theology is built.

Apologetics seeks to establish and maintain a harmonious relationship between faith, historical claims, and reason. This approach systematically defends the Christian worldview by articulating, defending, and substantiating its fundamental tenets. It is not about proving faith through logic; instead, reasoned arguments are used by the Holy Spirit to lead individuals to the truth of Christianity. It serves as a precursor to theology and evangelism. Apologetics defends

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<sup>61</sup> Walker, *Breaking Strongholds in the African-American Family: Strategies for Spiritual Warfare*, 50.



and commends the Christian faith against perspectives of the unconvinced, grounding its arguments in the fundamental Christian narrative of creation, fall, and redemption. This narrative provides a lens through which the entirety of the Christian faith is understood, from acknowledging God as the sovereign creator to recognizing humanity's fallen state and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, apologetics is not merely defensive but also wields an offensive nature that moves beyond responding to engaging with the intentionality of dismantling spiritual strongholds that run counter to the Christian worldview. It seeks to offer a coherent and compelling case for the truth and the relevance of its claims in the contemporary world. In essence, apologetics is a systematic vindication of the Christian faith, as it addresses challenges and objections that seek to convince the unconvinced to challenge allegiance (pistis, also translated as faith) from being a denier to a disciple.

It is a discipline that defends and commends the Christian faith against non-believing perspectives, grounding its arguments in the fundamental Christian narrative of creation, fall, and redemption. This narrative provides a lens through which the entirety of the Christian faith is understood. Moreover, this researcher proposes the appendage of the history of Africa's ancient connections and contributions to Christianity. The appendage, coined as the 'Antioch to African America' narrative by this researcher, is a historical account drawn from empirical evidence that traces the spread of Christianity from the African-led church in Antioch to its significant influence in African American communities. When integrated into the evidential apologetics approach, this narrative can provide a unique and intriguing perspective for the POPMBC, sparking engagement and strengthening the defense of the Christian faith.

Regarding the theoretical underpinnings, apologetics in the context of the POPMBC is designed to empower its members to make a reasoned case for their hope in Christ Jesus. The aim is to equip them with the ability to defend why their trust, confidence, hope, and allegiance to Christ Jesus will aid in contending for the Christian faith. This powerful tool can subvert and defeat the false claims of BCC and BRIC adherents. It is crucial for covert and overt actions to persuade these anti-Christian adherents to reevaluate their claims and reconsider their relationship with Christ Jesus. The establishment of an apologetics ministry at the POPMBC, as proposed by this researcher, is underpinned by Voddie Baucham, Jr.'s assertion that "[apologetics] is necessary today because of issues such as biblical illiteracy, postmodern/post-Christian thinking, open opposition to biblical truth, and the growing presence of opposing religions."<sup>62</sup> Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to evaluate the empowering impact on a person's ability to defend the Christian faith against those who claim Christianity is a "White man's religion" or "God does not exist."

### Personal Philosophy

When evaluating the various apologetic methods, this action researcher presupposes that the Word of God contained in the biblical repository is true and inerrant. This insistence forms the basis for this researcher's selection of the evidential apologetic method despite the consensus among this approach's adherents asserting that the weight and expanse of evidence that God exists demonstrates presupposition is not necessary. The evidential apologetic framework is a one-step methodology that does not require presupposition of God's existence or the witness of biblical Scripture. Still, this researcher believes that the presupposition of God's existence and

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<sup>62</sup> Baucham, Jr., *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word*, 24.

inerrancy of God’s Word contained in the biblical record undergirds and anchors the demonstration of evidence shared between Christians and their non-Christian counterparts. Therefore, this researcher insists on a need for presupposition and an appeal to the facts concerning the central claims of Christianity. Adopting this approach is vital to this researcher’s work, for “truth is not only to be believed; it is to be deployed.”<sup>63</sup>

This action researcher also seeks to highlight the historical connection between Africa and the early history of Christianity. The connection relies on the facts that demonstrate the spread of Christianity, which took a southern route to Africa before transmission throughout Europe. This approach seeks to demonstrate that Christianity was espoused and proclaimed across the African continent long before the establishment of Islam and the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade period. Drawing such a connection is critical, for it goes without debate that most of the research in apologetics has primarily concerned the Western church in a context that fails to consider the unique challenges of the African-American church. It is the contention of this researcher’s thesis topic that there needs to be more work focused on the African-American church context of apologetics. Thus far, this researcher has encountered some scholarly efforts that warrant serious consideration. Nine of these outstanding works are:

- *Urban Apologetics*, compiled by Eric Mason.
- *Street-Level Apologetics*, compiled by Vocab Malone.
- *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*, compiled by Thomas C. Oden.
- *Early North African Christianity*, compiled by David L. Eastman.
- *Early Libyan Christianity*, compiled by Thomas C. Oden.
- *An Unbroken Circle*, compiled by Paisius Altschul.
- *The African Memory of Mark*, compiled by Thomas C. Oden.
- *Is Christianity the White Man’s Religion: How the Bible Is Good News for People of Color*, compiled by Antipas L. Harris.

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<sup>63</sup> Baucham, Jr., *Fault Lines*, 214.

Concerning the research conducted by Mason and Malone, there is a commonality that goes beyond basic apologetics. Both researchers addressed BCC and BRIC challenges, atheism, African roots in Christianity, and social justice. These same researchers also address the noted challenges from an urban context.

This researcher will adopt the concept presented by Mason and Malone to address the false claims made by the BCC and BRICs against the African-American church and African-American Christians because a Christian apologetics ministry must consider 2 Cor. 10:4-5, which says, “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” This is possible because “God [does] not short-change believers on the fighting material end. It behooves a leader to equip his or her army with the best military hardware weapons their kingdom or government can afford. ... No other fighting equipment in the entire universe has the power of a Christian’s spiritual weapons.”<sup>64</sup>

This researcher’s work is fueled by Paul’s goal to demolish arguments that counter the gospel. The reason for this is drawn from the BECNT’s description of arguments. The BECNT describes arguments that oppose the gospel as “a defensive wall of a city or fortress, ‘raised up’ to fend off an assault. Thus, the ‘thoughts’ of [opponents to the gospel] are depicted as an enemy wall standing against a true knowledge of God; authentic Christian ministry tears down such thoughts and makes clear the gospel.”<sup>65</sup> This is only the first stage of siege warfare. The second

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<sup>64</sup> Walker, *Breaking Strongholds in the African-American Family: Strategies for Spiritual Warfare*, 50.

<sup>65</sup> George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 475.

stage commences: “[once] the walls are torn down ..., ministry involves the capture of enemy soldiers, who because the wall has been dismantled, are vulnerable.”<sup>66</sup> Considering the warfare stages, the counsel of the apostle’s words noted in 2 Cor. 10:3-6 implies that apologetics must conform to the Word of God with the commitment to conquer false claims for the cause of Christ Jesus.

### Research Distinctives

Apologetics involves the defense of the truth, and biblical rather than social justice is based upon the revelation of truth. As such, this DMIN action research project differs from the norm established by Mason and Malone because rather than emphasize social justice, this researcher concurs with Voddie Baucham, Jr.’s biblical justice concept, which says, “God is clear about His attitude toward falsehood and its implications ... falsehoods must be confronted.”<sup>67</sup> The biblical mandate to “seek justice is not a call to superficial, knee-jerk activism. [Christians] aren’t commanded to merely execute justice but to ‘truly execute justice.’”<sup>68</sup> Notwithstanding this mandate, this researcher believes that the tenets of social justice are heretical because of its dependence on society to define and employ a dynamic interpretation of justice. This researcher believes that God “is the moral plumb line who determines what is good and right for all peoples, for all eras. And because God doesn’t change, this standard

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<sup>66</sup> Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 475.

<sup>67</sup> Baucham, Jr., *Fault Line*, 41-42.

<sup>68</sup> Thaddeus J. Williams, *Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth: 12 Questions Christians Should Ask About Social Justice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 3.

doesn't change."<sup>69</sup> So, therefore, this DMIN action research project will not use social justice in its apologetic approach.

The other key difference is this researcher's intent to connect the African-American church directly to the ancient African Christianity moorings via the Antioch to African-America narrative that predates the trans-Atlantic slave trade by at least fourteen to fifteen centuries.

Suffice it to say, this researcher asserts that the linkage can be made by highlighting

[The] central role played by Africa and Africans in the formation of the church has not been taught to most African-American Christians.... By acquainting [African-American Christians] with the truth of Christian history, [African-American Christians are armed] against the onslaught of deceit, misinformation, and ignorance. [They are linked] to the early church through their forefathers.<sup>70</sup>

While Mason makes a brief reference to Christianity's connection to Africa, this researcher endeavors to forge a more substantive link between Africa and early Christianity to more effectively refute the false claim that Christianity is a White person's religion. This false claim must be vigorously challenged, for Christianity is a universal religion established by an omnipresent God and cannot be confined to one ethnicity or nation. Christianity cannot be the domain of one ethnicity or nation when the tremendous commission charged in Matt. 28:18-20 is considered and applied according to divine decree.

The investigation of this linkage performed by Thomas Oden concerning how Africa shaped Christianity aids in the refutation of the false claims that Christianity is a "White man's religion." Oden's investigation confirms the seldom-admitted fact that "Africa played a decisive role in the formation of Christian culture. Decisive intellectual achievements of Christianity were

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<sup>69</sup> Scott David Allen, *Why Social Justice Is Not Biblical Justice: An Urgent Appeal to Fellow Christians in a Time of Social Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Credo House Publishers, 2020), 19.

<sup>70</sup> Paisius Altschul, *An Unbroken Circle: Linking Ancient African Christianity to the African-American Experience* (Saint Louis, MO: Brotherhood of St Moses the Black, 1997), 16-17.

explored and understood first in Africa before they were recognized in Europe, and a millennium before they found their way to North America.”<sup>71</sup> Oden proceeds to point out that BCC and BRICs adherents “have been so intent on condemning nineteenth-century colonialist missionary history that they have hardly glimpsed [the] momentous premodern patristic African intellectual heritage. [They] have exalted every other conceivable aspect of the African tradition seen [while consistently ignoring] this patristic gift lying at their feet.”<sup>72</sup>

The decisive role Africa plays in the history of Christian is demonstrated by the African memory of John Mark. This distinction is essential for it establishes a significant connection with Africa and early (ancient) Christianity and poses a significantly powerful challenge to the claims that Christianity is a “White man’s religion.” Not only was John Mark, the gospel writer, born in Africa (Cyrene), but African memory proclaims that history proves his “life and mission embodied the unity of the body of Christ. Mark remains a fixed point of reference for virtually all Christian believers in Africa today.”<sup>73</sup> Those who oppose or ignore the connection between John Mark and Africa are constrained by over two thousand years of historical testimony documented in Africa by Africans. This memory is framed by John Mark’s birth in Africa (Cyrene) and his death in Africa (Alexandria). The center of this memory declares that Mark was a member of a group of disciples known as “the seventy.” Immediately adjacent to the center of this memory is Mark’s association with the apostles Peter and Paul and his founding of the

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<sup>71</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books (InterVarsity Press), 2007), 9.

<sup>72</sup> Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity*, 11.

<sup>73</sup> Oden, *The African Memory of Mark: Reassessing Early Church Tradition*, 29.

church in Alexandria, Egypt. According to African memory, John Mark ministered in Africa, Asia, and Europe. Not even Peter or Paul accomplished this feat.

Per this memory, this researcher asserts it must be noted that John Mark was born in the same place as Simon of Cyrene, along with his sons Rufus and Alexander (Mark 15:21, Rom. 16:13). This reasoning is based upon the critical role Simon served in Scripture because Roman soldiers drafted him to carry the cross for Jesus on the day (the Lord) was crucified.

Additionally, this same reasoning includes the findings of William Hugh Clifford Frend, a church historian and archaeologist, who brings to light that the adherents of Donatism claimed Simon of Cyrene was an “*Afer* (African [a native of Africa]) like themselves.”<sup>74</sup>

This researcher asserts that BCC and BRIC adherents are complicit in spreading religious and philosophical lies as matters of truth. Their false claim that Christianity is a White man’s religion serves as a genocidal tool to eradicate the history of Christianity in Africa and the determined efforts of Africans to spread Christianity to other Africans long before the establishment of Islam and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The attempts by BCC and BRICs to attack the Christian faith of African-Americans amount to Blacks whitewashing Black people.

The basis for their actions is reprehensible and ignores the historical fact that by AD 340, the capital of Ethiopia (Abyssinia), known in history as the Kingdom of Aksum, served as a base for Christianity in Africa along with Alexandria (Egypt), Carthage (Tunisia), and Meroe (Sudan). Ethiopia is singled out to exemplify that in AD 340 and the following three centuries, the Bible was translated into Ge’ez, an ancient Ethiopian Semitic language. Moreover, the kingdom of Ethiopia (Abyssinia) had so many churches that when Europeans discovered the country in the

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<sup>74</sup> Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995) 37-38.



seventeenth century, they declared, “[it] is not possible to sing in one church without being heard by another, and perhaps by several.”<sup>75</sup>

Aksum still exists today and is considered Ethiopia’s holiest city. Coincidentally, while BCC and BRICs adherents ignore the ancient history of Christianity in Africa, they fail to acknowledge this same place that some claim is the resting place for the Ark of the Covenant. These opponents of Christianity refused to recognize that Christianity existed in Africa before the conversion of Constantine the Great in AD 337. These same opponents ignore the historical fact that the Christian kingdom of Nubia (Sudan) waged a military campaign in 745 to “invade Egypt, with the goal of defending the patriarch of Alexandria.”<sup>76</sup> Amazing, the Nubians sought to defend the very place where the church was established by John Mark in Africa and the source of bishops that were sent to Alexandria (Egypt), Cairo (Egypt), Aswan (Egypt), Ethiopia (Abyssinia), Nubia/Khartoum (Sudan), Nairobi (Kenya), Al-Kairuwan (Tunisia), and Tripoli (Libya).

While BCC and BRIC adherents’ false claims contain a measure of truth regarding the atrocities engineered by colonial powers, their claims are still disingenuous and misleading. This charge is made based upon the failure of their claims to seriously consider the role of African empires such as the Benin Empire (Kingdom of Dahomey/Kingdom of Allada), Kanem Bornu Empire, Aro Confederacy, Ashanti Empire, Songhai Empire, and Mali Empire in the African slave trade. The complete picture of what transpired in the trans-Atlantic slave trade is a nightmare derived from unspeakable evil.

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<sup>75</sup> Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand - Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died*, 55-56.

<sup>76</sup> Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand - Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died*, 55.

There is no debate that colonial powers used Christianity as a tool to control bonded slaves and to justify their actions and claims of superiority over those subjugated as chattel.

Nonetheless, this researcher renounces the accusation that notes,

Christianity represents colonial oppression and is not authentically African. This assumption is categorically false [because] Christianity has been in Africa since the beginning. In fact, it is very likely that there were Christians in Africa before there were Christians in Europe.... Africa belongs at the center of Christian history, beginning in the early church.<sup>77</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This DMIN action research project is vital to helping the POPMBC establish an apologetics ministry to help members defend the Christian faith against the claims made by the BCC and BRICs. As such, this researcher proposes implementing the Insurgency Apologetics project to help equip church members to defend the Christian faith against allegations made by the BCC and BRICs. This is essential, as Blake Will puts it:

The intent of biblical literacy [is] to impact those without the light of Christ, drawing them to trust him for the forgiveness of sins and to become members of the body of Christ. Whether facing [Jehovah Witnesses] or an atheist, Muslim, or Black Hebrew Israelite ..., the goal of the biblically literate believer should be to share the gospel and answer questions about the hope of Christ with ‘gentleness and reverence’ (1 Peter 3:15 NASB).<sup>78</sup>

The Insurgency Apologetics project will provide the training/material needed to help members of the POPMBC gain an understanding of the church’s vision and mission, the need for apologetics, the African legacy which has played a significant role in shaping Christianity, the reason for fighting back against the BCC and BRICs and engaging in biblical justice to dismantle the chief arguments waged by the enemies of the gospel (BCC/BRICs). Moreover, this

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<sup>77</sup> David L. Eastman, *Early North African Christianity: Turning Points in the Development of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 5.

<sup>78</sup> Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel*, 218.

Insurgency Apologetics project aims to evaluate the impact on a person's ability to defend the Christian faith against those who claim Christianity is a "White man's religion" or "God does not exist." It will also serve as the catalyst for establishing a new ministry at the POPMBC.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This DMIN research methodology was designed to address the absence of an apologetic ministry to help POPMBC members participating in the church's small growth group ministry defend the Christian faith against the claims of the BCC and BRICs. So, it must be noted that this project was undertaken as a quality improvement initiative at the POPMBC and, as such, was not formally supervised by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board.

This active research methodology infers that the primary source contributing to this problem is the lack of an apologetic ministry curriculum. This methodology intends to advocate the theological and theoretical foundations articulated in the latter section of the previous chapter. This chapter will explain the design of the action research thesis project intervention within the context of an apologetics course taught by this researcher at the POPMBC. The intervention will use this researcher's Insurgency Apologetics curriculum.

The Insurgency Apologetics curriculum is designed to cover the categories of church mission, apologetics, BRICs and BCC primary false claim, African Legacy, and African Memory of John Mark. Usage of this curriculum will help participants understand the material and apply the gained knowledge to defend the Christian faith against the false claims of the BRICs and BCC. The intervention lesson plan outline for the 7-week project is illustrated in table 1.0

**Table 1.0 Insurgency Apologetics Project Task**

<b>Table 1.0. Insurgency Apologetics Project Task</b>		
Week 0	Course Preparation	Confirm course registrations and provide course outline, and Pre-Course Survey
Week 1	Unit #1 Session	Introduction/Expectations, Church Mission, and Apologetics Mandate
Week 2	Unit #2 Session	BCC and BRICs Primary False Claim
Week 3	Unit #3 Session	Defense, Attack, and Persistence

Week 4	Unit #4 Session	Apologetics (Minimal Facts)
Week 5	Unit #5 Session	African Legacy to Christianity
Week 6	Unit #6 Session	African Memory of John Mark
Week 7	Unit #7 Session	Focus Group discussion/review, and Post-Course Survey

This researcher designed the Insurgency Apologetics curriculum utilized in this intervention and summarized in the various appendices. The efficacy measurement of this intervention will heavily depend on the class survey results. Regarding triangulation, this researcher will use various sources: surveys, questionnaires, and field notes. This check for rigor also considers that this researcher’s journal observations can aid in identifying progressive changes. Overall, the measurement of efficacy and usage of triangulation enables this researcher to “[check] the consistency of what people say over time; ... [even to hopefully] understand the reasons for [data discrepancies].”<sup>1</sup>

The Insurgency Apologetics curriculum is based upon three apologetic components: Defense, Attack, and Persistence. The first component, Defense, is drawn from 1 Pet. 3:15, whereby Christians must always be ready to make a reasoned case for their hope in Christ Jesus. The second component, ‘Attack,’ is drawn from Jude 3, whereby Christians are expected to unite in positively intervening in the fight to contend for their common orthodox Christian faith against heresies and heretics. The third component, ‘Persistence,’ is drawn from 2 Corinthians 10:3–5, whereby Christians are expected to subvert the claims of Christianity’s opponents overtly and covertly with the authenticity of the Christian ministry, which has the ability via the agency of the Holy Spirit to expose, depose, oppose, and transpose.

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy R. Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Dissertations*, Second (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022), 172-173.




<b>Defend</b>		Ability to make a reasoned case for their hope in Christ Jesus
<b>Attack</b>		Ability to contend for the Christian faith against claims of the BCC and BRICs adherents
<b>Persistence</b>		Ability to defeat claims of the BCC and BRICs adherents

Figure 1. Key elements of the Insurgency Apologetics curriculum

The Insurgency Apologetics curriculum aims to engage with course participants collaboratively to build them up so that they will be adequately equipped to defend the Christian faith against the false claims of the BRICs and BCC. This defense of the orthodox Christian faith may spur the conversion(s) of BRICs and BCC adherents. As derived from Matt. 28:18-20 and 1 Pet. 3:15-16, this intervention plan recognizes that “[apologetics] in evangelism is crucial: it clears the ground so there’s an open pathway for the gospel.”<sup>2</sup> The Insurgency Apologetics components emphasize the importance of each participant’s ability to address the claims of the BCC and BRICs adherents to help these opponents of Christianity switch their loyalty to Christ Jesus.

### **Intervention Design**

The lack of discrete apologetics ministries in African-American churches is a multifaceted issue that raises concerns. Scriptures such as 2 Cor. 10:3-5, 1 Pet. 3:15-16, and Jude 3 provide the basis for establishing such a ministry. An apologetics ministry can equip African-American churches to address the unique spiritual, intellectual, and social challenges they face in their host communities. Establishing a discrete apologetics ministry can be instrumental in

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<sup>2</sup> Malone, *Street-Level Apologetics: Passion for the City, Clarity for the People*, 9.

defending the Christian faith and engaging in a culturally sensitive manner, such as refuting false claims posed by BRICs and BCC adherents.

The proposed apologetics concept, developed by this researcher is crucial in addressing the gap left by traditional apologetic approaches. While current approaches incorporate arguments for social justice to help African-American churches refute the notion that Christianity is a White man's religion, this researcher's proposal does not include social justice in its design. Instead, it leverages the "Antioch to African-America" narrative, which highlights the ancient African roots of Christianity as found in the church at Antioch (cf. Acts 11:19-21, 13:1-3) and the African contributions to ancient Christianity that have impacted the faith held by contemporary African-American Christians.

The design of apologetics interventions at the POPMBC church is intentional and strategic, considering the community's unique challenges and cultural strengths. The curriculum highlights the leaders of the Antioch church, the Ethiopian Eunuch from Meroe (Nubia) presented in Acts 8:26-39, the family of Simon Cyrene noted in Mark 15:21, and ancient African pieces of evidence that John Mark was born in Cyrene rather than Jerusalem (Israel). Moreover, the contributions of Africans such as Athanasius, Origen, Tertullian, and Augustine are mentioned too. Creating a dialogue that is both informative and transformative, fostering a space where questions can be asked, doubts can be expressed, and faith can be deepened in an affirming and empowering manner is the intention.

The proposed POPMBC apologetics intervention bridges faith, reason, history, and cultural relevancy. Such a bridge is significant because throughout most of the history of the African-American church, it could be noted with overwhelming certainty that "[the] Black church was with the Black community, and the Black church was the Black community.

Community and church were coterminous.”<sup>3</sup> This claim is supported by Barna’s data analysis which contends that “[the] history of Black Church community, advocacy and influence is woven into the fabric of Black life, irrespective of one’s faith affiliation. . . . In fact, half of the unchurch (48%) call themselves ‘very familiar’ with the Black Church. Black churches hold influence and responsibility among the Black population at large, not just among their constituencies.”<sup>4</sup>

It is incumbent upon the POPMBC and other African-American churches to help members give a reason for their hope while also providing a robust refutation of false claims leveled by BRICs and BCC adherents against the Christian faith. This effort to help members defend the Christian faith is intended to help members contend so that BRICs and BCC challengers will move from being unconvinced to being convinced; they will move from denial to being disciples of Christ.

Furthermore, following IRB approval, the first stage of this project involves engaging with the POPMBC pastor and the Board of Christian Education to promote the action research project to the church's adult small growth groups via church service/Facebook announcements and group facilitators. The researcher will recruit members of his men's small growth group and other classes. Eligible participants for this DMIN research methodology will include adult POPMBC's small growth group members willing to learn how to refute the BCC and BRICs' claims. The participant population will not be divided into groups.

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<sup>3</sup> Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church: A Call to Reclaim a Sacred Institution* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 190.

<sup>4</sup> Barna Group. 2021, *Trends in the Black Church: Celebrating Its Legacy and Investing in a Hopeful Future* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2021), 55.



The rationale for selecting participants from the adult small growth group population is that they represent individuals willing to serve in church ministry, interested in spiritual development, and capable of learning and teaching the *Insurgency Apologetics* curriculum. The goal of selecting course participants is to limit the participant population to approximately 20-40 members. The second stage of selecting course participants involves distributing consent forms and verifying that they agree to participate in this study. All participants must sign the consent forms, as the data collection will not be anonymous.

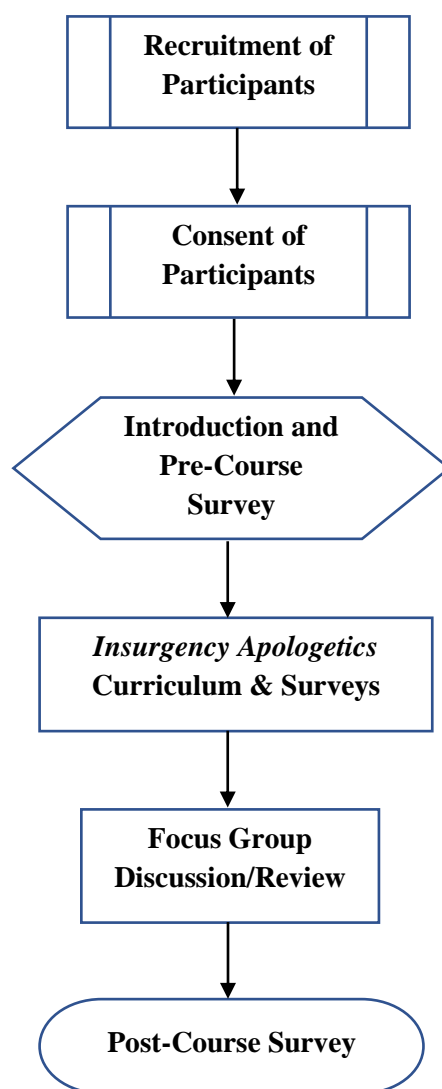


Figure 2. Methodological approach

As noted above in figure 2, the third and succeeding stages comprise data collection and course instruction. A questionnaire will be submitted to course participants at the conclusion of each course component. Additionally, this researcher will keep a reflective journal during this action research project's data collection and course instruction stages. This is crucial to aid in the protection of the research project's data integrity. The reflective journal will take into project related discussions/conversations that may arise outside the structured times because “[project participants] may express opinions during the unstructured times that they would not during [class sessions] even if asked directly.”<sup>5</sup>

At the conclusion of the course, the data collected via surveys and questionnaires will be compiled and analyzed to measure the Insurgency Apologetics curriculum's effectiveness. The gathered data will be stored in the Microsoft Access database on the researcher's private (password-protected) One-Drive cloud repository. Survey paper copies will be in the researcher's private file cabinet for storing sensitive documents until they can be scanned and electronically stored on the noted One-Drive. The hard copies will be shredded in bulk after the scanning process has concluded.

This researcher will consider the intervention outcome successful if the project participants at the POPMBC demonstrate via focus group/class settings and course surveys that they can defend the Christian faith against the false claims of the BRICs and BCC. This determination will also consider the data visualization findings provided via Microsoft Power BI the researcher used to create anonymous participant reporting of the data extracted from the MS

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<sup>5</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Dissertations*, 194.

Access database. This evaluation criterion will also serve as an observation to measure efficacy and inadequateness.

### **Implementation of the Intervention Design**

The implementing of the Intervention Design involves a strategic approach that integrates theological, historical, and practical elements to effectively defend the Christian faith against the false claims posed by BCC and BRIC adherents. This process often includes understanding the historical and cultural context of apologetics and the specific challenges faced by the POPMBC. This intervention design will consider the subjective experiences and objective evidence that support the Christian faith, utilizing a range of approaches from evidentialist and ancient African Christian roots and contribution arguments. Ultimately, the goal is to provide a culturally relevant defense of the Christian faith that is convincing and compelling.

Implementing the intervention at the POPMBC is a mission that has both local (immediate) and communitywide impact. The scope of this intervention begins with a local centrality to spread the gospel (Acts 17:6) near and far. Implementation of an apologetics ministry at the POPMBC has the power to save (bring out) people from the clutches of BRICs and BCC entities and deliver (bring in) people into the community of the redeemed. Also, this intervention can, via apologetic mandate that can, lead to militant discipleship that cannot be contained by society, for the POPMBC and other African-American churches have a mission to preach and teach the gospel and mentoring all “to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people. (Jude 3 NIV).”

The call for militancy espoused by the implementation of this intervention calls for spreading the gospel by any overt, covert, or subverted means necessary to build bridges of opportunity, convert, disciple, and embrace BRICs and BCC adherents if at all possible. Acts of

militancy are best viewed as “gospel[ing].” Militancy in this aspect can be summarized as “[declaring] that Jesus is ... the rightful Lord, ... [summoning BRICs and BCC adherents] to turn from their [heretical beliefs in order] to worship and live under that [rightful] Lord who saves, ... to subvert the [false claim that Christianity is a White man’s religion] with an [accurate biblical finding that Christianity is universal rather than the domain of a particular ethnic group].”<sup>6</sup>

The implementation of an apologetics ministry at the POPMBC can undoubtedly help her members defend the hope they have in Christ Jesus and contend for the Christian faith. Learning to defend the Christian faith aids in maturing as a disciple and gaining the ability to make disciples who adhere to Christ. This is crucial because adherence to Christ Jesus “must take the form of discipleship. ... [for] Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

The implementation of the intervention is not just intended to help POPMBC members refute the false claims of BRICs and BCC adherents but to help the members refute allegations in a manner that helps to convince BRICs and BCC adherents to positively respond to the Gospel and embrace Christ Jesus as both Lord and Savior. As such, “[the] proper response to the gospel is to turn (rebel against ungodly strongholds). When [BRICs and BCC adherents] embrace the gospel, [they] have undertaken a change in direction.”<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, as seen by the context of

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<sup>6</sup> Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited*, Revised (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 158.

<sup>7</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone (Simon & Schuster), 2018), 59.

<sup>8</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Recovering the Real Lost Gospel: Reclaiming the Gospel As Good News* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), 91.

Mark 8:35, it should be noted that responding “to Jesus was to respond to the gospel; [and] to respond to the gospel was to respond to Jesus.”<sup>9</sup>

This intervention calls for recognizing the importance of discipleship practices, spiritual formation, and missions to acknowledge and follow the counsel provided in 1 Peter 3:15b to “[always] be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks [us] to give the reason for the hope that [we] have.” Apologetics, by definition, calls for POPMBC members to give a reason for their hope in Christ Jesus because everyone is created in the image of God. The impact of Christians sharing the reason for their hope forms the basis of bridge-building efforts to disciple BRICs and BCC adherents by emphasizing what the gospel is, its appropriate response, and the ancient connections between Africa and Christianity.

It is incumbent upon the POPMBC and other African-American churches to acknowledge and confront BRICs and BCC adherents in a manner that serves to build bridges of opportunity to give voice to the hope they have in a risen savior (Christ Jesus). The building blocking of compassion for the plight of others forms the bridges of opportunity. These building blocks are situated on points of commonality (i.e., cultural identity) whereby the three universal longings (goodness, truth, and beauty) can take root and solidify into stable structures to help these adherents see the reality of their situation, the relevancy of Christ Jesus, the linkage of their heritage to ancient Christianity, and reason for receiving Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. After all, the goal of this intervention is to help POPMBC members use this researcher’s apologetic approach to enable the “gospel to get a fair hearing [among BRICs and BCC

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<sup>9</sup> McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited*, 128.

adherents so they can have the opportunity] to grasp the meaning and significance of the ultimate question: What do you make of [your heritage’s historical connection to Christianity]?”<sup>10</sup>

Via implementation, the researcher provided lesson outlines found in the appendices and the PowerPoint presentation provided at the end of the course to those who formally consented to participate in the intervention. The intervention aims to evaluate the ability of the Prince of Peace Missionary Baptist Church members to refute the claims of the Black-conscious community and Black religious identify cults and Black atheists (i.e., Black atheists, Black Hebrew Israelites, and Nation of Islam) that Christianity is a “White man’s” religion. Weekly lesson outlines were provided to both online and in-person participants.

The course lessons were designed to build an apologetic framework connecting African-Americans’ Christian faith to ancient African Christianity. As such, six one-hour classes were scheduled to cover the following subject matter:

- 1) Introduction/Expectations, Church Mission, and Christian Apologetics Mandate
- 2) BCC and BRICs Primary False Claims
- 3) Defense, Attack, and Persistence
- 4) Christian Apologetics (Minimal Facts)
- 5) African Legacy to Christianity
- 6) African Memory of John Mark

The POPMBC provided the researcher with the use of the church sanctuary and fellowship hall for the intervention implementation. Both areas were adequate for use as teaching spaces. The church offered both areas because another ministry had reserved the fellowship hall during the same period needed for the intervention. Considering this, the fellowship hall included a whiteboard and wall-mounted pull-down projection screen, which allowed for presentations. This area was well-lit, roomy, temperate, and comfortable enough to satisfy all who participated

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<sup>10</sup> Gould, *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World*, 219.

in the intervention. As for the sanctuary, the same conditions cited for the fellowship hall also apply. However, the church sanctuary had a better sound system and three large monitors. The church provided the researcher with a Zoom meeting link to conduct the intervention online and in person. The research purchased and provided printed lesson books with plastic covers, as shown in table 2.0.

**Table 2.0 Realized Research Expenditures**

<b>Table 2.0. Realized Research Expenditures</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Tax</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
Printed Lesson Booklets (Black/White)	40	\$ 190.00	\$ 17.08	\$ 207.08
Clear Plastic Covers	40	\$ 79.60	\$ 7.15	\$ 86.75
<b>Total Item Donation</b>				<b>\$ 293.83</b>

Each rectangular table in the fellowship hall could comfortably seat four adults. Aisles separated the tables, and the project stand was positioned in the first row in the center of the room. The church-provided laptop computer was placed on a small table to the projector's left. The laptop was connected to a church-owned projector. The researcher had to download a PDF of their presentation to the church laptop to show on the projection screen. The church also provided the wired microphone, mounted on a tripod, and positioned on the same table as the supplied laptop. As for the table and chairs in the fellowship hall, they were provided by the church, along with two staff members who set everything up for the intervention.

Regarding the sanctuary, the only table beside the Communion table was the one used by the researcher. A church staff member set up the table in front of the centrally located pulpit. A church-supplied wireless microphone with a tripod was placed on the table. Due to the type of equipment used in the sanctuary, this researcher could use their personal laptop and Microsoft PowerPoint presentation software.

### Consent to Participate and Course Surveys

Nineteen people attended the initial class session and were presented with the introduction/expectations, church mission, and Christian Apologetics Mandate lesson. During this session, the researcher outlined the intervention expectations, the POPMBC mission, and the apologetics mandate established in 1 Pet. 3:15. The researcher also discussed the meaning of 2 Tim. 3:16-17 and the importance of trusting the authority of God's Word. The purpose of the Insurgency Apologetics course was explained to the participants. Considering the course purpose, the POPMBC wants to establish an apologetics ministry to provide the necessary training to help better equip members to give the reason for their hope in Christ Jesus.

The POPMBC helped promote the researcher's action research project. The researcher informed the participants in the initial class that each session would be recorded, and survey questions would be provided for them to complete. The participants were told that the cumulative survey results and PDF version of the PowerPoint presentation would be available after this action research project. Moreover, the researcher explained to each person who registered for the Insurgency Apologetics course the necessity for obtaining their written consent. The Consent form (see Appendix B) was distributed to each course participant. Upon conclusion of the initial class session, pre-course surveys were disseminated to each participant (see Appendices E & M). Those who received the pre-course survey were asked to return it as soon as possible, preferably before the start of the following class session.

### Implementation Observations from Angles

The following discussions describe the implementation of the Insurgency Apologetics classes grouped into the Defense, Attack, and Persistence components that comprise the framework for the usage of the researcher's evidential apologetical approach to defend the



Christian faith and ancient African Christianity to refute the false claim that Christianity is a White man's religion. Concerning the data gathering, Tim Sensing defines triangulation as "cross-checking the existence of certain phenomena and the veracity of individual accounts by gathering data from a number of informants and a number of sources and subsequently comparing and contrasting one account with another in order to produce as full and balanced a study as possible."<sup>11</sup> The type of triangulation preferred by Sensing is "Data triangulation," for he asserts this method of "comparing and contrasting data from field notes, observation, interviews, questionnaires, documents of official records, and evaluations from an independent expert will give [the researcher] a richer description than [they] could otherwise know."<sup>12</sup> The system suggested by Sensing to collect the data is comprised of three angles, which constitute the perspectives and observations are: outsider, insider, and researcher.

Considering Sensing's suggestion about project intervention data collection, this intervention does not include the outsider angle. However, it contains the research angle and two insider angles. A POPMBC member provides one insider angle, and a non-POPMBC member contributes to the other. The outsider's angle was not included in this action research's thesis project data collection method since an independent expert was not identified or available to convey the outsider perspective. Nonetheless, the researcher employed a hybrid triangulation because using three angles (views) is "considered the saturation point to support the criteria of trustworthiness."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 172.

<sup>12</sup> Sensing, 173.

<sup>13</sup> Sensing, 176.

### The Researcher's Angle (Perspective)

The first class was an introductory session whereby the participants were informed about course expectations, the church mission, and the apologetics mandate. The purpose of addressing the church mission regarding the POPMBC was to satisfy the ministry directive to announce to/remind members that the objective is to make spiritually mature and exceptional disciples for the kingdom of God who change the world for the better. The apologetics mandate was addressed by highlighting 2 Tim. 3:16-17, which established that the course presupposes and insists on participants placing their hope and confidence in trusting the authority of God's Word. This instruction set the stage for a discussion about the meaning of 1 Pet. 3:15-16. The introductory class also served as a clarion call for the participants to become acquainted with the truth of Africa's connection to ancient Christianity. The researcher concluded the class by attending to administrative activities.

The intervention was designed to equip POPMBC members to refute the claim that Christianity is a White man's religion. This same aim was to remind POPMBC members that God's Word and offer of salvation is available to all regardless of ethnicity and that the apologetic mandate warrants that the goal of defending/contending for the faith delivered to God's people is intended to demolish barriers that inhibit the acknowledgment of Jesus as the Christ to win souls who will faithfully serve Christ. As such, the curriculum developed by the researcher focused on the main apologetic passages of 2 Cor. 10:3-5, 1 Pet. 3:15-16, and Jude 3. The focus also included the presence of Africans who were involved with the early church, as seen in the book of Acts, as well as the ancient African theologians who played vital roles in Christian history. The researcher chose this approach to help POPMBC members learn the basics for subverting, via overt and covert means, the erroneous claim charged against African-

American Christians. The inaccurate claim that Christianity is a White man's religion is a stronghold that must be demolished and replaced with the historical fact that Africans were among the first to be called Christians (cf. Acts 11:26; 13:1-2).

During the implementation of the intervention, the researcher observed that class participants were excited, and discussions were quite engaging when ancient African links to Christianity were presented as an evidential apologetic to defend Christianity and substantiate the right of African-Americans to embrace the "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 3)." However, in the early stages of the intervention, several participants presupposed after the fifth class (African Legacy to Christianity) that the discussions would center on what transpired during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. These participants were also informed that focusing on the trans-Atlantic slave trade represents a surrender to the claims of BCC and BRICs adherents/organizations before waging a battle with the truth. This debate about an area of disagreement amounts to identifying diverse assertions, termed slippage. This term, by nature, "... asks, 'What is not congruent in the data?' 'What is contradictory in nature?' Slippage seeks disconfirmation of findings."<sup>14</sup>

Data incongruity can be beneficial because it can lead to the discovery of significant insights and areas for improvement. Data that does not align with assumed expectations warrants an assessment of perceived discrepancies and outliers, whereby a greater understanding of present underlying factors and critical influencers is needed. Investigating differences can confirm assumptions or call for further analysis and possible adjustments to the research methodology. The disconfirmation of results can lead to a better understanding of unanticipated

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<sup>14</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 307.

variable impacts. Furthermore, data incongruency is a valuable catalyst for growth and improvement in action research

Yet, to move from divergence to convergence, the researcher asked the inquiring participants about the sacrifices and efforts of African Christians who freely embraced the gospel of Christ Jesus, freely shared the gospel with Europeans in Acts 11:19-22, the martyrdom of Saint Cyprian (African bishop), the extensive spread of Christianity in Africa by Africans centuries before the establishment of Islam. The researcher asked the participants to consider if it was appropriate to ignore the noted events and others that involved African Christians that occurred roughly 14-15 centuries before Africans were pressed into bonded slavery on the continents of North and South America. This was done with the expectation that the appropriate reply would forge an agreement that moving beyond the trans-Atlantic slave trade was sufficient and more reasonable for drawing an undeniable linkage between Africans and ancient Christianity.

Three-course participants, which consisted of a POPMBC minister (in-person) and two POPMBC members (online), emerged from silence to provide commentary and questions. When discussing the Evidentialism (minimal facts) apologetic approach, the vocal POPMBC minister inquired whether the disciple Thomas touched the resurrected Jesus during their John 20 encounter. The researcher said the primary observation that must be acknowledged concerning the minimal facts argument and John 20 is the emphasis of verses 24-25 and 28-29. The researcher said these verses demonstrate the absolute and immediate change of Thomas' opposition (v. 25, "I will not believe") to the resurrection claim to acknowledging (v. 28, "My Lord and my God!") the resurrected Christ Jesus.

Two POPMBC members wanted to know why the researcher discussed the miracle of the resurrection rather than defending the Christian faith using evidence. The researcher informed them that the miracle of the resurrection cannot be divorced from the context of proof because it is evidence. The researcher quoted former atheist Antony Flew, who said, “[the] evidence for the resurrection is better than for claimed miracles in any other religion. It’s outstandingly different in quality and quantity, ... from the evidence offered for the occurrence of most other supposedly miraculous events.”<sup>15</sup> The two vocal members were also informed that Flew said, “[if] a miracle is to serve as genuine evidence for a belief, it must be recognizable as a miracle by someone not already committed to the belief in question.”<sup>16</sup>

The researcher discovered that post-class encounters with participants helped further establish the basis for the intervention. After the introduction/expectations, church mission, and Christian Apologetics Mandate class concluded, a participant approached the researcher and talked about the challenges they faced dealing with their family members who were members of the Jehovah’s Witness cult. They spoke of the anguish and shifted to expressing joy for the church’s embrace of the researcher’s action research project.

One participant informed the researcher after the BCC and BRICs Primary False Claims class that they had been married to a spouse who became a member of a BRIC (Black Hebrew Israelite sect). They said their Christian faith was constantly challenged and ridiculed. They also said the spiritual bondage inflicted upon them was intolerable and that they came to realize just how bad their situation had been once their spouse died. This same participant spoke about how

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<sup>15</sup> Gary R. Habermas and Antony Flew, *Did the Resurrection Happen: A Conversation with Gary Habermas and Antony Flew*, ed. David Baggett (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books (InterVarsity Press), 2009), 85.

<sup>16</sup> Habermas and Flew, 100.

long and difficult it had been to move forward. This testimony was moving, for it impacted the researcher and those who remained after the BCC and BRICs Primary False Claims class. Also, after this same class, a participant said they were excited to learn about the African contribution to Christianity. Not surprisingly, this participant said they had been accused on several occasions of embracing the religion of their ancestors' slave masters.

At the conclusion of the Defense, Attack, and Persistence class, a participant approached the researcher and said they liked the acronym DAP. They said it was an expressive handshake/hand gesture that African-American soldiers would do with each other to signify a common brotherhood. The researcher told the participant the acronym was chosen to express the nature of Christian apologetics' quest to make a definite case for the Christian faith to win souls and demonstrate African-Americans' familial connections to Africa and Africa's linkage to ancient Christianity.

During the data gathering and interpretation phases of this intervention, it must be noted that data triangulation aims to "[enhance] validity and reliability of the [researcher's] research."<sup>17</sup> The researcher's angle fails to satisfy what can be termed as credibility. Considering triangulation, qualitative research is dependent on "three angles of vision [which establish] the saturation point to support the criteria of trustworthiness ... [and] provides more conversation partners to inform [the researcher's] judgment."<sup>18</sup> Therefore, two other angles were brought into the conversation to help elucidate the researcher's data assessment. The usage of triangulation is key for enhancing the validity and credibility of action research project findings. Utilizing this

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<sup>17</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 174.

<sup>18</sup> Sensing, 176.

approach to data analysis tends to require extra processing time but proves crucial to confirming results and increasing confidence in generalization of findings and key influences.

#### The POPMBC Insider's Angle (Perspective)

Twenty-six individuals (15 in person; 11 online) were observed as participants in the first class (introduction/expectations). In this class, the participants asked a few questions. The researcher was energetic and excited to share information. It was apparent that the researcher was passionate about the lesson topic and comfortable speaking to the group. The participants were encouraged to share their opinions and pose questions. As for the tone of the focus group, the insider said it was very casual and attentive. Concerning the POPMBC insider, they indicated their comfort level with the lesson presented in the first class was extremely confident. The POPMBC insider also suggested that the same level of comfort describes their attitude towards acknowledging and trusting the authority of God's Word. Yet, they admitted to only having an average comfort level regarding defending the Christian faith.

The POPMBC insider was not available for the second lesson, but they were present for the third class (Defense, Attack, and Persistence). According to the insider, ten individuals (in person) were present, but online attendance was not gathered. When making the case for defending and contending for the Christian faith, the POPMBC insider said a participant's question about what justification is stood out, considering the lesson focus centered around making a reasoned case for the hope Christians have in Christ Jesus. The insider was unsure if the question about justification was posed to the researcher or class participants. Nonetheless, the insider noted the researcher answered the question since the participants did not address this inquiry. The answer provided by the researcher used Rom. 4:5 and 8:1-2 along with the idea of believers possessing a "foreign righteousness" in their response. The POPMBC insider observed

that the researcher gave many examples of how to turn conversations into the gospel by seeking “bridge-building” opportunities. This same insider noticed that participants were encouraged to share their opinions and raise questions. As for the tone of the focus group, the insider said it was good, but the in-person participants could not see the PowerPoint presentation. Concerning the POPMBC insider, they indicated their comfort level with the lesson presented in the third class was above average.

Thirteen individuals (13 in person) were observed as participants in the fourth class (Christian Apologetics - Minimal Facts), but online attendance was not gathered. In this class, a participant wanted to know how it was determined which books were included in the biblical canon. This same participant wanted to know why the “lost books” of the Bible were not included. The researcher responded to this inquiry and also pointed out the role that an African theologian named Athanasius played in determining the official biblical canon. The researcher was excited and energetic. The participants were encouraged to share their opinions and pose questions. As for the tone of the focus group, the insider said the participants were engaged and excited to learn about the minimal facts. Concerning the POPMBC insider, they indicated their comfort level with the lesson presented in the fourth class was average.

Thirty-one individuals (31 online) were observed as participants in the fifth class (African Legacy to Christianity). There were no in-person participants due to inclement weather. In this class, a participant wanted to know why some individuals question the trustworthiness of biblical Scripture. The insider observed that the researcher was organized and presented step-by-step facts to show the African connection to ancient Christianity. The participants were encouraged to share their opinions and pose questions. The researcher responded to questions and comments raised in the online chat. As for the tone of the focus group, the insider said the participants



expressed appreciation for having the facts to support the refutation of the claim that Christianity is a White man's religion. Concerning the POPMBC insider, they indicated their comfort level with the lesson presented in the fifth class was above average.

During the sixth class on African Memory of John Mark, thirty-one individuals were observed, including ten in-person and twenty online participants. One of the participants raised a question about why ancient African-Christian history is not taught and why more African-Americans are unaware of these facts. In response, the researcher explained that African-American churches are responsible for providing this information to their members. However, another participant contradicted this statement by asserting that many African-American Christians do not learn this history because they are not willing to put in the effort to learn it.

During the class, the insider observed that the researcher was enthusiastic about sharing biblical and historical facts. The participants were encouraged to share their opinions and testimonies and ask questions. The tone of the focus group was very positive, and the participants seemed thrilled about the information they received regarding the ancient African linkage to Christianity in its earliest stages.

After the class had concluded, several participants approached the researcher to ask more questions and express their appreciation for the class. The insider who observed the class reported that their comfort level with the lesson presented during the sixth class was above average. Overall, the class seemed very informative and engaging, with participants actively participating and showing interest in the topic.

#### The non-POPMBC Insider's Angle (Perspective)

Thirteen individuals (13 online) were observed as participants in the first class (introduction/expectations). In this class, the non-POPMBC insider felt the researcher was

creative, engaging, and encouraged conversation. The researcher provided details about what to expect and what will be covered in the course. Outlines for the different classes and context for each upcoming session were provided. Concerning the non-POPMBC insider, they indicated their comfort level with the lesson presented in the first class was above average. The non-POPMBC insider also stated they were extremely confident in acknowledging and trusting the authority of God's Word. Yet, they admitted having a somewhat confident comfort level regarding defending the Christian faith.

Fifteen individuals (15 online) were observed as participants in the second class (BCC and BRICs Primary False Claims). The non-POPMBC insider heard a participant mention their experience with a member of the Black Hebrew Israelites and inquired about the correct approach to such confrontations. The non-POPMBC insider felt the researcher was attentive, thorough, and willing to help simplify the concepts for the class participants. The insider felt the class environment was conducive to input, including opinions and questions. However, this was not verbally expressed during this class. As for the tone of the focus group, the non-POPMBC insider said the participants were eager to learn more about actioning the information received during the course. Concerning the non-POPMBC insider, they indicated their comfort level with the lesson presented in the second class was above average.

Sixteen individuals (16 online) were observed as participants in the third class (Defense, Attack, and Persistence). When making the case for defending and contending for the Christian faith, the non-POPMBC insider heard a participant raise the question about what constitutes orthodoxy. The non-POPMBC insider felt the researcher provided a rather scholarly tone. At points, some of the information was given at a higher level, resulting in difficulty understanding. The insider asserted the tone was mitigated when the researcher provided clarity through

examination of biblical Scripture. The participants were encouraged to provide comments, questions, and concerns actively. As for the tone of the focus group, the non-POPMBC insider said the participants were a bit reserved and that many comments were not ventured until the end of the discussion and after the lesson had concluded. Concerning the non-POPMBC insider, they indicated their comfort level with the lesson presented in the third class was above average.

Sixteen individuals (16 online) were observed as participants in the fourth class (Christian Apologetics - Minimal Facts). In this class, a participant wanted to know how it was determined which books were included in the biblical canon. This same participant wanted to know why other books/writings were excluded from the Bible. Another participant asked about the Apocrypha, and the researcher replied that this book collection is not divinely inspired but provides valuable historical context spanning the intertestamental period (e.g., 1 & 2 Maccabees). The researcher was engaging and relatable. The researcher made a point to provide clarity where necessary. The participants were encouraged to share their opinions and pose questions. As for the tone of the focus group, the insider noticed the participants' questions and comments seemed to be focused on providing evidence for the Bible. At the same time, the researcher appeared to be more focused on the testimony of skeptics regarding the resurrection of Christ Jesus. Concerning the non-POPMBC insider, they indicated their comfort level with the lesson presented in the fourth class was above average.

Twenty-nine individuals (29 online) were observed as participants in the fifth class (African Legacy to Christianity). In this class, a participant raised the question surrounding the identity of Lucius of Cyrene and the possibility of a connection to Luke, the gospel writer. Another participant commented on biblical characters often possessing multiple names. The non-POPMBC insider observed that the researcher was concise and focused when discussing the

significance of Lucius (Luke) and other figures, such as the Ethiopian eunuch and his origin. The participants were encouraged to share their opinions and pose questions, but there seemed to be fewer opportunities to ask questions in this session. The non-POPMBC insider asserted that adding more opportunities for questions throughout the sessions will drive greater engagement. As for the tone of the focus group, the insider's observation perceived the class as both engaged and attentive. They also asserted the interactions between the researcher and participants created the opportunity to bring understanding between biblical figures and what was discovered about them in both Christian and secular history. Concerning the non-POPMBC insider, they indicated their comfort level with the lesson presented in the fifth class was above average.

Nineteen (19 online) were observed as participants in the sixth class (African Memory of John Mark). In this class, the non-POPMBC insider observed that a participant asked about Cyrene and other African areas besides Meroe (Sudan). This question was followed up by an inquiry concerning Africans' presence in Israel and even Antioch (Syria). The researcher noted that Africans had lived in what is known today as the Middle East throughout biblical history. The researcher informed the participant that African merchants, mercenaries, and their descendants lived in these areas for centuries. The participant then posed an inquiry as to whether African mercenaries started the church at Antioch and the reply answer was no. The researcher said the history surrounding the church at Antioch did not support such an assertion and asked the participant about the biblical testimony found in Acts 11:19-26 and 13:1-4.

Sixteen (16 online) were observed as participants in the seventh class (Course Wrap-up/Review). The non-POPMBC insider commented that participants requested this course information to be compiled in a book for long-term reference. The insider described the researcher as attentive and listened carefully to each question. As for the tone of the focus group,

the insider's observation perceived the class as encouraging and curious. Many questions and comments in this class indicated a hunger for the course content. Many participants verbally expressed how they would love to have the course information as a reference in their arsenal of apologetic tools. Concerning the non-POPMBC insider, they indicated their comfort level with the lesson presented in the fifth class was above average.

The non-POPMBC insider found the exchange between the researcher and participant (local minister) about whether there is a difference between a Christian and a disciple quite interesting. The participant asserted that not all Christians are disciples, but the researcher respectfully rejected this claim and pointed out that in the New Testament, the terms "Christian" and "disciple" are synonymous based on Luke's usage in Acts 11:26 and 26:28. The researcher went on to make the point that a believer in Christ Jesus becomes a disciple at the point of salvation. Considering this exchange and how the researcher addressed the participant, the non-POPMBC insider claimed what they found intriguing was that considering the disagreement between the researcher and the participant, both agreed upon the call to action for Christians to become good/better disciples.

The non-POPMBC insider observed that the researcher was informative, friendly, and courteous. The participants were encouraged to share their opinions and pose questions. Periodically, the researcher stopped to ask if there were any questions before moving on to cover the next topic. This action created more opportunities for back-and-forth dialog. As for the tone of the focus group, the non-POPMBC insider pointed out that the tone of the participants was inquisitive. The class seemed more than willing to follow along and fully understand the historical attributes of John Mark. Concerning the non-POPMBC insider, they indicated their comfort level with the lesson presented in the sixth class was above average.

## Summary of Intervention Implementation

This chapter has been based on the methodology for an academic study on apologetics. The implementation of the intervention design at the POPMBC was conducted and completed as planned. It was anticipated that roughly 20-40 individuals would participate in the course. There were essentially forty individuals who signed up for the course. Still, due to various other concurrent ministry programs, the initial group consisted of twenty-six who participated in the first class. Overall, the action research study promotion resulted in seventeen initial participants from a cross-section of church members in the apologetics study course. Sixteen participants completed the entire Bible study course, and fifteen completed and returned both worldview surveys. Eighteen participants completed the apologetics course.

Following the development and implementation of academic apologetics research, this project will be used at the POPMBC. Implementing an apologetics ministry program at the POPMBC will be unique because the local church has never had a discrete apologetics ministry. It is pretty uncommon to find African-American churches that have apologetics ministries. Many African-American Christians are not trained to comply with apologetic mandates found in 2 Cor. 10:4-5, 1 Pet. 3:15-16, and Jude 3. This is partially because some churches do not have staff that are qualified to teach apologetics or do not consider apologetics as a necessary element of evangelism. Thus, such a ministry is not deemed vital. Subsequently, African-American Christians in local churches such as POPMBC are not equipped to defend their hope in Christ Jesus or contend for the Christian faith against BRICs and BCC adherents.

Nevertheless, the intervention implementation proves there is an interest in Christian apologetics among POPMBC members. Some have even expressed a desire to participate in a discrete apologetics ministry. The establishment of apologetics at the POPMBC has a great

potential to help the POPMBC in the discipling process, for the prime directive of the church is “to pursue the transforming [of] unconvinced people into wholehearted followers of Jesus.”<sup>19</sup> This is supported by the fact that “[the] Church exists for nothing else but to draw [people] into Christ, to make them little Christs.”<sup>20</sup>

The evaluations from the online and in-person groups were then combined so that all survey groups could be scored together. Considering all this, attention can now be turned to analyzing the results of this action research project. The following chapter will evaluate the quantitative data collected from the course Likert scale surveys and Dual scale questions to determine any impact of participating in the Insurgency Apologetics course. The data visualization will analyze the data to show trends (Likert scale results), matrix (Dual scale results), and key influencers (Dual scale results).

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<sup>19</sup> Hunter III, *The Apostolic Congregation: Church Growth Reconceived for a New Generation*, 89.

<sup>20</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Revised and Enlarged edition (April 21, 2015) (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2015), xiv.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

### **Approaching the Evaluation**

This academic research course is of utmost importance for the POPMBC as she seeks to equip her members to defend their hope in Christ Jesus and contend for the Christian faith. The course, which spans six lessons, has been exclusively designed to equip course participants with the necessary tools and knowledge to defend their beliefs against BRICs and BCC adherents with confidence. The primary focus of this course is on identifying the ancient African roots of Christianity, as illuminated by biblical scripture and the scholarly insights of renowned academics like Thomas Oden and David Eastman.

For African-American Christians, it is crucial to know how to defend their faith when confronted by those who claim that Christianity is a White man's religion. This course delves into the historical depths of Christianity and its connection to ancient Africa, providing evidence that Christianity is not a religion exclusive to any ethnic group. The course uses the Bible and historical references to teach the Antioch to African-American narrative formulated by this researcher, which links the ancient African roots of Christianity with contributions to the Christian faith embraced by African-American Christians.

This course aims to provide POPMBC members with the necessary knowledge and training to refute the false claims made by BRICs and BCC adherents. By the end of the course, the participants should gain confidence in their ability to defend their faith and identify the profound ancient African connections to Christianity. The course will be held at the POPMBC, where participants will get to interact online and in person and share their passion for this subject matter.



POPMBC participants and those who comprise the membership of other African-American churches are tasked with speaking the truth in love to those who attack the Christian faith. In so doing, disciples of Christ need to respond to attackers of the Christian faith in a manner that engages, interrogates, informs, encourages, and even invites. In this regard, consideration must be rendered for addressing the connection between truth, love, and discipleship (cf. Ephesians 4:14-15). Likewise, African-American Churches cannot ignore their responsibility to acknowledge and be ready to DAP (defend, attack, and persist) in tearing down strongholds, such as the challenges posed by BCC and BRICs adherents in the manner prescribed below in Figure 3.




<b>Defend</b>		Ability to make a reasoned case for their hope in Christ Jesus.
<b>Attack</b>		Ability to contend for the Christian faith against claims of the BCC and BRICs adherents.
<b>Persistence</b>		Ability to defeat claims of the BCC and BRICs adherents.

Figure 3. Key Elements of Insurgency Apologetics Curriculum

The approach that drove this action research project was a collaborative effort based upon three apologetic components: Defense, Attack, and Persistence. The researcher, in partnership with the POPMBC members, used these components to extend the Evidential apologetic approach to help African-American Christians. The first component, Defense, is drawn from 1 Peter 3:15. The second component, Attack, is drawn from Jude 3, and the third component, Persistence, is drawn from 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. These DAP components, a product of our collective wisdom, were drawn together to encourage POPMBC members to respond to BRICs and BCC challenges in a manner that engages, interrogates, informs, inspires, and even invites the challengers to consider the claims and cause of Christ Jesus. Also, these components served to provide the framework to subvert the claims of Christianity's opponents overtly and covertly

with the authenticity and authority of God's Word. The components were used to drive the questions that appear in survey issues after each class, a testament to our shared commitment to this project.

Considering the evaluation approach, the noted aim is to identify the problem that must be addressed by the POPMBC and other African-American churches that do not have established apologetics programs/ministries. The evaluation is intended to demonstrate the need for an apologetics ministry, a gap in understanding the challenges posed by BRICs and BCC adherents, and a challenge in understanding and communicating the evidence proving that Christianity is universal rather than the domain of a sole ethnic group. Evaluation utilization is also intended to show a need to develop training, designing and acquiring training resources that can be useful in equipping POPMBC members to DAP (see Figure 3).

The "Defense" apologetic component noted above is derived from 1 Pet. 3:15 with the understanding that Christians, regardless of ethnicity, are expected to be able to defend their hope in Christ Jesus in both ideal and hostile circumstances. The employment of this component assumes that Christians, via the agency of discipleship, will gain the ability to give a reason for why they embraced the Christian faith in a convincing, gentle, respectful, and disarming manner. Addressing the defense of the Christian faith in this manner is done in a manner that anticipates confrontation. As such, there is a need for keen observation concerning relational connection and bridge-building opportunities. After all, defense in this fashion is intended to draw challengers close to those who draw near to Christ Jesus, planting seeds rather than harvesting, highlighting commonality rather than contradiction, and using conflicts as the concrete needed to build roads that lead to confessing and embracing Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Approaching the evaluation takes into account that the “Attack” apologetic component noted in Figure 3 is derived from Jude 3 with the understanding that “[the] gospel actually creates confrontation with the culture around and within [the reach of the POPMBC and her members].”<sup>21</sup> With the understanding that Jude 3 is an invective against heresy, POPMBC members must respect their BRICs and BCC challengers while seeking to repudiate BRICs and BCC challenges. For African-American Christians, “it is the portrait of Christ in the gospel that compels [the African-American church] to fight for the detonation and destruction of [BRICs and BCC false claims] ... [African-American Christians] are compelled to fight ... with the truth of the gospel ...”<sup>22</sup>

The "Persistence" apologetic component, derived from 2 Cor. 10:3-5, suggests that the ongoing confrontation with the false claims made by BRICs and BCC can be effectively countered. This approach recognizes that the conflict is temporary and emphasizes the need for members of the POPMBC to be adequately equipped to defend the Christian faith. It also acknowledges that African-American Christians, like those at the POPMBC, are not alone in their struggle, as the Holy Spirit is an active agent in helping to demolish spiritual strongholds and capture false claims to dismantle and destroy them. This component calls for a determined effort to repel BRICs and BCC false claims while relentlessly seeking to engage and evangelize BRICs and BCC adherents because silence is not appropriate when the Great Commission is viewed through the context of Matt. 28:18-20 champions the clarion call that “[African-American Christians] cannot— [must not] —stay silent with [the Gospel of Christ Jesus]. Gospel

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<sup>21</sup> Platt, *Counter Culture: Following Christ in an Anti-Christian Age*, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Platt, 130-131.

possession requires gospel proclamation.”<sup>23</sup> The “Persistence” component operates from the assumption that when Christians are equipped to defend the Christian faith, their resolution abounds and refuses to recognize limits to reach out by faith with faith by all Holy Spirit-empowered means necessary.

The action research project has adopted a comprehensive evaluation approach that uses surveys to assess the readiness and confidence level of the members of the POPMBC. The surveys have been compiled to gauge the understanding of the researcher's Antioch to African-America narrative, which is intended to counter the baseless claim that Christianity is exclusively a White man's religion. The results of the surveys, as well as PowerPoint presentations, have been used to develop a comprehensive curriculum that can be used to equip members of the POPMBC and other African-American churches to counter the challenges posed by BRICs and BCC adherents. The project has been implemented through a series of class sessions, which have been designed to provide an effective and engaging learning experience for the members of the POPMBC.

Evaluating the effectiveness of a course is a critical step that helps to identify its strengths and weaknesses, as well as areas of interest. Data is collected and analyzed through the evaluation process, and based on the findings, major adjustments or minor tweaks may be implemented to the course content. This rigorous evaluation process enables course participants to gain valuable insights and engage in disciplined inquiry, ultimately generating knowledge on topics significant to them.

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<sup>23</sup> Platt, *Counter Culture: Following Christ in an Anti-Christian Age*, 269.

Moreover, evaluating the course content is crucial in helping members of the POPMBC church refute challenges posed by BRICs and BCC adherents. This involves addressing complex questions regarding ancient African connections to first-century Christianity, the historical role of ancient Africans in the church, and the significance of these aspects to the African-American experience. The course material should empower participants to articulately and confidently refute the claim that Christianity is a White man's religion, enabling them to express a clear and educated response to this misconception.

The success of the focus group training course at the POPMBC should be measured not only by participants' ability to articulate an educated refutation of the noted erroneous BCC/BRICs claim but also by the long-term benefits to the church's ministry and its role in the local community. The course should contribute to building a viable apologetics ministry at the POPMBC equipped to train others to refute the noted false claim. In summary, evaluating the Apologetics Focus Group Training Course within an African-American church context requires an evidential and historical approach that considers the cultural relevancy aspects unique to the community.

### **Pre-Collective Results**

At the beginning of the course, this researcher conducted a pre-course survey to gather essential information for the action research project. The survey was carefully designed to establish a foundation for the project by collecting crucial data such as the participants' initial knowledge, readiness, and comfort levels. Obtaining this baseline data is critical in understanding the participants' starting point and will help us track their progress as they engage in the project.

By establishing a baseline, this researcher will have a valuable metric to gauge progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the action research project implementation. We will be able to compare the results of the pre-course survey with the post-course survey to ascertain the project's impact on the participants' knowledge, readiness, and comfort levels. This will help us determine the areas that require more attention and resources during the course.

The baseline data will also promote informed and meaningful discussions during the course. The participants will be able to engage in class, whether online or in person, to ensure that the action research project is effective. The classes will be productive and fruitful, and the participants will be able to increase their understanding of the Antioch to African-America narrative, which describes the ancient African connections to Christianity.

The researcher developed a Microsoft Access database to collect and report Likert and Dual-scale scoring. This database is safely stored on a Microsoft One-Drive cloud account and is only accessible to the researcher. Additionally, the researcher utilized Microsoft Power BI to create data visualization reporting that included stacked charts, clustered charts, matrix, and key influencer metrics generated by artificial intelligence (AI). The reporting charts do not contain participant-identifying information. Only one database table contains participant names, and the other tables use sequentially established identification numbers for participant counts.

The reporting data source and charts enabled the researcher to “place the raw data into logical, meaningful categories, to examine data in a holistic fashion, and to find a way to communicate the interpretation.”<sup>24</sup> The pre-collective activities involved creating a database, dataflow queries, reporting charts, and survey question configurations that enabled the researcher

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<sup>24</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Dissertations*, 302.

to visualize the data. Researcher and insider observations also provided “a detailed interpretation of [the] data through ... three angles of evaluation.”<sup>25</sup>

Likert Scale surveys are widely used to gather numerical data about qualitative attributes. Despite offering a limited number of response options, this type of survey helps identify distribution patterns, highlight the key influencers, conclude, and make informed decisions. In assessing a course's efficacy, the questions in the Likert Scale surveys were designed to gauge the participants' confidence levels in understanding the material and their willingness to use the shared information to challenge the false notion that Christianity is a White man's religion. By collecting the responses on a Likert Scale, this researcher can measure the course participants' satisfaction levels and obtain visual representations of their focus and guidance on the next steps.

In addition to the Likert Scale, this researcher also employed Dual-Scale surveys to evaluate the effectiveness and acceptability of the course content. While this type of survey can confuse participants as they must consider two different issues simultaneously, it offers a crucial advantage: it enables the measurement of two variables simultaneously, saving time and space on the survey. Furthermore, dual-scale surveys help eliminate ambiguity and allow the capture of nuanced responses, making them an effective tool for assessing course content.

### **Collective Results**

This research project utilized an intervention that involved individuals providing training and conducting subsequent assessments of members of the POPMBC's ability to counter the claims of BRICs and BCC adherents who assert that Christianity is a religion for White people.

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<sup>25</sup> Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 303.

Using a focus group provided a dynamic means of gathering data on how POPMBC members articulate and rationalize the course content. The class presentation and discussions uncovered the collective reasoning of participants and identified areas where additional training could be advantageous.

This action research project, designed with inclusivity in mind, comprised six lessons culminating in a wrap-up/review taught at the POPMBC. While the target group for seeking participants was solely the POPMBC, two members of the Grace Church in Maryland Heights (Missouri) heard about the course and expressed their interest in participating. Recognizing the value of their contribution, the two Grace Church members were allowed to participate, with one serving as the non-POPMBC insider. This inclusive approach enabled the researcher to utilize a hybrid data triangulation approach, enriching the study's findings.

The participants in this research project played a crucial role in our exploration of African theologians such as Athanasius, Augustine, Origin, and Tertullian. The course content, primarily drawn from the Bible, was intentionally designed to highlight the African connection and contributions to ancient Christianity. The prevailing assumption that guided this action research project was that the participants at the POPMBC would respond positively to learning how to refute the false claim that Christianity is a White man's religion. To prove this assumption, the project aimed to demonstrate that revealing and exploring Africa's linkage and contribution to ancient Christianity would be instrumental in helping POPMBC members understand that Christianity was intentionally established to be inclusive of all ethnic (ethnos) groups, including Africans and Europeans.

This action research project sought to make evident the importance of establishing a discrete Christian Apologetics ministry at the POPMBC whereby members can be equipped to



defend the Christian faith against claims such as the one spewed by Elijah Muhammad whereby he said, “[Give] back to the White man his religion (Christianity), his church, and his names. These three are chains of slavery that hold us in bondage to them. [African-Americans] are free when [they] give up the above three.”<sup>26</sup> Intervention to subvert BCC and BRIC strongholds that serve as launch points to attack African-Americans must be implemented to thwart such efforts. As expressed by Vocab Malone, “[the] Christian church must be willing to construct an apologetic that prepares those in the body for spiritual warfare and cuts deception off at its knees. By God’s Grace, this can and will happen.”<sup>27</sup> According to Clarence Walker, “[this] element of warfare symbolizes the fact that those who participate in the war must be built up and elevated. Their spirits and morale must be lifted ... and whatever they do, do it in the name of the Lord (Colossians 3:17).”<sup>28</sup>

### Data Analysis

The primary assumption concerning this action research project hypothesizes that POPMBC participants would develop sufficient confidence to refute the false claim that Christianity is a White person’s religion. The survey questions were intended to gauge and confirm the effectiveness of each participant’s ability to defeat noted erroneous assertion that BCC and BRICs adherents use to attack African-American Christians. This project’s efficacy is crucial because “[the African-American] Christian church must be willing to construct an apologetic that




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<sup>26</sup> Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, 26.

<sup>27</sup> Malone, *Street-Level Apologetics: Passion for the City, Clarity for the People*, 137.

<sup>28</sup> Walker, *Breaking Strongholds in the African-American Family*, 92.

prepares those in the body for spiritual warfare and cuts deception off at its knees. By God's Grace, this can and will happen."<sup>29</sup>

The data gathered through qualitative research was analyzed to either confirm or refute the primary assumption of this project. This step is critical because "all analysis is an act of interpretation, but the primary objective is to identify information that accurately represents the viewpoint and experience of the stakeholders." It's worth noting that the lesson surveys included Likert Scale questions, which were scored on a scale of one to five (ranging from Very Little Confidence to Extreme Confidence). Lessons four through six featured both Likert Scale and Dual Scale questions, with the latter scoring negative responses as zero and positive responses as one. This approach made it possible to evaluate qualitative data quantitatively.

Displayed in Figure 4 is a stacked area chart that showcases the average scores and number of participants for each group type (In-Person vs. Online) and course. The chart pools together categorized data from the six Insurgency Apologetics course classes, allowing the researcher to assign a quantitative value to non-numerical information. This method allowed for analyzing the proportion of categories in the project's dataset. The shaded regions in the chart indicate the confidence levels of the In-Person and Online participants. At the same time, the data points denote a positive correlation between the average scores and the number of participants. Notably, the average score for Online participants (3.81) was higher than that of In-Person participants (3.72).

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<sup>29</sup> Malone, *Street-Level Apologetics: Passion for the City, Clarity for the People*, 137.

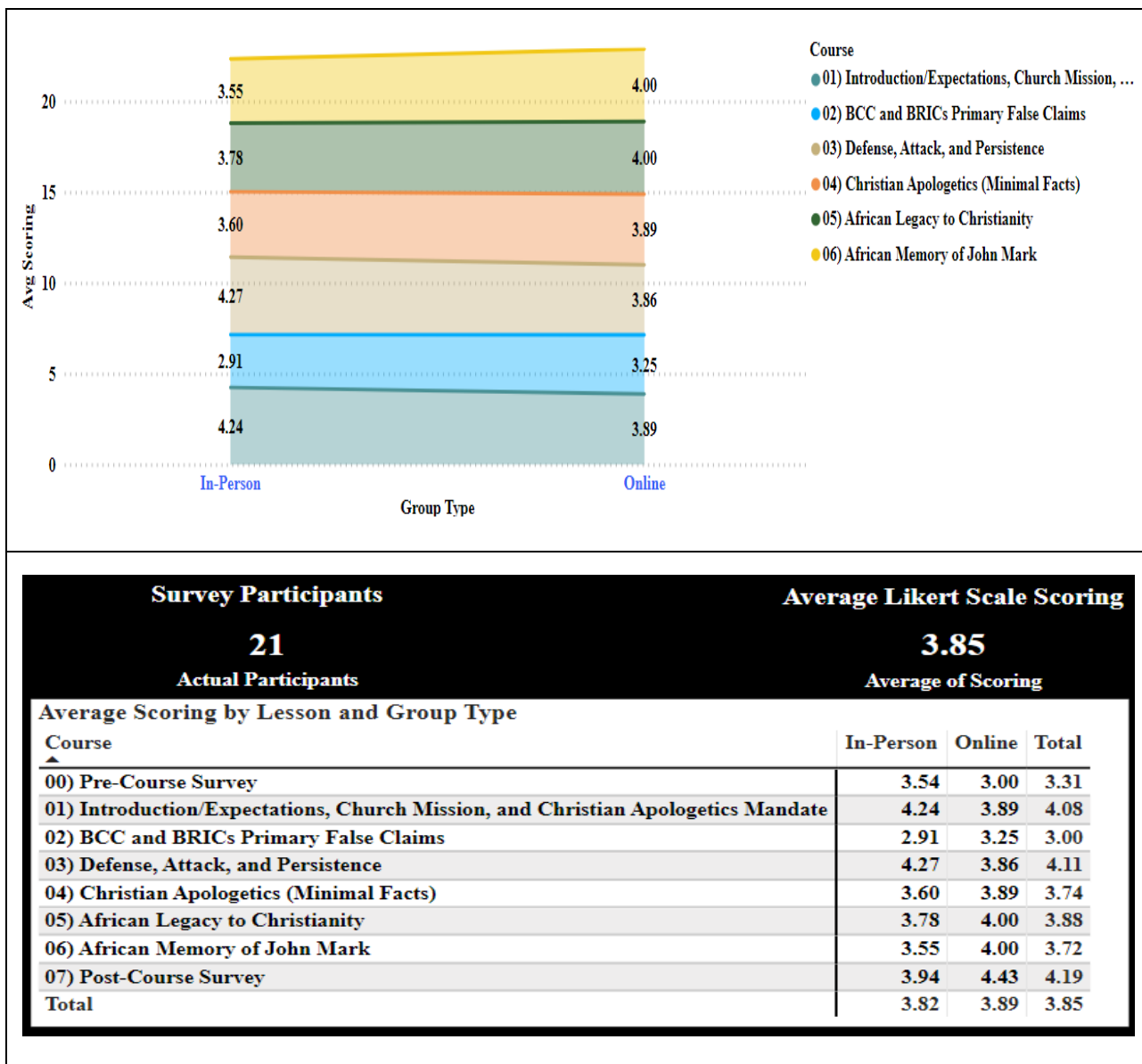


Figure 4. Average Scoring and Number of Participants by Group Type and Class

The matrix chart in Figure 4 is often used for qualitative data analysis. Therefore, it was used to organize and summarize the data to illuminate the connections between classes and group types. Moreover, the Power BI narrative summarization analysis in both Figure 4 charts shows the average scoring for Online and In-Person diverged the most for the sixth class (African Memory of John Mark), when Online was .45 higher than In-Person. In light of this analysis, the researcher’s angle (perspective) was observed to be an above-average level of divergence in the

fifth class (African Legacy to Christianity). Divergent conversations in the fifth class centered around what transpired during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Based upon participants' reactions after the fifth class, the researcher was able to move the discussion from the point of divergence to convergence by asserting that focusing on the trans-Atlantic slave trade represents a surrender to the claims of BCC and BRICs adherents/organizations before waging a battle with the truth.

The researcher asked the inquiring participants about the sacrifices and efforts of African Christians who freely embraced the gospel of Christ Jesus, freely shared the gospel with Europeans in Acts 11:19-22, the martyrdom of Saint Cyprian (African bishop), the extensive spread of Christianity in Africa by Africans centuries before the establishment of Islam. The researcher asked the participants to consider if it was appropriate to ignore the noted events and others that involved African Christians that occurred roughly 14-15 centuries before Africans were pressed into bonded slavery on the continents of North and South America.

The stacked column chart below in Figure 5 contains measures for the number of participants and associated average scoring per course and gender. This type of data visualization is beneficial because it provides numerical analysis of the distribution of qualitative data. The scoring data identified by the black line pertains to the distribution of the average confidence level held by the participants. In contrast, the red line relates to the number of participants in each class. Jointly, the two lines reveal the trends and relationships between the categories.

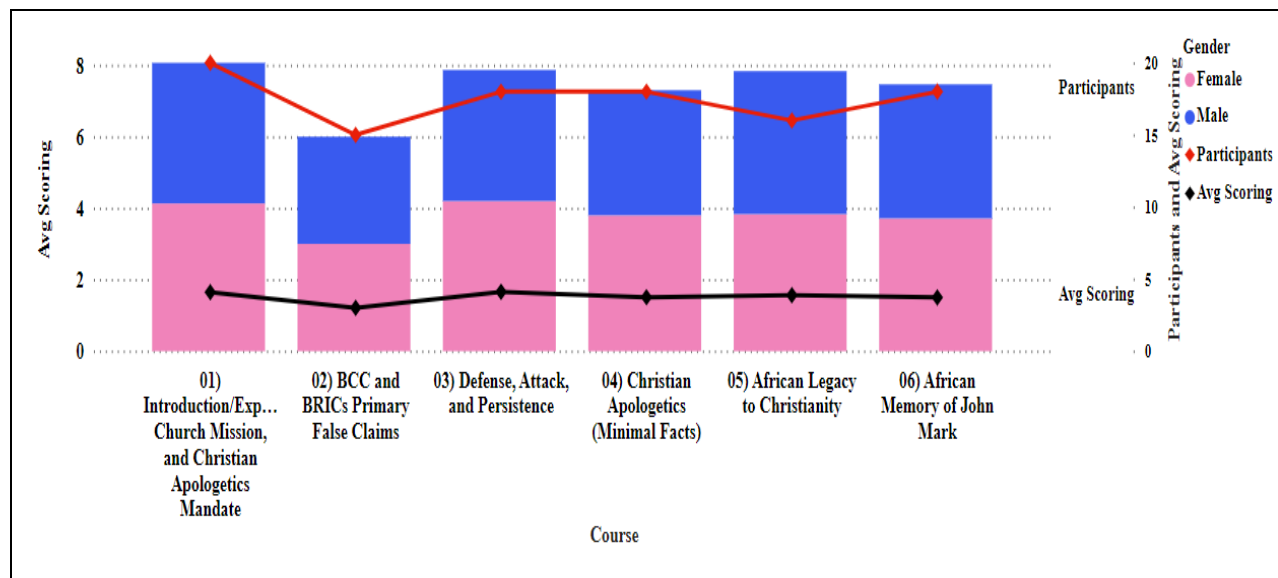


Figure 5. Participants and Average Scoring by Class and Gender

The chart in Figure 5 shows that the average scoring and total participants are positively correlated. In the third class (Defense, Attack, and Persistence), females scored 9.43% of the average. The average scoring for females (3.78) in this action research project was higher than for males (3.64). On the other hand, the average scoring for females and males diverged the most in the third class, with females scoring 0.53 higher than males.

The stacked bar chart below in Figure 6 enables visualization of how the proportion of participant confidence levels changes with each course. Proportions in this analysis comprise the percentage of participants and associated average scoring per course and level of confidence. The scoring data identified by the bars pertains to the average confidence level held by the participants. In contrast, the colored bars relate to each class's number of confidence level responses.

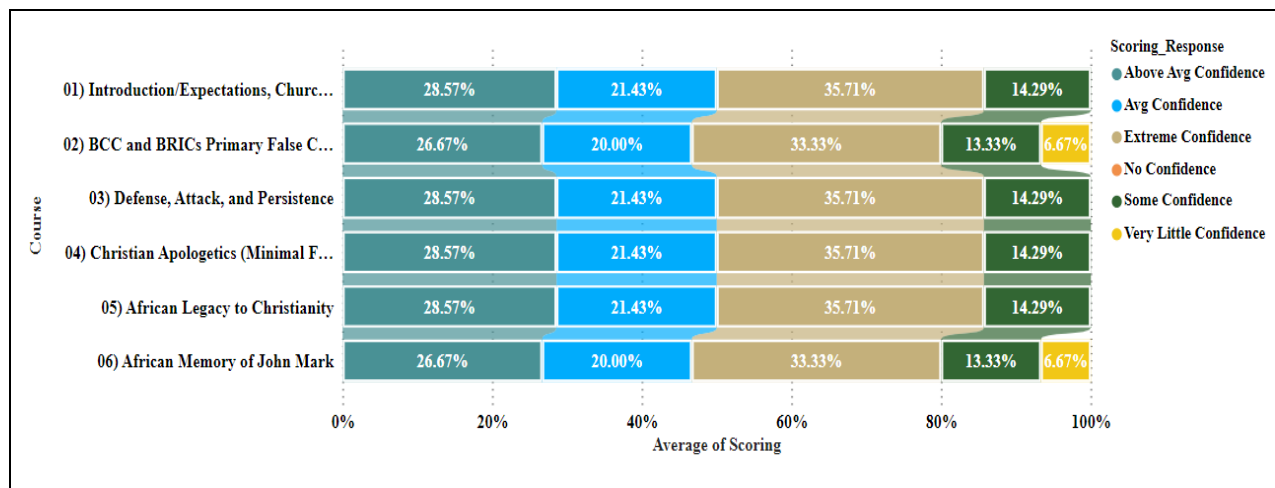


Figure 6. Average Scoring by Class and Levels of Confidence

The chart in Figure 6 shows that the average scoring is distributed across the various confidence levels. One participant expressed very little confidence in the average scoring of the first and sixth classes. Extreme and above-average confidence levels represented the highest scores for all classes. The average scoring and total participants are positively correlated. In the Defense, Attack, and Persistence class, females comprised 9.43% of the average scoring. The average scoring was higher for Female (3.78) than Male (3.64). The average scoring for Females and Males diverged the most in the Defense, Attack, and Persistence classes when females scored .53 higher than males.

The matrix and stacked area charts found below in Figure 7 contain dual-scale responses to survey questions in classes four through six. In this instance, the charts allow for a practical comparative analysis that warrants the evaluation of categorical contributions. Comparative analysis via this charting shows one participant said that according to Acts 11:20-26, African believers were not some of the first disciples to be called Christians. Equally strange, a participant agreed with the BCC and BRICs adherents' false claim that Christianity is a White man's religion. Per the matrix, a participant said the evidence/testimony found in John 20:24-28

and 1 Cor. 15:1-19 did not convince Thomas, Cephas (Peter), James (the brother of Jesus), and Paul that Jesus’ resurrection from the dead was true. Fourteen participants divulged they knew someone who did not believe in Jesus’ resurrection. Moreover, thirteen participants disclosed they had been challenged about their belief in Christ Jesus.

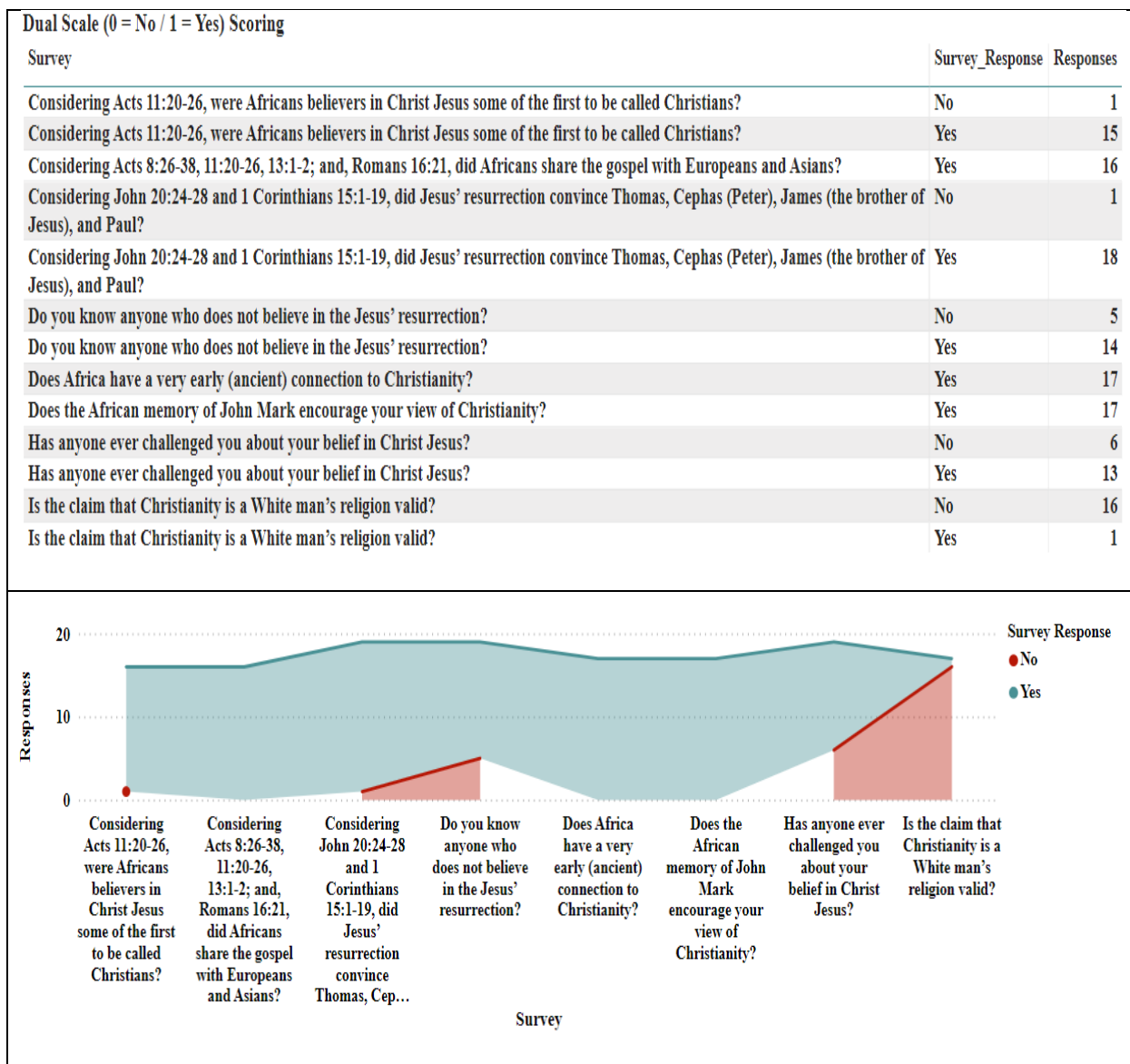


Figure 7. Responses by Survey and Survey Response Dual Scale Scoring

The researcher used the critical key influencer visual in Figure 8 to identify influencers crucial for understanding the correlation dynamics. The presentation of qualitative data in this

manner allows for straightforward interpretation and drawing of conclusions. In this instance, the influencer visualization indicates that the probability of the survey response being “Yes” increased the most (1.34 times) when the survey questions “Does Africa have a very early (ancient) connection to Christianity?” or “Does the African memory of John Mark encourage your view of Christianity?” are raised. One other factor, “Did Africans share the gospel with Europeans and Asians?” also influenced the survey response to be “Yes.”

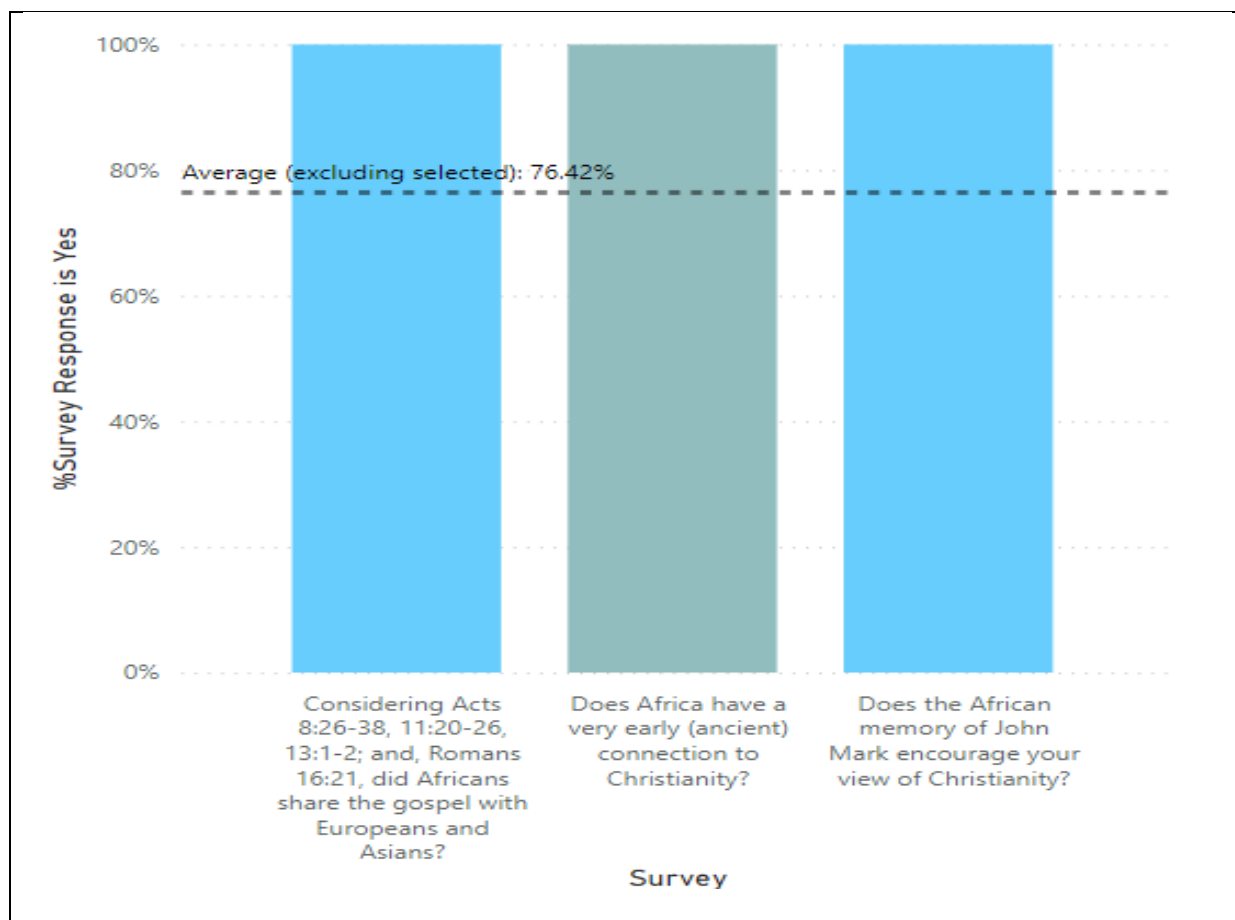


Figure 8. Key Influencer(s): What Influences Survey Response to be Yes on Dual Scale

The critical key influencer visual in Figure 9 indicates the most significant influence on survey response being “No” increased by (8.90 times) when the survey question is “Is the claim that Christianity is a White man’s religion valid?”



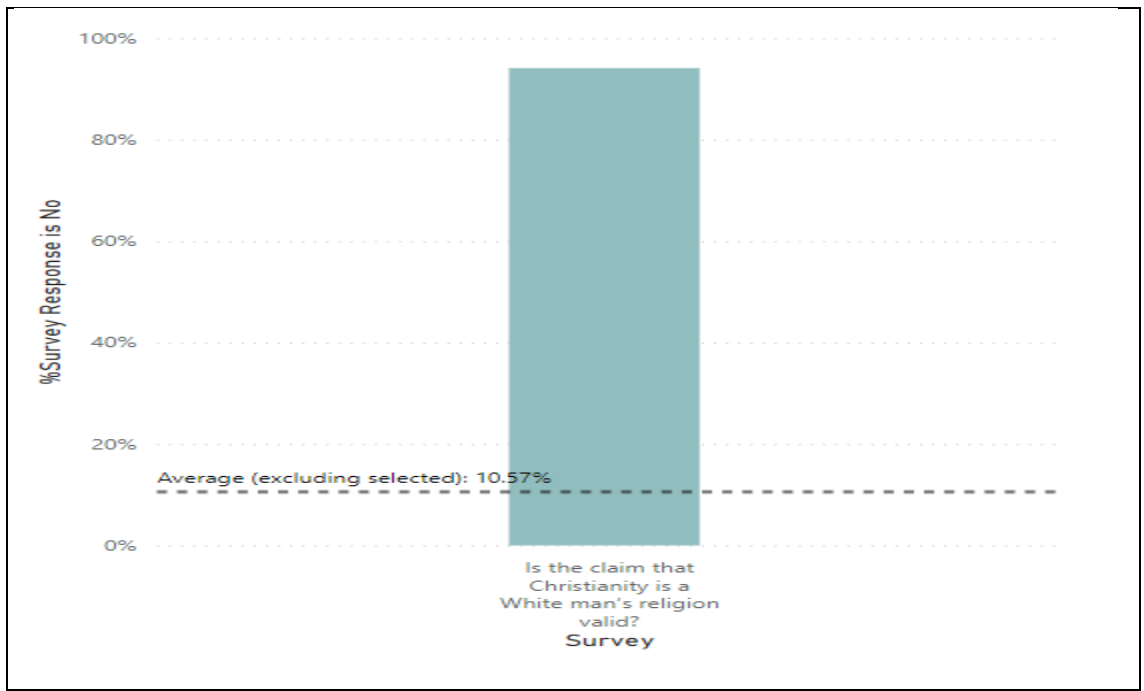
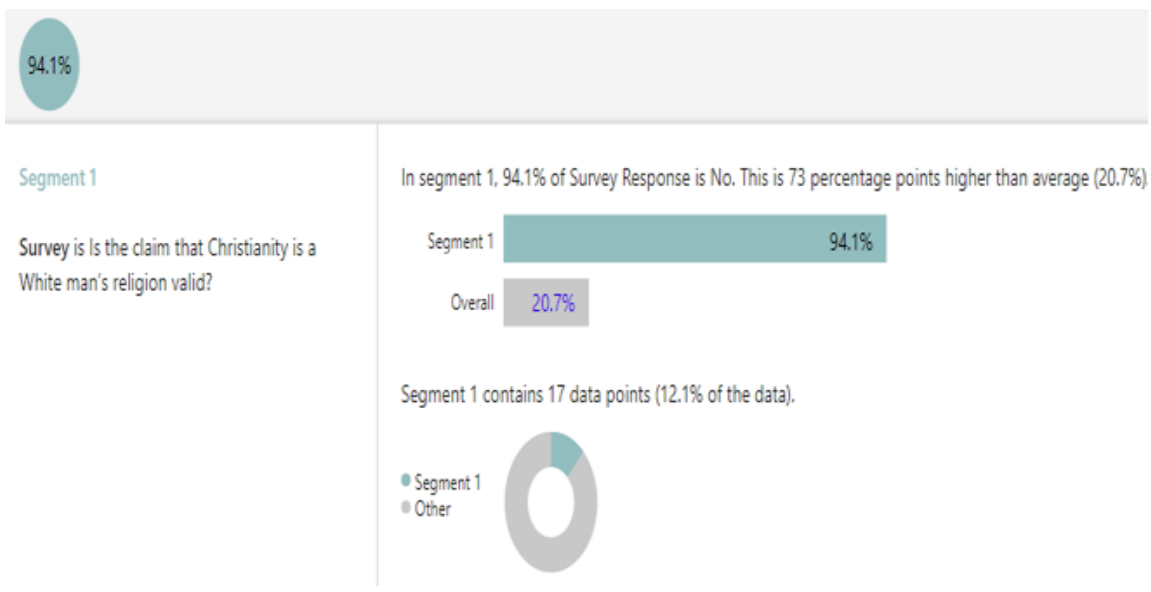


Figure 9. Key Influencer(s): What Influences Survey Response to be No on Dual Scale

Moreover, 94.1% of survey responses to this inquiry is 73 percentage points higher than average (20.7%). This artificial intelligence metric generated in Microsoft Power BI is shown in Figure 10 visualization:

Figure 10. Key Influencer(s): Top Segment for “No” Survey Response



The triangle bar and cluster column charts listed below in Figure 11 contain participants' pre-course and post-course average scoring measures. The triangle bar was used to show a simple categorical average, whereas the cluster column chart illustrated the categorical differences based on average scoring distributed across lessons. The scoring data indicates an increase in scoring. The Likert Scale used in this action research project's surveys implies that the course participants' initial confidence level rose from average to above average. The post-course average scoring is also higher than those recorded for all individual courses.

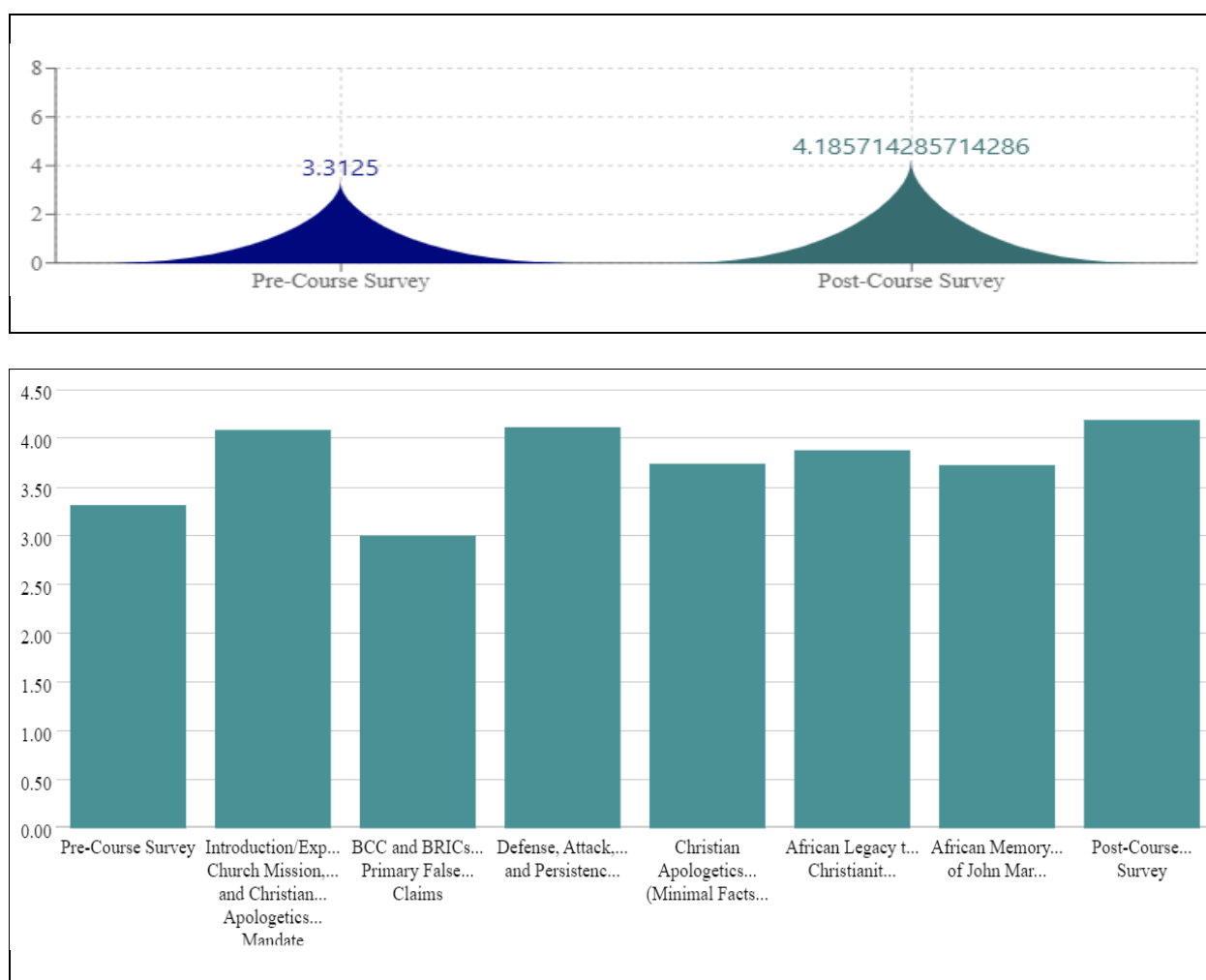


Figure 11. Pre-Course vs. Post-Course Average Scoring by Lesson

Figure 12 features a line and clustered column chart that provides a comprehensive and detailed qualitative data analysis, enabling us to extract valuable insights from the project's dataset. The chart showcases pre-course and post-course average scoring data alongside participant numbers, with the line on the y-axis representing the distinct number of participants.

The bars, on the other hand, depict the breakdown of classes by in-person and online group types. Upon analyzing the visualization summary, the analysis revealed the average scoring and total participants' measures exhibit a negative correlation. The Post-Course Survey in Group Type Online accounted for 29.71% of the average scoring. Additionally, the average scoring for In-Person (3.74) was higher than that of Online (3.71). Furthermore, we observed a significant divergence when comparing the average scoring for In-Person and Online against the Pre-Course Survey, with In-Person scoring 0.54 higher than Online.

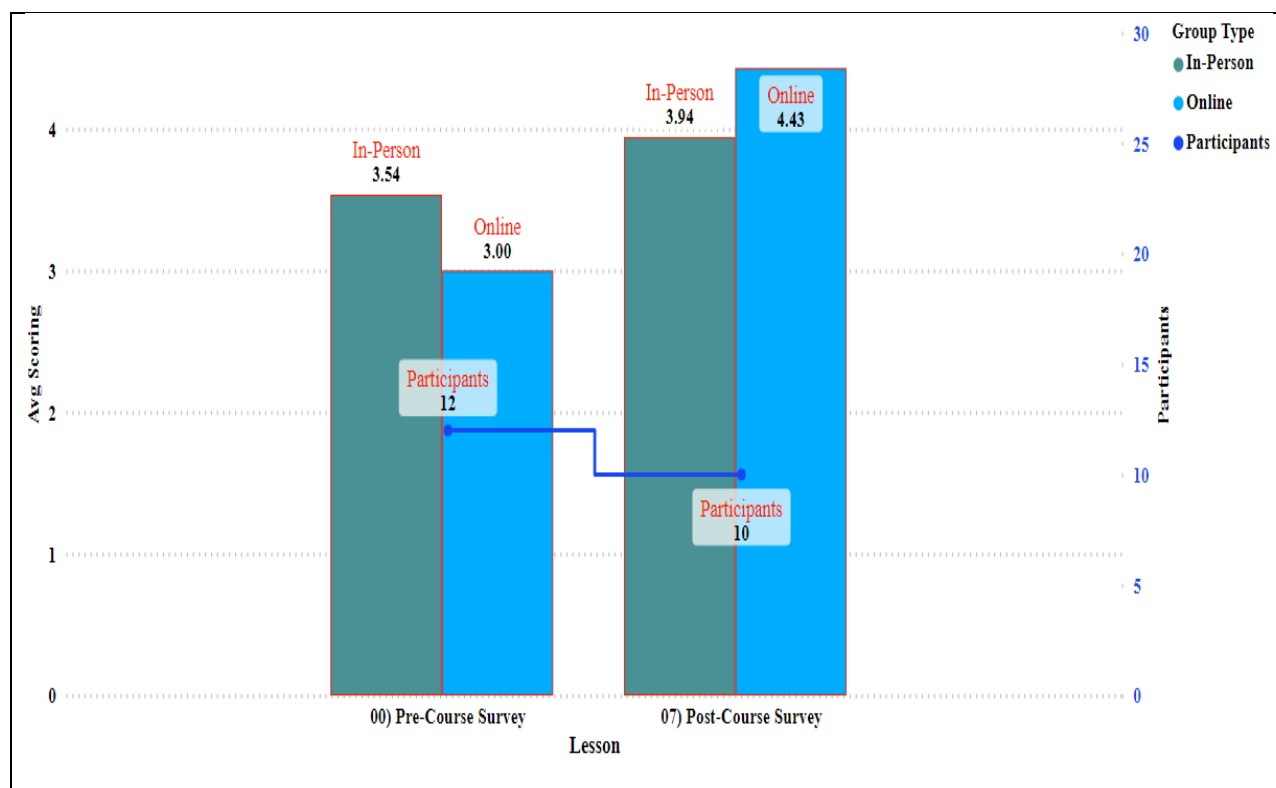


Figure 12. Average Scoring and Participants by Lesson and Group Type (In-Person vs. Online)

### Summary of Results

In dealing with early Libyan Christianity, Thomas Oden raised an interesting rhetorical question: "Did Africans receive Christianity from Europeans?"<sup>30</sup> Oden raised this question via the context of Acts 11:20, whereby he says, "[this text is sufficiently important to emphasize because] it makes it clear that the first Christians in Antioch included Africans, and they were the ones who first communicated with the Gentiles or Hellenists. This is a decisive moment in the history of Christianity and foundational for the history of early [African] Christianity."<sup>31</sup>

This researcher conducted a DMIN action research thesis project on formulating an apologetic approach that defends the Christian faith against the general claim of BRICs and BCC adherents that Christianity is a White man's religion. The researcher had four assumptions that they believed the study participants would fulfill. First, the participants would be able to counter and expose the erroneous declaration about Christianity being a White man's religion. Second, the POPMBC would embrace having a discrete apologetics ministry. Third, the participants would engage in the classes to gain understanding and preparedness to respond to the peddlers of BCC and BRICs' demonic dogma. Fourth, the participants would honestly and openly participate in the surveys needed to quantify the research data.

The researcher believed that by fulfilling these assumptions, participants would be better equipped to engage with BCC and BRIC adherents and defend the Christian faith with compassion, conviction, and cleverness to convince such skeptics to become disciples of Christ. The researcher believed that the results of the intervention would convince the POPMBC leadership that a discrete apologetics ministry is viable and valuable in helping the church make

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<sup>30</sup> Oden, *Early Libyan Christianity: Uncovering a North African Tradition*, 88.

<sup>31</sup> Oden, 89.

spiritually mature and exceptional disciples for the Kingdom of God who change the world for the better. The researcher also believed the participants would increase their comfort level about what they learned in the course.

The researcher's assumptions were proven valid by the quantitative results, various after-class discussions, and insider observations. There was even a request made by a POPMBC minister to have the researcher conduct this same course for the local church's teenagers. One member who was not a registered participant was informed about the course and inquired if it would be taught again at the POPMBC and even their hometown church located two hours from the POPMBC. This request was encouraging, as “the [African-American] church must be ground zero for all that is true.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Eric Mason, ed., *Urban Apologetics: Cults and Cultural Ideologies: Biblical and Theological Challenges Facing Christians*, Urban Apologetics (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2023), 60.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to evaluate the ability of the Prince of Peace Missionary Baptist Church (POPMBC) members to refute the claims of Black religious identity cults and Black atheists that Christianity is a “White man’s” religion. The project’s primary focus was to create an African-American church curriculum. This curriculum is designed to address the purpose of this study and provide essential information to POPMBC members about the ancient African connection to Christianity, which existed centuries before the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The hopeful outcome of this DMIN action research project is to eventually implement an apologetics ministry to help POPMBC members defend Christianity against false BCC and BRIC claims. To implement a Christian apologetics program at the church, member training, acquiring/developing training materials, and measuring results must be considered. These considerations are critical for helping church members understand how to defend the Christian faith from a practical and personal perspective.

Since her establishment and existence in the United States of America, the African-American church has witnessed and endured the onslaught of immoral acts and attempts to silence her prophetic voice. The African-American church has been attacked, oppressed, and even dismissed, yet she has managed to survive all the calamities deployed against her. Through the preaching of the gospel of Christ Jesus and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the African-American church has inspired and served those who comprise her membership and associated communities. Moreover, the African-American church has done from the genesis of her beginnings. She continues to serve as the heart, nerve center, intellectual and economic impetus, and even militancy, which mandates that she stands up and speaks out against the power of the

oppressive status quo. Such a posture correlates to the historical reality that she was not born in a sphere of conformity. Instead, she was born with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the audacity of faith to confront injustice and contend for the pursuit of autonomy, affluence, and achievement. Yet, suffice to say, it appears that growing segments of the African-American church, as observed via historical witness, have been distracted and deluded. Sarita Lyons says,

“It is time for warfare! The church must call out the false teachings and attacks on the faith that have emerged from the Black conscious community [and Black religious identity cults] and feminist ideologies. ... If we believe this is true, the church will not wave the white flag of surrender in the fight [to destroy strongholds].”<sup>33</sup>

This action research project evaluated the feasibility of establishing an apologetics curriculum and ministry at the POPMBC. The attempts by adherents of BCC and BRICs to attack and demean the Christian faith of African-Americans at the POPMBC and other local churches in the African-American community gave rise to this intervention to create the appropriate curriculum and training course to equip members to defend their faith via refutation of the false claim that Christianity is a White person’s religion. The refutation of this erroneous claim subverts the attempt to confuse and convince African-Americans to walk away from the Christian faith that was divinely given to the disciples of Christ (cf. Jude 3).

Repudiation is necessary because “[acceptance] of the idea that Christianity is a White man’s religion causes some people of color to embrace non-Christian religions such as Islam, animism, [Kemetics], and Rastafarianism.”<sup>34</sup> This action research project aims to encourage, empower, and equip African-American churches such as the POPMBC to establish discrete apologetic ministries and curricula to help refute abhorrent claims such as Christianity is a White

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<sup>33</sup> Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Cults and Cultural Ideologies*, 155-156.

<sup>34</sup> Gay, Jr., *The Whitewashing of Christianity: A Hidden Past, A Hurtful Present and A Hopeful Future*, 15.

man's (person's) religion. As such, this project asserts the presupposition that "Christianity is not a White man's religion, [Also, as a matter of fact], Christianity is not a Black, brown, red, or yellow religion, either. The truth of the Christian faith is universally applicable to all people."<sup>35</sup>

Six training lessons were developed after this action research project to assist the POPMBC and other African-American church congregations seeking to utilize the apologetic approach prescribed in this project. This approach augments the evidential method championed by Christian apologists such as Gary Habermas, John Warwick Montgomery, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Clark Pinnock, which is a viable Christian apologetic methodology that argues that "the most significant historical events in Christianity—particularly the resurrection of Jesus—are matters that can be established through proper historical argumentation, even apart from any prior arguments for the existence of God."<sup>36</sup> This extension seeks to prove a definite connection between the direct eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus and ancient African Christianity via historical elucidation.

Clarification from a historical context proves beyond debate that Africa is directly connected to ancient Christianity. This connection existed roughly fourteen to fifteen centuries before establishing the trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism. Despite attempts by European scholars such as Adolf von Harnack and Walter Bauer to imply Christianity is a White man's religion, the historical evidence declares such an inference to be entirely false. The evidence points out that "the church of Ethiopia was firmly established during the first century, Ethiopia

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<sup>35</sup> Gay, Jr., *The Whitewashing of Christianity: A Hidden Past, A Hurtful Present and A Hopeful Future*, 16.

<sup>36</sup> Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, 63.



[not Armenia] was the first kingdom [nation] to accept Christianity as its state religion, that's right, a country in Africa, not Europe, embraced the Christian faith long before chattel slavery."<sup>37</sup>

Historical accounts shine a light on the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26-40 who was actually from Meroe (Nubia) and the first Gentile Christian, the Cyrenaic synagogue in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9), the church in Syrian Antioch and her Cyrenian members, Alexandria Egypt and its third-century library which was unequaled in medieval Europe, and the conciliary gatherings whereby African theologians debated weighty Christian doctrinal issues such as the Trinity and Christology. In the same vein, the involvement of "African Christians like Tertullian, who came up with the concept of the Trinity, the African philosopher Origen, who is considered by many to be one of Africa's greatest scientific investigators of sacred text, and African scholars like Didymus the Blind and Tyconius ... have all contributed heavily to the way people approach and interpret Scripture."<sup>38</sup>

Historical evidence demonstrates via the firsthand accounts of Procopius of Caesarea that the Moors in Northern Africa during the Vandal era were dark-skinned (Niger) people. This point of reference is important because the term Moor/Mauri was applied to Africans from Numidia (modern-day Algeria). According to history, Augustine of Hippo was from Thagaste, Numidia. European scholar Theodor Mommsen's research found that Algeria had fully embraced Christianity by the fifth century. Mommsen also acknowledges that "through Africa, Christianity became the religion of the world."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Gay, Jr., *The Whitewashing of Christianity: A Hidden Past, A Hurtful Present and A Hopeful Future*, 79.

<sup>38</sup> Gay, Jr., 80.

<sup>39</sup> Craig S. Keener and Glen Usry, *Defending Black Faith: Answers to Tough Questions About African-American Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic (InterVarsity Press), 1997), 14.

Thomas Oden raises several questions that arise from the echoes of Christian history and its connection to Africa. Oden ventures the following inquiries:

- Did Africa receive the gospel from Europeans? [He replies, no.]
- Did Europeans receive the gospel from Africans? [ He replies, likely. See Acts 11:19-20 & Acts 13:1]
- Did Europeans receive the gospel from Libyans? [He replies, likely. See Acts 11:19-20 & Acts 13:1]
- Did African intellectual history influence European intellectual history? [He replies, I think so], and the earliest layers of evidence are found in the confluence of New Testament texts pertaining to the transition of Christianity from Jerusalem to Antioch and beyond to Rome. The embryonic clues are all there in Simon the Black [Niger], who carried the cross, provided core leadership for the church to Antioch and possibly for Paul himself, and whose family went on to Rome prior to Paul's arrival there.<sup>40</sup>

Another question that arises from the echoes of Christian history and its connection to Africa concerns the birthplace of John Mark. The primary historical recollection of ancient African Christian history “points to Libya as the place of Mark’s birth, likely in or near Cyrene, in the region of Cyrenaica (sometimes identified as Ptolemais or Barka), in North Africa.”<sup>41</sup> This recollection includes several significant voices in ancient African Christian history who “have attested Mark in Africa—‘the ancient presbyters’ recalled by Clement, as well as Eusebius Jerome and John Chrysostom, and most other classic Christian writers.”<sup>42</sup>

The African recollection (historical accounting) of John Mark includes his birth, death, and burial in Africa. Attempts by European scholars such as Adolf von Harnack, Walter Bauer, and Hans Lietzmann to disavow this historical recollection amount to absurdity. Their rejections must address the following questions:

- If there are so many sites in Alexandria that recall Mark, his ministry, his arrest, his death, his attempted burning, and his burial, why are they there in Alexandria [Egypt] if he never was in Alexandria?

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<sup>40</sup> Oden, *Early Libyan Christianity: Uncovering a North African Tradition*, 104.

<sup>41</sup> Oden, *The African Memory of Mark: Reassessing Early Church Tradition*, 45-46.

<sup>42</sup> Oden, *The African Memory of Mark: Reassessing Early Church Tradition*, 33.

- What accounts for the antiquity and persistence of martyr sites that correspond to the literary records if there were mere fantasy?<sup>43</sup>

### **Research Implications**

The research implications for apologetics at the POPMBC are significant because the African-American church must remain relevant to impact the lives of its members and community positively. As such, the African-American church must increase its ability to help equip its members to understand and articulate their hope in Christ Jesus. The message of biblical scripture is always at the forefront of the church's efforts to empower, equip, and encourage its members. This same treatment of biblical scripture is also necessary for engaging and evangelizing those who need an encounter with Christ Jesus. After all, "if the Bible has lost its central place in Black church life, what then has taken its place?"<sup>44</sup> Moreover, it must also be asserted that "congregations that no longer have the Bible at the center of their faith and life will lose the ability to discern the will of the Lord."<sup>45</sup>

The significance of the research implications for apologetics at the POPMBC extends beyond the congregation. The repercussions extend into the personal networks of POPMBC members. According to the Barna Group, "Black churchgoers are the bellwether of resilient U.S. Christianity. ... Though the Black Church is by no means monolithic, the general statistical portrait is of a bloc of believers who are spiritually disciplined and a force for social change."<sup>46</sup> The church's impact on the African-American community encompasses the fullness of forward

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<sup>43</sup> Oden, *The African Memory of Mark: Reassessing Early Church Tradition*, 164-165.

<sup>44</sup> Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church: A Call to Reclaim a Sacred Institution*, 24.

<sup>45</sup> Anyabwile, 27.

<sup>46</sup> Barna Group. 2021, *Trends in the Black Church: Celebrating Its Legacy and Investing in a Hopeful Future*, 7-8.

movement that results in upward mobility, and societal reform cannot be denied. The relevancy of Christian faith as observed through the annals of history shows “[the] heritage of the Black church—[ancient] African Christian heritage, [collective] African-American Christian heritage ... provides a renewing source of hope for the Black community today ...”<sup>47</sup> Strangely, the BRICs and BCC adherents are the beneficiaries of the sacrifices and successes of the African-American church.

The application of apologetics at the POPMBC is vital for equipping her members to defend the Christian faith. Equipping members to defend the Christian faith enables them to respond to challenges raised by BRICs and BCC adherents and even creates opportunities to build bridges to lead these same challengers to embrace the Christian faith. The research implications for apologetics at the POPMBC are significant. As evident by the apologetic contributions of Eric Mason and Vocab Malone, there is a growing recognition of the need to address specific cultural challenges germane to the African-American church concerning the Christian faith. This recognition has led to an expanding effort to contextualize apologetics to the African-American experience, addressing issues such as racial injustice, cultural identity, and the historical impact of Christianity on the African-American community.

Many African-Americans have been told that Christianity is a religion that only belongs to White people. This, however, is an inaccurate representation of the Christian faith. Christianity is not limited to any race or culture; it was designed to be universal by an omnipresent God. The very nature of Christianity, as evidenced in Matthew 28:18-20, is too dynamic to be constrained by race or culture. This dynamism requires Christians to lead lives

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<sup>47</sup> Usry and Keener, *Black Man's Religion: Can Christianity Be Afrocentric?*, 20.

inspired by the Holy Spirit, displaying holiness and encouraging others to become disciples who make disciples.

Christianity is transformative, able to adapt to society in a way that engages, encourages, and educates while remaining true to its core beliefs. This adaptability, as seen in Acts 17:16-34 and 1 Cor. 9:22-23, is critical because the African-American church must recognize that "a generation in [its community is searching for a] connection with the Ultimate Being [and] requires more information about God than they are getting from traditional Christianity. [God's Word cannot change, but African-American churches must incorporate an apologetic that allows for a culturally relevant identity without compromising any truth]."<sup>48</sup> The Christian church "must be willing to construct an apologetic that prepares those in the body for spiritual warfare and cuts deception off at its knees. By God's Grace, this can and will happen."<sup>49</sup>

It is not uncommon for African-American Christians to be told that Islam is the true religion for people of African descent because it originated in Africa. However, this claim is unfounded. The historical truth about religion in Africa reveals that Christianity has a long-standing presence in the continent, making it indigenous. Historical records show that Christianity was established in Africa as early as the first century AD (CE), while Islam did not emerge as a religion until the seventh century AD (CE). In other words, Christianity had already been established on the African continent for about six to seven hundred years before Islam appeared anywhere.

Furthermore, history informs us that Africans were sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with other Africans in the first century AD, and this predates the trans-Atlantic slave trade that

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<sup>48</sup> Harris, *Is Christianity the White Man's Religion: How the Bible Is Good News for People of Color*, 17

<sup>49</sup> Malone, *Street-Level Apologetics: Passion for the City, Clarity for the People*, 137.

was initiated by Europeans (Portuguese) in 1441. The call to consciousness for the African-American church demands informing those within her reach about the historic and influential role Africans played in establishing the Church. Jerome Sanderson says, “[by] acquainting [African-Americans] with the truth of Christian history, [the African-American church arms] them against the onslaught of deceit, misinformation, and ignorance.”<sup>50</sup>

BCC and BRICs have challenged the African-American church, which is simultaneously dealing with the heretical influences and distractions posed by Modalism (Oneness Pentecostalism), Arianism (cf. Jehovah Witnesses), relativism (atheism), non-Christ-centric justice (cf. social justice), and the prosperity gospel. The apologetic mandates of 2 Cor. 10:3-5, 1 Peter 3:15-16, and Jude 3 are still relevant for countering the challenges to orthodox Christianity. Thus, African-American Christians must be provided with evidence-based, intellectual, and culturally relevant resources and training. This approach to apologetics is not just about defending the faith against false claims and skepticism but also focuses on building bridges that encourage skeptics to change their allegiance to embrace Christ Jesus faithfully. Suffice it to say that it serves as a tool to help the POPMBC and the African-American church, in general, to speak the truth in love to those who attack the Christian faith with the intent to demolish false claims and disciple the attackers who make intentional and misinformed erroneous allegations about African-Americans and their embrace of Christianity.

The implications also extend to the broader discourse on how the African-American church engages the BCC and BRICs with historical evidence rather than getting bogged down with social justice issues. Moreover, the research into apologetics within the African-American

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<sup>50</sup> Altschul, *An Unbroken Circle*, 17.

church has implications for ministry leadership in local churches. It calls for a curriculum and associated training that resonates with African-American Christian experiences. This comprises an understanding of the historical connection between ancient African Christianity and today's African-American church, enabling a rebuttal of culturally sensitive challenges posed by adherents of BCC and BRICs. After all, claims such as "There is no hope for us in Christianity; it is a religion organized by the enemies (the white race) of the Black Nation to enslave us to the White race's rule ..." <sup>51</sup> must be boldly challenged without fail or hesitation.

### **Research Applications**

The gathered research data substantiates the need for apologetics in the African-American church. Roughly 74% of the twenty-one participants reported they knew someone who does not believe in Christ's Resurrection. Among this group of participants, 68.42% said they had been challenged about their belief in Christ. These metrics alone support the primary assumption in this project's proposal that apologetics is needed in the local African-American church. This assertion is further bolstered by the fact that a "Yes" response was registered to the survey question, "Is the claim that Christianity is a White man's religion valid?"

The insights gained from implementing the intervention and the reactions of the course participants further demonstrate the relevance and efficacy of the action research project. This assertion serves to substantiate the definite need for an apologetics approach that enables African American Christians to confidently refute the false claim that Christianity is a White person's religion. The insights ranged from participants staying after class to give personal testimonies,

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<sup>51</sup> Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, 221.

asking additional questions, and even suggesting teaching more apologetics classes. Moreover, several members desired to participate in apologetics at the POPMBC.

During the course wrap-up session, participants expressed how much they learned in the classes and appreciated the course. The consistent attendance numbers indicated that the participants were interested in the lessons. The data visualizations listed below in Figure 14 and indicates that participants increased their knowledge of the subject matter, as evidenced by the increase in the pre-course and post-course average scoring between the pre-course and post-course surveys. The Likert Scale scoring indicates that the average participant score moved from average confidence to above-average confidence.

### **Research Limitations**

The research limitations highlighted earlier in this prospectus appeared during the intervention's implementation. Due to scheduling conflicts with other POPMBC ministries, the weekly in-person class sessions switched between the fellowship hall and the church sanctuary. The fellowship hall's location afforded the ability to meet in closed session, controlling the in-person class size. Regarding the church sanctuary, the researcher could not limit the number of participants in the in-person class sessions. As such, some individuals would attend the sessions that met in the church sanctuary but would not officially register for the course. As for the online section of the course, the Zoom portion was manageable by the researcher, but the POPMBC meeting link also feeds their Facebook live page, which was not controllable by the researcher.

The researcher initially asserted that the action research project was limited by the scarcity of previous research conclusions focusing on apologetics and the African-American church, which allowed for a broader investigation. This limitation was highlighted because most approaches to apologetics and the African-American church incorporated a measure of social



justice items to counter the erroneous race-baiting claim(s) of BCC and BRIC adherents. However, the researcher worked around this limitation for their contention that incorporating social justice issues limited research and ceded crucial ground to the BCC and BRICs. It was deemed inconceivable by the researcher to limit their apologetic approach to the horrors inflicted upon the ancestors of African-Americans by colonialism and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The strategy utilized by this intervention refused to cede/ignore roughly 1400-1500 years of African Christian history and contribution to the Christian church at large that preceded the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The researcher intentionally used the church at Antioch as the foundation for their apologetic approach.

### **Further Research**

The researcher contends that this action research project's main findings and contributions satisfied the study's assumed outcomes and warrant a broader conversation within Christian apologetics. This more comprehensive dialogue must focus on providing local African-American churches with the research and training necessary to link the African-American church's heritage with ancient African Christianity. The broader conversation must incorporate research that upends whitewashing and presents the multicultural contributions to the church of Christ. An honest investigation of the beginnings of Christianity refutes the false claim that Christianity is a White person's religion by confirming the seldom-admitted fact that "Africa played a decisive role in the formation of Christian culture. [Honest research should aim to herald rather than hide the decisive] intellectual achievements of Christianity were explored and understood first in Africa before they were recognized in Europe, and a millennium before they

found their way to North America.”<sup>52</sup> Credible research must endeavor to highlight every aspect of the African tradition rather than “[ignoring] this patristic gift lying at their feet.”<sup>53</sup>

While BCC and BRIC adherents’ false claims contain a measure of truth regarding the atrocities engineered by colonial powers, their claims are still disingenuous and misleading. This charge is made based upon the failure of their claims to seriously consider the role of African empires such as the Benin Empire (Kingdom of Dahomey/Kingdom of Allada), Kanem Bornu Empire, Aro Confederacy, Ashanti Empire, Songhai Empire, and Mali Empire in the African slave trade. The complete picture of what transpired in the trans-Atlantic slave trade is a nightmare derived from unspeakable evil.

There is no debate that colonial powers used Christianity as a tool to control bonded slaves and enforce claims of their superiority over those subjugated as chattel. The evil actions of those who claimed to be Christians provide manna for those who oppose Christianity. It must be noted that “[other] religions capitalize on the negative historical association of slavery with Christianity as support for their disdain of the faith.”<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, this researcher renounces the accusation that “Christianity represents colonial oppression and is not authentically African. This assumption is categorically false [because] Christianity has been in Africa since the beginning. In fact, it is very likely that there were Christians in Africa before there were Christians in Europe. ... Africa belongs at the center of Christian history, beginning in the early church.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity*, 9.

<sup>53</sup> Oden, 11.

<sup>54</sup> Harris, *Is Christianity the White Man’s Religion: How the Bible Is Good News for People of Color*, 37.

<sup>55</sup> Eastman, *Early North African Christianity: Turning Points in the Development of the Church*, 5.

Excluding social justice, the research project results confirm the findings of published apologetic works by Eric Mason (Urban Apologetics) and Vocab Malone (Street-Level Apologetics). The information from preceding studies indicates a definite need to incorporate apologetics in African-American church ministries. The research results show a hunger for learning about apologetics and ancient African Christian history. This proves there is a need for an apologetic approach that is divorced from the tenets of social justice while still culturally relevant to the African-American church.

Gaps between current Christian apologetic methods and the African-American church must be closed by developing a culturally relevant approach. Therefore, the gaps are not merely intellectual but deeply woven into the fabric of community, identity, and the quest for a faith expression that is authentic and relevant to African-Americans' lived experiences. By addressing these gaps, the African-American church can strengthen its congregations and broader communities.

Within the context of the African-American church, there is a need for apologetics that addresses theological concerns and resonates with the unique cultural and historical challenges posed by BCC and BRICs. New methods have been developed to bridge this gap by addressing the specific realities and experiences of African Americans residing in urban centers. The researcher believes this methodology fails African-American Christians who do not reside in urban areas and generally face a divergent set of realities and experiences. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding and engaging with the cultural narratives that shape the community's view of Christianity. It also involves tackling the negative feelings about Christianity that may arise from a failure to understand the tremendous impact Africans have had on Christianity. The researcher's methodology aims not to harm those outside of the African-

American church community. Rather, it seeks to be an apologetic that counters the distortions of God's Word presented by various groups, offering biblical and historical truth to defend the faith of the African-American Christian community of which the POPMBC is a resident.

The researcher contends that an apologetic method that focuses on the historical linkage between the African-American church and ancient African Christianity should serve as the appropriate approach to refuting erroneous claims, such as the idea that Christianity is a White person's religion. The participants' inquiries and discussions were more interested in the connection between the African-American church and ancient African Christianity than societal realities. This contention recognizes a call for apologetics that counters the distortions of Christianity presented by BCC and BRICs, offering biblical and historical facts to provide an undeniable refutation that strengthens the African-American church's members in urban and non-urban areas.

As it pertains to the results of this action research project, it must be recognized that the approach taken by this action research project is applicable in other settings for the noted false claim leveled by BCC and BRICs. The same claim is often leveled by various hate groups in American history that used White supremacist theology to pacify, oppress, and control the least desirable in society. The researcher's prescribed apologetic methodology also applies in some American Indian as well as other cultural settings whereby the false claim the "Christianity is a White person's religion" mantra is cited as fact. The same approach also applies in liberal Christian settings that lend support to the same false claim.

Further research into this researcher's proposal must embrace the universality of the Christian faith. While Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ, it must be noted that God created a diverse humanity, and the word of God "compels us to celebrate our ethnic distinctions,

value our cultural differences, and acknowledge our historical diversity, even forgiving the ways such history may have been dreadfully harmful.”<sup>56</sup> Biblical scripture also mandates Christians to defend their hope in Christ, contend for the faith, and even do what is biblically sanctioned to demolish strongholds erected to denounce and demean the Christian faith.

Additional research should also consider the results of this action research project and how to organize educational programs and training sessions best to equip POPMBC and other African-American church members with the knowledge and skills needed for refuting the claim that Christianity is a White man’s religion. Other deliberations should consider using Christian apologetics for community outreach and social media engagement, creating apologetics materials for teenagers and young adults, and collaborating with other Christian apologetics organizations.

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<sup>56</sup> Platt, *Counter Culture: Following Christ in an Anti-Christian Age*, 205.

## Appendix A

**CALL TO COUNTERATTACK**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, are we ready to do the necessary work to learn how to respond to the primary arguments made by the Black Conscious Community and Black Religious Identity Cults? As African-American Christians, we are tasked with speaking the truth in love to those who attack the Christian faith. We need to respond to adherents of the BCC and BRICs in a manner that engages, interrogates, informs, encourages, and even invites. In this regard, we should consider the connection between truth, love, and discipleship (*cf.* Ephesians 4:14-15). Likewise, we cannot ignore our responsibility to acknowledge and adhere to the following counsel faithfully:

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”  
- Peter, the Apostle (1 Peter 3:15-16 NIV)

“Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people.”  
- Jude, the Apostle (Jude 3 NIV)

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”  
- Paul, the Apostle (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV)

Considering this counsel, we have collaborative work to do. Let’s work together to respond to the primary arguments made by the BCC and BRICs. The time to engage in battle with the BCC and BRICs is urgent for this conflict cannot be ignored or deemed as non-critical. The church must fight with the intent to demolish and disciple.

## Research Participants Needed

### African-American Christian Apologetics Study

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Are you an active member of the Small Growth Group ministry?
- Are you interested in how to defend your faith against those who claim Christianity is a “White person’s religion” or there is no God?

If you answered yes to these questions,  
you might be eligible to participate in an apologetics research study.

Apologetics is characterized as an orderly defense of the Christian faith. Defense of the Christian faith involves weighing the evidence against contrary claims. The study aims to evaluate the impact on a person’s ability to defend the Christian faith against those who claim Christianity is a “White man’s religion” or “God does not exist.”

Participation will consist of taking a survey administered during the first class and at the conclusion of the last course. Participation will also require attending seven apologetic study classes at 8:30 am on consecutive Saturdays beginning in mid-January 2024.

The study is being conducted at the Prince of Peace Missionary Baptist Church.

Brian Gadson, a doctoral candidate in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study. Please get in touch with Mr. Gadson for more information.

Liberty University IRB - 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515

## Appendix B

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Title of the Project:** Insurgency Apologetics: Refuting the Claims that Christianity is a “White Person’s” Religion

**Principal Investigator:** Brian Gadson, a doctoral candidate in the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study. Please get in touch with Mr. Gadson for more information.

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You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be at least 18 years of age or older. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Your decision to accept or reject participation will not affect your current or future relations with the researcher. Considering your involvement in the Insurgency project, as a participant, you can withdraw at any time. If you choose to withdraw, please inform the researcher in writing at the email address provided during the introductory course. Please do not submit your study materials, as your portion of the research will be excluded from the study.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

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Participant Name (Printed)

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Signature & Date

Please return this signed and dated consent form to the researcher using the contact information provided during the introductory course.



## Appendix C

**PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL FORM**

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Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to accept or reject participation will not affect your current or future relations with the researcher. Considering your involvement in the *Insurgency* project, as a participant, you can withdraw at any time. If you choose to withdraw, please inform the researcher in writing at the email address provided during the introductory course. Please do not submit your study materials, as your portion of the research will be excluded from the study.

By signing this withdrawal form, you agree to cease participation in this study. You will be given a copy of this document for your records.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to withdraw from Insurgency Apologetics project.*

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Participant Name (Printed)

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Signature & Date

Please return this signed and dated withdrawal form to the researcher using the contact information provided during the introductory course.

## Appendix D

### **ABOUT THE CURRICULUM**

#### **Class Structure**

This course is structured around selected biblical Scriptures, teacher materials, and lectures from this researcher. The various scriptures and materials will be discussed in the course. To foster a collaborative experience, participants will be asked questions about content and engaged collectively.

#### **Integrating Media**

PowerPoint will be utilized during lectures. Additionally, this Insurgency curriculum has many references from various scholars and apologists. Participants will be informed about apologetic resources such as the Jude 3 Project, the Bisrat, Apologetics Press, Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, Christian Apologetics Alliance, Cross Examined, Got Questions, and One Minute Apologist. Finally, the supplemental statements made by various Black Religious Identity Cults (BRICs) members will be used to prompt discussion in a focus group session. Several videos/podcasts from the Bisrat and Jude 3 Project will supplement the Insurgency curriculum developed by this researcher to help students understand the subject matter.

#### **Discussion Questions**

These questions will be based on the scriptures and materials associated with the lecture subject matter. Participants are expected to respond via course sessions, questionnaires, and surveys.

## Appendix E

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS PRE-COURSE SURVEY**

This appendix includes the African-American Christian Apologetics Survey administered to all participants committed to the study during the introductory apologetics course and after the focus group discussion/review.

**Printed Participant Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature & Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS:** These questions comprise aspects of Christian apologetics that are relevant to the African-American Christian perspective. The questions stem from an African-American Christian's understanding of the church's mission, the need for apologetics, African legacy, spiritual warfare, and justice (biblical vs. social). So, therefore, please attempt to answer each question.

**Reflections:**

Kenyan-born scholar John Mbiti believes that "Christianity in Africa is so old that it can rightly be described as an indigenous, traditional, and African religion. Long before the start of Islam in the seventh century, Christianity was well established all over North Africa, Egypt, parts of the Sudan, and Ethiopia."<sup>57</sup>

Jerome Gay, Jr., President of The Urban Perspective, said, "When we look at the historical record, we see that true Christianity, instead of being forced on Black people during slavery, was in fact gladly and enthusiastically embraced and spread by and through our African ancestors' centuries before American slavery."<sup>58</sup>

**Church Mission*****Prince of Peace Missionary Baptist Church***

What is the mission of the POPMBC?

**Apologetics**

<sup>57</sup> Vocab Malone, *Street-Level Apologetics: Passion for the City, Clarity for the People* (West Salem, OH: Firesmyth Press, 2022), 107.

<sup>58</sup> Jerome Gay, Jr., *The Whitewashing of Christianity: A Hidden Past, A Hurtful Present and A Hopeful Future* (Chicago, IL: 13th & Joan, 2020), 185.

***2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Philippians 1:7, 16; 1 Peter 3:15-16; and Jude 3***

According to these biblical scriptures, what is Christian apologetics?

**Spiritual Warfare**

***Ephesians 6:10-18, 2 Corinthians 10:4 & 12:9***

According to these biblical scriptures, what is spiritual warfare?

**African References**

***Acts 8:26-38 NKJV***

<sup>26</sup> Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is desert.

<sup>27</sup> So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship,

<sup>28</sup> was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.

<sup>29</sup> Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.”

<sup>30</sup> So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

<sup>31</sup> And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

<sup>32</sup> The place in the Scripture which he read was this:

“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;  
And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,  
So He opened not His mouth.

<sup>33</sup> In His humiliation His justice was taken away,

And who will declare His generation?

For His life is taken from the earth.”

<sup>34</sup> So the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?”

<sup>35</sup> Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

<sup>36</sup> Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”

<sup>37</sup> Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.”

And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

<sup>38</sup> So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

*Questions ...*

- Who did Philip encounter?
- Who did this person work for?
- What did the person Philip encountered come to do?
- What did Philip find this person doing?
- After hearing the gospel, what did the person ask Philip?
- What did Philip do to this person?
- Where was this person from?

*Acts 11:20-26 NKJV*

<sup>20</sup> But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.

<sup>21</sup> And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.

<sup>23</sup> When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.

<sup>24</sup> For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

<sup>25</sup> Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul.

<sup>26</sup> And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

*Questions ...*

- Where was the city of Cyrene located?
- Did the church in Antioch have members from Cyrene?
- What were the disciples called at the church in Antioch?

*Acts 13:1-2 NKJV*

<sup>01</sup> Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

<sup>02</sup> As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

*Questions ...*

- Who are some of the prophets and teachers at the church in Antioch?
- Does the list of prophets and teachers include anyone from Cyrene?
- Does this list of prophets and teachers include someone with an alias (nickname)?
- If so, what does this alias (nickname) suggest?

### **Biblical Justice**

Social Justice, defined by secular authorities, replaces God with government and the absolutes of truth with societal values. This poses a problem since Christians should refrain from conforming to worldly standards (cf. Romans 12:1–2). It must be acknowledged that while social justice sounds good, it must be noted that justice divorced from biblical principles is a perversion of justice. This is problematic for God, as revealed in biblical Scripture, “is the moral plumb line who determines what is good and right for all peoples, for all eras. And because God doesn’t change, this standard doesn’t change.”<sup>59</sup> Therefore, Christians, via the transformative empowerment of the Holy Spirit’s influence, should embrace justice from a biblical standpoint. As such, what is meant by the following biblical passages?

#### *Deuteronomy 32:4 NKJV*

<sup>04</sup> He is the Rock, His work is perfect;  
 For all His ways are justice,  
 A God of truth and without injustice;  
 Righteous and upright is He.

#### **Meaning:**

#### *Hebrews 12:14 NKJV*

<sup>14</sup> Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

#### **Meaning:**

#### *Matthew 5:13-16 NKJV*

<sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

<sup>15</sup> Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

<sup>16</sup> Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

#### **Meaning:**

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<sup>59</sup> Scott David Allen, *Why Social Justice Is Not Biblical Justice: An Urgent Appeal to Fellow Christians in a Time of Social Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Credo House Publishers, 2020), 19.

**Matthew 25:40 NKJV**

<sup>40</sup> And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

**Meaning:**

**James 1:27 NKJV**

<sup>27</sup> Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

**Meaning:**

**James 2:8 NKJV**

<sup>08</sup> If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well;

**Meaning:**

**African Influence**

Which individual was nicknamed “The Black Dwarf”?

- A. [Athanasius of Alexandria](#)
- B. Augustine of Hippo
- C. Tertullian of Carthage
- D. Cyprian of Carthage
- E. Arius of Alexandria
- F. Gamaliel the Elder (aka Rabban Gamaliel I)

Which individual defended the biblical fact that Jesus has always existed and was equal to God the Father”?

- A. [Athanasius of Alexandria](#)
- B. Augustine of Hippo
- C. Tertullian of Carthage
- D. Cyprian of Carthage
- E. Origen of Alexandria
- F. Arius of Alexandria

Which individual shaped the practice of biblical interpretation?

- A. Athanasius of Alexandria
- B. [Augustine of Hippo](#)
- C. Tertullian of Carthage
- D. Cyprian of Carthage
- E. Origen of Alexandria
- F. Arius of Alexandria

Which individual developed what is known as systematic theology (explanation of how Christianity fits into views of the universe, creation, and humankind's relationship with God)?

- A. Athanasius of Alexandria
- B. [Augustine of Hippo](#)
- C. Tertullian of Carthage
- D. Cyprian of Carthage
- E. Origen of Alexandria
- F. Arius of Alexandria

Which individual led the Christians of North Africa during a period of persecution from Rome and became the first bishop-martyr of Africa?

- A. Athanasius of Alexandria
- B. Augustine of Hippo
- C. Tertullian of Carthage
- D. [Cyprian of Carthage](#)
- E. Origen of Alexandria
- F. Arius of Alexandria

The term "canon" describes the collection of books that are divinely inspired and comprise the Jewish or Christian scriptures known as the Bible. Considering this, which individual listed below helped identify the canon of biblical Scripture?

- A. [Athanasius of Alexandria](#)
- B. Augustine of Hippo
- C. Tertullian of Carthage
- D. Gamaliel the Elder (aka Rabban Gamaliel I)
- E. Origen of Alexandria
- F. Arius of Alexandria

Which of the individual was instrumental in shaping the vocabulary and thought of Western Christianity?

- A. Athanasius of Alexandria
- B. Augustine of Hippo
- C. [Tertullian of Carthage](#)
- D. Cyprian of Carthage
- E. Origen of Alexandria
- F. Arius of Alexandria

Who was the first Christian author to use the term "Trinity" in Latin?

- A. Athanasius of Alexandria
- B. Gamaliel the Elder (aka Rabban Gamaliel I)
- C. [Tertullian of Carthage](#)
- D. Cyprian of Carthage
- E. Origen of Alexandria
- F. Arius of Alexandria





## Appendix F

**LESSON 1 – INTRODUCTION/EXPECTATIONS, CHURCH MISSION, AND CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS MANDATE**

- 1.1 Introduction/Expectations
- 1.2 Church Mission and Authority of God's Word
- 1.3 Christian Apologetics
- 1.4 Pre-Course Survey

Instructor Notes – To Be Used with PowerPoint

Mission of the Prince of Peace Missionary Baptist Church

- To make spiritually mature and exceptional disciples for the Kingdom of God, who change the world for the better.

We trust the authority of God's Word

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV
  - <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness,
  - <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Christian Apologetics

- 1 Peter 3:15 NIV
  - <sup>15</sup> But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Read and Discuss: 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and 1 Peter 3:15-16

Questions to further assess student comprehension:

1. What can participants expect from this course?
2. What can the instructor expect from participants?
3. Can Christians trust the Bible?
4. What is apologetics?
5. Is there a connection between evangelism and apologetics?
6. Should Christians view the world through a biblical lens?

Devotional Thought: Isaiah 50:4; Matthew 28:18–20; Colossians 4:5-6

**Please indicate your response by checking a box below:**

What is your comfort level with the course/lesson?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

What is your comfort level with acknowledging and trusting the authority of God's Word?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

What is your comfort level with defending the Christian faith?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

## Appendix G

**LESSON 2 – BCC AND BRICs PRIMARY FALSE CLAIMS**

- 4.1 What are BCC and BRICs?
- 4.2 Primary False Claims of the BCC and BRICs?
- 4.3 Has Christianity Been Whitewashed?

Instructor Notes – To Be Used with PowerPoint

### BCC and BRICs?

Black atheistic organizations, practitioners of African mysticism, and Egyptian (Kemetic) spiritualists are representative of the Black Conscious Community (BCC). These entities typically have no formal creed, whereas Black Religious Identity Cults, such as the Nation of Islam, Moorish Scientists, and Black Hebrew Israelite groups are representatives of Black Religious Identity Cults (BRICs).

### Primary False Claims of the BCC and BRICs

Many BCC organizations generally claim that “there is no god.”

Elijah Muhammad, former leader of the Nation of Islam, makes the following assertions:

- “[The] first step is to give back to the White man his religion (Christianity), his church, and his names. These three are chains of slavery that hold us in bondage to them. We are free when we give up the above three.”<sup>60</sup>
- “There is no hope for us in Christianity; it is a religion organized by the enemies (the white race) of the Black Nation to enslave us to the White race’s rule.”<sup>61</sup>

Hebrew Israelites (1West sect) makes the following assertion:

- “[It is] their duty to gather scattered ‘Israelites’ who are still ‘Jakes’ – those who do not yet know the alleged truth of their ancestry and heritage.”<sup>62</sup>

Read and Discuss: Acts 8:26-38, 11:20-26, 13:1-3; 2 Corinthians 4:3-5; Galatians 3:1

Questions to further assess student comprehension:

1. Since the probability of forming the smallest and simplest living organism is one in  $10^{340,000,000}$ , and the human body contains roughly 37 trillion cells, is it logical to believe and proclaim there is no god?
2. What is ‘Whitewashing?’

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<sup>60</sup> Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America* (Phoenix, AZ: Secretarius MEMPS Publications, 1973), 26.

<sup>61</sup> Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America.*, 221.

<sup>62</sup> Vocab Malone, *Barack Obama vs The Black Hebrew Israelites: Introduction to the History & Beliefs of 1West Hebrew Israel*, 1st edition. (Phoenix, AZ: Thureos Publishing, 2017), 38.



## Appendix H

**LESSON 3 – DEFENSE, ATTACK, AND PERSISTENCE**

2.1 Defense of the Christian Faith

2.2 Attack on behalf of the Christian Faith

2.3 Persistence to defeat claims against the Christian faith

Instructor Notes – To Be Used with PowerPoint

<b><u>D</u>efend</b>	■■■➔	Ability to make a reasoned case for their hope in Christ Jesus
<b><u>A</u>ttack</b>	■■■➔	Ability to contend for the Christian faith against claims of the BCC and BRICs adherents
<b><u>P</u>ersistence</b>	■■■➔	Ability to defeat claims of the BCC and BRICs adherents

Defense of the Christian faith

- 1 Peter 3:15 NIV

<sup>15</sup> But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Attack on behalf of the Christian faith

- Jude 3 NIV

<sup>3</sup> Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people.

Persistence to defeat claims against the Christian faith

- 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV

<sup>3</sup> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Read and Discuss: 1 Peter 3:15, Jude 3, and 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Questions to further assess student comprehension:

1. Should Christians be prepared to defend their faith in Christ Jesus?
2. What can Christians do to make a stand for their faith in Christ Jesus?

Devotional Thought: 2 Timothy 2:24-26 and Jude 22



## Appendix I

**LESSON 4 – CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS (Minimal Facts)**

## 3.1 Minimal Facts

## Instructor Notes – To Be Used with PowerPoint

## Minimal Facts (Evidentialist Apologetic Approach)

This approach is based upon working with the minimal facts surrounding historical evidence. The minimal facts that are being referred to are:

- Jesus died after Roman crucifixion [*cf.* 1 Corinthians 15:3; Luke 23:1-33; John 19:1-23].
- The disciples had experiences that they thought were actual appearances of the risen Jesus [1 Cor. 9:1, 15:3, 8-11; Lk. 24:34; Galatians 1:11-2:10].
- The disciples were thoroughly transformed, even willing to die for this belief [Jn. 20:19-29].
- Thomas (also known as Didymus), a disciple who refused to acknowledge the resurrection of Jesus, makes the declaration after the resurrected Jesus physically confronts him ... “My Lord and my God!” [Jn. 20:24-28].
- The apostolic proclamation of the resurrection began very early when the church was in its infancy [1 Cor. 15:3ff. probably dates from the early to mid-30s A.D. ... Gospel of Mark is usually placed at A.D. 64-69].
- The disciples’ public testimony and preaching of the resurrection occurred in Jerusalem, where Jesus had been crucified and buried shortly before [Gal. 1:18-2:10]. Jerusalem is the last geographical location where the disciples would preach about the resurrection if Jesus’s grave were still occupied. Anything other than an empty tomb would have invalidated the resurrection.
- James, the brother of Jesus and a former skeptic, became a Christian due to an experience that he believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus [Mark 3:21; Jn. 7:5; 1 Cor. 15:7].
- Saul (Paul), the church persecutor, became a Christian due to an experience that he believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus [1 Cor. 15:8, Acts 9:1-9, 22:1-11, 26:9-19; Gal. 1:16].<sup>63</sup>

Read and Discuss: John 20:24-28 & 1 Corinthians 15:1-19

Questions to further assess student comprehension:

1. Did the resurrected Jesus appear to anyone besides the apostles?
2. What is the importance of Jesus’ resurrection?

Devotional Thought: John 20:19-29

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<sup>63</sup> Gary R. Habermas, *The Risen Jesus & Future Hope* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 9, 23 & 26-27.



**Please indicate your response by checking a box below:**

What is your comfort level with discussing Christian Apologetics' minimal facts?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

- 1) Has anyone ever challenged you about your belief in Christ Jesus?  
 **Yes**                       **No**
- 2) Do you know anyone who does not believe in the Jesus' resurrection?  
 **Yes**                       **No**
- 3) Considering John 20:24-28 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-19, did Jesus' resurrection convince Thomas, Cephas (Peter), James (the brother of Jesus), and Paul?  
 **Yes**                       **No**
- 4) In your opinion, what is the importance of Jesus' resurrection?

### NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES WITHIN 150 YEARS OF JESUS

Adversarial witnesses have extra strength. Hence, the non-Christian writers during and shortly after the time of Christ add to the cumulative evidence for the historicity of the New Testament. Their combined testimony provides a surprising addition to the case for the authenticity of the New Testament. They confirm that (1) Jesus was from Nazareth; (2) he lived a virtuous life; (3) he performed unusual feats; (4) he introduced new teaching contrary to Judaism; (5) he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; (6) his disciples believed he rose from the dead; (7) his disciples denied polytheism; (8) his disciples worshiped him; (9) his teachings and disciples spread rapidly; (10) his followers believed they were immortal; (11) his followers had contempt for death; (12) his followers renounced material goods. ... Clearly, this [summarization as charted] is a confirmation of major points in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ found in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup>

Source	A.D.	Existed	Virtuous	Worship	Disciples	Teacher	Crucified	Empty Tomb	Disciples Belief in Resurrection	Spread	Persecution
Thallus	52	X					X*				
Tacitus	111	X			X		X	X*		X	X
Pliny	112	X		X	X	X		X*		X	X
Trajan	112	X*		X	X					X	X
Hadrian	117–138	X*			X					X	X
Suetonius	117–138	X		X	X			X*		X	X
Talmud	70–200	X					X				X
Phlegon	80?	X				X	X		X		
Josephus	90–95	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Mara bar-Serapion	1st - 3rd Century	X	X	X			X	X*			
Lucian	2nd Century	X		X	X	X	X	X			X
Toledot Yeshu	5th Century	X						X			

**\*Implied**

Mara bar-Serapion (ca. A.D. 73) said, “For what advantage did ... the Jews [gain] by the death of their wise king, because from that same time their kingdom was taken away?”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook on Christian Evidences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 109.

<sup>2</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp, vol. 2, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 1843.

## Appendix J

**LESSON 5 – AFRICAN LEGACY TO CHRISTIANITY**

5.1 African Legacy according to biblical Scripture

5.2 African legacy according to early church history

Instructor Notes – To Be Used with PowerPoint

**Biblical Scripture***Acts 8:26-38*

- Who did Philip encounter?
- Who did this person work for?
- What did the person Philip encountered come to do?
- What did Philip find this person doing?
- After hearing the gospel, what did the person ask Philip?
- What did Philip do to this person?
- Where was this person from?

*Acts 11:20-26*

- Where was the city of Cyrene located?
- Did the church in Antioch have members from Cyrene?
- Where did some of the prophets/teachers in the church in Antioch come from?
- What were the disciples called at the church in Antioch?

*Acts 13:1-2*

- Who are some of the prophets and teachers at the church in Antioch?
- Does the list of prophets and teachers include anyone from Cyrene?
- Does this list of prophets and teachers include someone with an alias (nickname)?
- If so, what does this alias (nickname) suggest?

**Legacy***Early Church History*

Who are the following individuals?

- Athanasius of Alexandria
- Augustine of Hippo
- Tertullian of Carthage
- Cyprian of Carthage
- Origen of Alexandria
- Perpetua and Felicity

What continent(s) are Athanasius, Augustine, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen from?

Read and Discuss: Mark 15:21, Acts 8:26-38 and 11:20-26

In addition to the questions at the end of the chapter, here are some questions to further assess student comprehension:

1. Why does the presence of African people in the Bible matter?
2. What is the importance of the African contribution to the early history of Christianity?
3. Is Christianity a “White man’s religion,” or is it available for all (*cf.* John 3:16)?

Devotional Thought: Numbers 12:1, 1 Kings 10:1-13, Song of Solomon (Song of Songs) 1:5-6, and Zephaniah 1:1

**Please indicate your response by checking a box below:**

What is your comfort level with discussing Christianity’s African roots?

0	1	2	3	4	5
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

- 1) Considering Acts 11:20-26, were Africans believers in Christ Jesus some of the first to be called Christians?

**Yes**

**No**

- 2) Considering Acts 8:26-38, 11:20-26, 13:1-2; and Romans 16:21, did Africans share the gospel with Europeans and Asians?

**Yes**

**No**

- 3) In your opinion, why does the presence of African people in the Bible matter?

- 4) Considering Acts 8:26-38, 11:20-26, 13:1-2; and Romans 16:21, what is the importance of the African contribution to the early history of Christianity?

## Appendix K

**LESSON 6 – AFRICAN MEMORY OF JOHN MARK**

## 6.1 Recollection of John Mark

[African Memory](#)

African Memory is “the characteristic way of looking at history from within the special experience and outlook of the continent of Africa. Memory does not here refer to the contemporary African memory alone, but to a two-thousand-year-long history of a way of remembering.”<sup>1</sup>

The African memory of John Mark is essential for it establishes a significant connection with Africa and early (ancient) Christianity and poses a significantly powerful challenge to the claims that Christianity is a “White man’s religion.” Not only was John Mark, the gospel writer, born in Africa (Cyrene), but African memory proclaims that history proves his “life and mission embodied the unity of the body of Christ. Mark remains a fixed point of reference for virtually all Christian believers in Africa today.”<sup>2</sup> Those who oppose or ignore the connection between John Mark and Africa are constrained by over two thousand years of historical testimony documented in Africa by Africans. This memory is framed by John Mark’s birth in Africa (Cyrene) and his death in Africa (Alexandria). The center of this memory declares that Mark was a member of a group of disciples known as “the seventy.” Immediately adjacent to the center of this memory is Mark’s association with the apostles Peter and Paul and his founding of the church in Alexandria, Egypt. According to African memory, John Mark ministered in Africa, Asia, and Europe. Not even Peter or Paul accomplished this feat.

African memory tells us that Mark was the one who established the first church in Africa (Alexandria, Egypt) and is referred to as the first teacher of African Christianity and as the “first saint of Africa, who was born, abided, returned, and died in Africa. ... [As a matter of fact, in] Africa, it is widely held that the resistance to Mark’s Africanness comes out of deep Eurocentric prejudice, to put it mildly.”<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, this same memory tells us the house of Mark’s mother was used as a place of worship and that the upper room was where Jesus observed the Lord’s Supper before His betrayal.

African memory informs us that Mark’s father, Aristopolus [Aristobulus], was related to Simon Peter’s wife, Strapola, and his mother (Mary of Cyrene) was related to Barnabas. The historical remembrance of Mark contends that there was a close relationship between the families of Mark, Barnabas, and Peter. This provides sufficient reasoning about the “close

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *The African Memory of Mark: Reassessing Early Church Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic (InterVarsity Press), 2011), 27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 88 & 236.

intimacy between Mark and Barnabas on the one hand, as well as between Mark and Peter, who called him ‘son,’ on the other.”<sup>4</sup>

Read and Discuss: Acts 4:36, 12:1-12, 15:35-39; Romans 16:10; and Colossians 4:10

Why does the African memory of the African Jew (Levite) John Mark matter?

1. Is it safe to say that Africa has a very early (ancient) connection to Christianity?
2. Is the claim that Christianity is a “White man’s religion” valid?

**Please indicate by checking a box below:**

What is your comfort level with discussing African Christianity’s memory of John Mark?

0	1	2	3	4	5
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

Does Africa have a very early (ancient) connection to Christianity?

**Yes**                       **No**

1) Is the claim that Christianity is a White man’s religion valid?

**Yes**                       **No**

2) Does the African memory of John Mark encourage your view of Christianity?

**Yes**                       **No**

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<sup>4</sup> Oden, *The African Memory of Mark: Reassessing Early Church Tradition*, 82.

## Appendix L

**FOCUS GROUP OBSERVATION QUESTIONS**

This appendix includes the African-American Christian Apologetics Survey administered to all participants committed to the study during the introductory apologetics course and after the focus group discussion/review.

**Focus Group Note-Taker:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature & Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson/Class Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please address questions and any other focus group dynamics/observations that stand out whether positive or negative.

---

**Notes:**

**How many participants were in the group?**

**Did a question raised by a participant stand out? If so, what was the question?**

**Did an answer raised by a participant stand out? If so, what was the question and the answer?**

**How would you describe the researcher/moderator's style and tone?**

**Were participants encouraged to share their opinions and questions?**

## What was the tone of focus group?

Please indicate your response by checking a box below:

As a note-taker, what is your comfort level with the course/lesson?

0	1	2	3	4	5
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

As a note-taker, what is your comfort level acknowledging and trusting the authority of God's Word?

0	1	2	3	4	5
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

As a note-taker, what is your comfort level with defending the Christian faith?

0	1	2	3	4	5
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

As a note-taker, what is your comfort level with discussing Christian Apologetics' minimal facts?

0	1	2	3	4	5
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

As a note-taker, what is your comfort level with discussing BCC and BRICs primary claims?

0	1	2	3	4	5
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence



As a note-taker, what is your comfort level with discussing Christianity's African roots?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

As a note-taker, what is your comfort level with discussing African Christianity's memory of John Mark?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

## Appendix M

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS POST COURSE SURVEY**

This appendix includes the African-American Christian Apologetics Survey administered to all participants committed to the study during the introductory apologetics course and after the focus group discussion/review.

**Printed Participant Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature & Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS:** These questions comprise aspects of Christian apologetics that are relevant to the African-American Christian perspective. The questions stem from an African-American Christian's understanding of the church's mission, the need for apologetics, African legacy, spiritual warfare, and justice (biblical vs. social). So, therefore, please attempt to answer each question.

**Reflections:**

Kenyan-born scholar John Mbiti believes that "Christianity in Africa is so old that it can rightly be described as an indigenous, traditional, and African religion. Long before the start of Islam in the seventh century, Christianity was well established all over North Africa, Egypt, parts of the Sudan, and Ethiopia."<sup>5</sup>

Jerome Gay, Jr., President of The Urban Perspective, said, "When we look at the historical record, we see that true Christianity, instead of being forced on Black people during slavery, was in fact gladly and enthusiastically embraced and spread by and through our African ancestors' centuries before American slavery."<sup>6</sup>

**Church Mission*****Prince of Peace Missionary Baptist Church***

What is the mission of the POPMBC?

**Apologetics**

<sup>5</sup> Vocab Malone, *Street-Level Apologetics: Passion for the City, Clarity for the People* (West Salem, OH: Firesmyth Press, 2022), 107.

<sup>6</sup> Jerome Gay, Jr., *The Whitewashing of Christianity: A Hidden Past, A Hurtful Present and A Hopeful Future* (Chicago, IL: 13th & Joan, 2020), 185.

***2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Philippians 1:7, 16; 1 Peter 3:15-16; and Jude 3***

According to these biblical scriptures, what is Christian apologetics?

**Spiritual Warfare**

***Ephesians 6:10-18, 2 Corinthians 10:4 & 12:9***

According to these biblical scriptures, what is spiritual warfare?

**African References**

***Acts 8:26-38 NKJV***

<sup>26</sup> Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert.

<sup>27</sup> So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship,

<sup>28</sup> was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.

<sup>29</sup> Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot."

<sup>30</sup> So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

<sup>31</sup> And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

<sup>32</sup> The place in the Scripture which he read was this:

"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;  
And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,  
So He opened not His mouth.

<sup>33</sup> In His humiliation His justice was taken away,

And who will declare His generation?

For His life is taken from the earth."

<sup>34</sup> So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?"

<sup>35</sup> Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

<sup>36</sup> Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"

<sup>37</sup> Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may."

And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

<sup>38</sup> So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

*Questions ...*

- Who did Philip encounter?
- Who did this person work for?
- What did the person Philip encountered come to do?
- What did Philip find this person doing?
- After hearing the gospel, what did the person ask Philip?
- What did Philip do to this person?
- Where was this person from?

*Acts 11:20-26 NKJV*

<sup>20</sup> But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.

<sup>21</sup> And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.

<sup>23</sup> When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.

<sup>24</sup> For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

<sup>25</sup> Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul.

<sup>26</sup> And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

*Questions ...*

- Where was the city of Cyrene located?
- Did the church in Antioch have members from Cyrene?
- What were the disciples called at the church in Antioch?

*Acts 13:1-2 NKJV*

<sup>01</sup> Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

<sup>02</sup> As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

*Questions ...*

- Who are some of the prophets and teachers at the church in Antioch?
- Does the list of prophets and teachers include anyone from Cyrene?
- Does this list of prophets and teachers include someone with an alias (nickname)?
- If so, what does this alias (nickname) suggest?

### African Influence

Which individual was nicknamed “The Black Dwarf”?

- G. [Athanasius of Alexandria](#)
- H. Augustine of Hippo
- I. Tertullian of Carthage
- J. Cyprian of Carthage
- K. Arius of Alexandria
- L. Gamaliel the Elder (aka Rabban Gamaliel I)

Which individual defended the biblical fact that Jesus has always existed and was equal to God the Father”?

- G. [Athanasius of Alexandria](#)
- H. Augustine of Hippo
- I. Tertullian of Carthage
- J. Cyprian of Carthage
- K. Origen of Alexandria
- L. Arius of Alexandria

Which individual shaped the practice of biblical interpretation?

- G. Athanasius of Alexandria
- H. [Augustine of Hippo](#)
- I. Tertullian of Carthage
- J. Cyprian of Carthage
- K. Origen of Alexandria
- L. Arius of Alexandria

Which individual developed what is known as systematic theology (explanation of how Christianity fits into views of the universe, creation, and humankind’s relationship with God)?

- G. Athanasius of Alexandria
- H. [Augustine of Hippo](#)
- I. Tertullian of Carthage
- J. Cyprian of Carthage
- K. Origen of Alexandria
- L. Arius of Alexandria

Which individual led the Christians of North Africa during a period of persecution from Rome and became the first bishop-martyr of Africa?

- G. Athanasius of Alexandria
- H. Augustine of Hippo
- I. Tertullian of Carthage
- J. [Cyprian of Carthage](#)
- K. Origen of Alexandria
- L. Arius of Alexandria

The term “canon” describes the collection of books that are divinely inspired and comprise the Jewish or Christian scriptures known as the Bible. Considering this, which individual listed below helped identify the canon of biblical Scripture?

- G. [Athanasius of Alexandria](#)
- H. Augustine of Hippo
- I. Tertullian of Carthage
- J. Gamaliel the Elder (aka Rabban Gamaliel I)
- K. Origen of Alexandria
- L. Arius of Alexandria

Which of the individual was instrumental in shaping the vocabulary and thought of Western Christianity?

- G. Athanasius of Alexandria
- H. Augustine of Hippo
- I. [Tertullian of Carthage](#)
- J. Cyprian of Carthage
- K. Origen of Alexandria
- L. Arius of Alexandria

Who was the first Christian author to use the term “Trinity” in Latin?

- G. Athanasius of Alexandria
- H. Gamaliel the Elder (aka Rabban Gamaliel I)
- I. [Tertullian of Carthage](#)
- J. Cyprian of Carthage
- K. Origen of Alexandria
- L. Arius of Alexandria

Which individual listed below was known as a prolific Christian writer and founded a Christian school primarily targeted towards young pagans who had expressed interest in Christianity but were not yet ready to ask for baptism?

- G. Athanasius of Alexandria
- H. Augustine of Hippo
- I. Tertullian of Carthage
- J. Cyprian of Carthage
- K. [Origen of Alexandria](#)
- L. Arius of Alexandria

Which two individuals listed below were instrumental in shaping the church’s understanding of the Trinity, and their contributions continue to influence Christian theology today.

- D. [Athanasius of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo](#)
- E. Tertullian of Carthage and Cyprian of Carthage
- F. Origen of Alexandria and Arius of Alexandria

**Please indicate your response by checking a box below:**

What is your comfort level with the course and course expectations?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

What is your comfort level with defending the Christian faith?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

What is your comfort level with discussing spiritual warfare?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

What is your comfort level with acknowledging and trusting the authority of God's Word?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

What is your comfort level with discussing BCC and BRICs primary claims?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

What is your comfort level with defending the hope you have in Christ Jesus?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

What is your comfort level with discussing Christianity's African roots?

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No Confidence	Very Little Confidence	Some Confidence	Average Confidence	Above Average Confidence	Extreme Confidence

In your opinion, why does the presence of African people in the Bible matter?

1) Considering Acts 11:20-26, were Africans believers in Christ Jesus some of the first to be called Christians?

**Yes**                       **No**

2) Considering Acts 8:26-38, 11:20-26, 13:1-2; and Romans 16:21, did Africans share the gospel with Europeans and Asians?

**Yes**                       **No**

3) Does Africa have a very early (ancient) connection to Christianity?

**Yes**                       **No**

4) Is the claim that Christianity is a White man's religion valid?

**Yes**                       **No**

5) Does the African memory of John Mark encourage your view of Christianity?

**Yes**                       **No**

6) Considering the testimony of 1 Peter 3:15, Jude 3 and 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, do Christians have a responsibility to defend their faith with the intent of winning souls to Christ?

7) In your opinion, what is the importance of Jesus' resurrection?

8) Has anyone ever challenged you about your belief in Christ Jesus?

**Yes**                       **No**

9) Do you know anyone who does not believe in the Jesus' resurrection?

**Yes**                       **No**

10) Considering John 20:24-28 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-19, did Jesus' resurrection convince Thomas, Cephas (Peter), James (the brother of Jesus), and Paul?

**Yes**                       **No**



## Appendix N

### **Human Developmental Theory**

#### Model Summary

The Insurgency Apologetics curriculum’s lesson material will help participants respond to the false primary claims of the BCC and BRICs against the Christian faith. This assertion is based on the cultural basis of the BCC and BRICs’ claims against African-American Christians. As such, the “Cultural-Age Model of Development” approach represents the best method for the aim of the curriculum to help participants thwart the false primary claims of BCC and BRICs to evangelize the anti-Christian adherents.

The curriculum and the noted human development approach both recognize that the context for reasoning and evangelizing is to be done with the understanding that the gospel of Christ Jesus transcends culture. This understanding is supported by the apostle Paul’s contention that “... there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all (Colossians 3:11 NIV).” This implies that no “...set of cultural truths, norms, traditions, or customs carries final authority ... No cultural factor could ever hold ultimate authority ... In short, [the project and the approach endeavor to] distinguish between a cultural means of expressing faith in God and faith in God itself.”<sup>7</sup>

#### Model Application

Application of the “Cultural-Age Model of Development” will help the participants grow theologically, for it highlights the importance of defending the Christian faith via the

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<sup>7</sup> Steve Wilkens and Mark L. Sanford, *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape Our Lives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 154 & 158.

understanding that the salvific acts of Christ and the gospel are not confined to any people-group for as Paul declares, "... [we] are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28 NIV)." This application calls for recognizing *imago Dei*, as noted in Genesis 1:26-27. Likewise, this approach is based on a Christ-consciousness whereby spiritual unity in Christ Jesus calls for "Spirit-enabled transformative participation [of this researcher and project participants] in the life and character of God revealed in the crucified and resurrected Messiah Jesus—is the starting point of mission."<sup>8</sup>

Application of the noted approach is critical to Christian formation for calls for this researcher and project participants "to engage in Christ-centered cultural renewal with grace and truth (John 1:14, 17)."<sup>9</sup> Engagement in this manner will help this researcher and the participants express their faith more confidently when seeking to annihilate the false primary claims of the BCC and BRICs and advance an awesome alternative. Concerning cultural development, Christian formation for all participants in this action research should grow because the application calls for a collaborative and individual transforming engagement with adherents of the BCC and BRICs.

### Model Evaluation

The data associated with the "Cultural-Age Model of Development" approach consists of pre-course and post-course surveys administered to all the consenting participants. The pre-course will be issued to establish a baseline determining the initial ability of participants to respond to the false primary claims of the BCC and BRICs. All consenting participants must

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<sup>8</sup> Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial (Harper & Row), 1959), 147.

<sup>9</sup> James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, eds., *Christian Formation: Integration Theology & Human Development* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), 297.

respond to the comfort level assessment after each course. A focus group will be scheduled at the course's conclusion to collectively review the *Insurgency Apologetics* project and the claims of the BCC and BRICs. The researcher will take notes of focus group discussions and observations. Afterward, the post-course survey, which is identical to the pre-course survey, will be administered to assess the intervention's effectiveness.

The survey questions comprise six essential areas of focus that serve as the foundation of the *Insurgency Apologetics* curriculum. As noted in appendices F-K, specific survey questions address the following:

1. *Course Introduction & Church Mission*. Questions include views about expectations, reliability of biblical Scripture, definition of apologetics and connection to evangelism, and appropriate Christian worldview.
2. *BCC and BRICs Primary False Claim*. Question includes the absurdity claiming that Christianity is a White man's religion and the historic "Whitewashing" of Christianity.
3. *DAP (Defense, Attack, and Persistence)*. Questions include the responsibility of Christians to defend the Christian faith.
4. *Christian Apologetics (Minimal Facts)*. Questions include the evidence and importance of Christ Jesus' resurrection.
5. *African Legacy*. Questions include the African legacy in biblical Scripture and church history.
6. *African Memory of John Mark*. Questions include the African accounting of John Mark to establish a significant connection between Africa and early (ancient) Christianity.

The model evaluation also measures the comfort level assessment found in appendices E-K to gauge a participant's overall confidence in responding to the false primary claims of the BCC and BRICs. The comfort level assessment is a 5-item pencil/paper questionnaire with a 6-point Likert scale. This 6-point Likert scale has "Extreme Confidence" and "No Confidence" endpoints. The measures also include a Dual scale whereby a participant registers their agreement or disagreement with each statement.

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*IRB APPROVAL LETTER*  
**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 18, 2023

Brian Gadson  
Seth Bible

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY23–24–428 Insurgency Apologetics: Refuting the Claims that Christianity is a “White Person’s” Religion

Dear Brian Gadson and Seth Bible,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study/project is not considered human subjects research because it will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not “designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge” according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application. Any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. **If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.**

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application’s status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair*  
**Research Ethics Office**