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THE ENCROACHMENT OF SECULARISM AMONG YOUNG
ECUADORIAN CUENCANO MESTIZOS

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James Howard Winfrey

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THE ENCROACHMENT OF SECULARISM AMONG YOUNG
ECUADORIAN CUENCANO MESTIZOS

James Howard Winfrey

Read and Approved by:

John M. Klaassen (Chair)

George H. Martin

J. Keith McKinley

Date _____

For Heather, my God-given partner in life and missions.

For my children—Willow, Walker, Waverly, Weston, Wallace, and Windsor.

May God grant each of you with the desire to proclaim his gospel as far as the curse is
found.

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PREFACE

This dissertation would not have been possible without the encouragement and sacrifice of my wife, Heather. She has been by my side from the very beginning, never failing to spur me on to perseverance during the difficult days of completing this project. Likewise, I am grateful for the expertise and clear instruction of my committee, and particularly the consistent guidance of my faculty supervisor Dr. John Klaassen. I also want to thank my pastor and friend, Dr. Jim Orrick, who provided wise counsel and affirmation that I should pursue a Doctor of Philosophy degree in the first place. May this work serve the church for the glory of God.

James H. Winfrey

Cuenca, Ecuador
December 2021

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We're all secular now. The secular touches everything. It not only makes unbelief possible; it also changes belief—it impinges upon Christianity and all religious communities.¹

Serving as a missionary in Cuenca, Ecuador for several years afforded me the opportunity to observe major cultural differences between Ecuadorian customs and those of my home country, the United States. These distinctions extend to many areas of everyday life including work, leisure, religion, and family. However, much like the USA, Ecuador does not have a uniform nationwide culture. Cultural variances are evident among Ecuador's diverse regions and people groups. There are the Afro-Ecuadorians of the western coast, the indigenous Quichua tribes of the central Andean mountains, the *mestizos* of the major cities, and the numerous native tribes of the Amazon rainforest in the East. Despite these significant societal distinctives, one particular development has become increasingly notable in my experience—namely, many younger Ecuadorians have adopted a much more secular worldview than that of their parents' generation.

Having observed this development among the younger generation, the goals for this research project emerged: to investigate, analyze, and describe the secularization of worldview among younger Cuencano mestizos in central Ecuador. Additionally, the need for Ecuadorian Christian leaders to address and combat this supposed increase in secularization has become readily apparent. Therefore, considerations will be made as to how pastors may be prepared to understand secularism in order to equip their

¹ James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 65.

congregations to withstand its encroachment.

Background

I serve with Reaching and Teaching International Ministries. Our primary focus as a missions organization is making mature disciples, establishing healthy churches, and training local leaders.² My principle method of serving the Kingdom of Christ in Ecuador has consisted of providing theological education and pastoral training for Christian leaders without access to formal instruction. As a result, I have organized and led a variety of classes throughout the country. For example, in the nation's third largest city, Cuenca, I have taught a room full of mestizos, meaning *mixed*, who are descended from both indigenous and Spanish lineages. I have also taught in the small town of Tambo to a class almost entirely comprised of indigenous Quichua people—the largest native people group in the Americas today.³

Such contrasts among cultures in Ecuador are commonplace. What has been remarkable is that everywhere I have been I have consistently observed younger Ecuadorians' attraction to Western culture and secularization.⁴ Certain generational distinctives have become consistently apparent: the younger generation's desire to speak English, their clothing, their view of marriage and the family (specifically a desire to marry much later in life, if ever), and their increasing lack of traditional religiosity in their overall worldview. Consequently, the need for a plan for preparing Ecuadorian pastors to combat secularism has become clear.

² For more information on Reaching and Teaching International Ministries, refer to the following article: Reaching and Teaching, "About Us," last modified 2021, <https://rtim.org/about-us/>.

³ Ray Waddington, "The Quichua People," The Peoples of the World Foundation, accessed April 6, 2020, <http://www.peoplesoftheworld.org/text?people=Quichua>.

⁴ Chap. 2 of this dissertation will seek to further explain the historical roots of Western secularism. See the section on "terminology" below for a baseline understanding of the term.

Thesis and Research Questions

My thesis is that several key indicators of a significant increase in secularism are evident among the younger generation of Cuencano mestizos, those between 18 and 35.⁵ Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation is to identify key markers of secularization based upon relevant literature, to demonstrate how increasing secularism has affected younger Cuencanos in comparison to their parents, and to propose a missiological paradigm to equip Ecuadorian Christian leaders to combat secularization from a biblical worldview.

In order to determine the veracity of my thesis, I will seek to address the following research questions: What is secularism and how has it impacted cultures throughout history? What worldview shift, if any, has occurred among young Cuencano mestizos in comparison to their parents? How should evangelical Christian leaders be effectively trained and equipped to combat secularism with biblical truth?

Terminology

The most important term to define in this dissertation is *secularism*. Chapter 2 of this dissertation will be devoted to the task of defining secularism and tracing its development and spread throughout Western culture. Numerous books and scholarly articles have been written seeking to address the nature of secularism and its effects. However, I am convinced that the following definition captures the essence of the term: “[Secularism is] any movement in society directed away from otherworldliness to life on earth.”⁶ Secularism, broadly speaking, entails the gradual increase of “a belief system,

⁵ My years of participant observation within the Cuencano culture has allowed me to conclude that the traditional age range for youth extends from the age of eighteen all the way to approximately age thirty-five. It is not at all uncommon for an unmarried college graduate to continue living with their parents until their mid-thirties. Additionally, most church youth groups include all singles in this age range.

⁶ “Secularism: Social Movement,” Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified October 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/secularism>.

attitude and/or style of life that denies or ignores the reality of God.”⁷ Ultimately, secularism does not result in the absence of worship. Instead, it results in an indifference or hostility toward the transcendent which eventually leads people to so intensely focus on the immanent sphere that thoughts of the divine all but disappear.⁸ For example, Charles Taylor, in his seminal work on secularism entitled *A Secular Age*, notes that a vital aspect of secularism is an increased focus on the physical world to a point in which thoughts of the spiritual world are virtually non-existent. Taylor writes:

Part of our story seems to lie in the increasing interest in nature, as it were, for its own sake, not simply as a manifestation of God; an interest which can be seen in science (e.g., the recovery of Aristotle in the thirteenth/fourteenth centuries); in art (e.g., the new “realism” of Giotto, who seems to have put the people around him, closely observed, into his painting); in ethics (the recovery of ancient ethics of “nature”, Aristotle, the Stoics) ... They have taken the first step on a journey which leads to us. It suffices that they take more and more interest in nature-for-its-own-sake, and gradually this will grow, while the reference to the divine atrophies. Until finally, they are modern exclusive humanists, or at least secularists.⁹

Another term pertinent to this dissertation is *globalization*. Contemporary secularism and globalization are so intertwined that one can scarcely be discussed without the other. The term encompasses several facets of meaning regarding global interdependence. The following definition, offered by Bryant L. Meyers, concisely and effectively communicates the various aspects of interrelation that the term entails: “Globalization is the widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the

⁷ C. Stephen Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics and Philosophy of Religion: 300 Terms and Thinkers Clearly and Concisely Defined* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), 104.

⁸ *Transcendence* and *immanence* are theological terms most often used to describe God’s interaction with his creation. Transcendence refers to “God as being greater than the creation and independent of it.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 267. Whereas immanence refers to the opposite, yet not contradictory, aspect of God “existing or remaining in [creation]. The term is used in theology to speak of God’s involvement in creation.” Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 267. Immanence, as used throughout this dissertation, more precisely refers to the “here-and-now” of the physical, material world as opposed to the other-worldly, spiritual aspects of the transcendent realm. For an excellent analysis of these aspects of the secular worldview, refer to the entirety of chapter 2 of Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 90.

criminal, the financial to the spiritual.”¹⁰

Finally, *culture* is a common term that must be adequately defined in order to properly engage the arguments within this dissertation. Prominent Christian anthropologist and missiologist Paul Hiebert offers a helpful definition of *culture*: “The integrated system of learned patterns of behavior, ideas, and products characteristic of a society.”¹¹ The shared values and customs that make up a culture are inevitably impacted by the overarching worldviews of its members. Therefore, this study of the proposed increase in secularism among young Cuencano mestizos requires a thorough examination of Cuencano culture. Chapter 3 will serve to provide a survey of the history of Ecuadorian culture to provide a baseline for the contrasting values of Western secularism.

Limitations and Delimitations

Cultural researchers born outside of the target people group for any given research project are, by nature, approaching the people group from an *etic*—outsider’s—perspective with the goal of better understanding the *emic*—insider’s—perspective of the individuals within the target people group. Ultimately, as Bronislaw Malinowski states, the researcher’s goal is to “grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of the world.”¹² This dissertation will be limited by my etic perspective of the Cuencano mestizo culture. It is not possible for someone born outside a culture to fully integrate and understand every aspect of a people group. Therefore, I will survey a controlled number of people with an emic perspective in order to better grasp how secularism is affecting the younger generation of mestizos in Cuenca. I will survey at least thirty members of the older and younger generations. From research among the

¹⁰ Bryant L. Myers, *Engaging Globalization: The Poor, Christian Mission, and Our Hyperconnected World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 33.

¹¹ Paul Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1983), 25.

¹² Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1967), 4.

older generation, I will establish a baseline of traditional principles and attitudes regarding religion. From research among the younger generation, I will evaluate any discovered changes in beliefs and core values in order to discern whether the key indicators of secularism are present.

The scope of this research project will be delimited to the mestizo people of Cuenca, Ecuador. My research among the younger generation of Cuencano mestizos will be limited to individuals between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. Via a review of relevant literature, I will examine the formation of religious principles from as far back as the Inca conquest in the fifteenth century until the present day. This overview will allow for a detailed description of the traditional Cuencano religious worldview—many aspects of which I suppose still influence members of the older generation.

My research will also be confined to the study of secularization within Western cultures, such as those of the United States and Western Europe. According to my experiences with young Cuencano mestizos, globalization in the society and the proposed resulting secularization appears to stem primarily from Western cultures such as the United States. Therefore, this delimitation should provide a research focus upon the most influential strand of secularism that is encroaching upon Cuencano culture.

Methodology

Identifying the distinct worldviews of the mestizo Cuencanos is vital to understanding their shifting religious, moral, and familial values. Various ethnographic research methods and worldview identification tools are available to cultural researchers, but methodology often determines the quality of results. Therefore, I carefully selected the following research methods to complete this study: a review of relevant literature and qualitative inquiry.

In order to properly answer the proposed research problem, several key questions need to be explored. What are the key markers of secularization in Western

culture? Are these markers of secularization occurring among the younger generation of mestizos in present-day Cuenca? If so, what are the consequences of a secularizing worldview in practical areas of life such as attitudes toward religion, family, and education? Finally, are there means of theological education and pastoral training which have proven effective in equipping pastors to prepare their congregations for significant cultural changes such as secularization?¹³ Answering these questions will be critical to confirming the central thesis of this dissertation and thereby equipping evangelical Ecuadorian Christian leaders to understand and address this worldview shift in a biblical manner.

Review of Literature

The focus on the shifting worldview of Cuencano mestizos requires a literary survey on both the nature of secularism and the primary indicators of increasing secularization in a society. Targeting these topics provides an understanding of how secularism has historically encroached upon societies and what Cuencano mestizos might expect in their own culture. I conducted a review of literature examining how secularism first arose in Western society. I subsequently assessed which ideas and philosophies were principally responsible for the initial development and spread of secularism. Examining the expansion of secularism from its roots in Medieval Europe throughout Western culture and into Latin American countries like Ecuador is necessary for understanding the proposed secularization of young Cuencano mestizos.

¹³ One of the primary characteristics of secularism is a self-focused personal autonomy. Colin Hansen argues that as secularism began to take hold of Western culture, this inward turn to self has influenced evangelicalism in a way which has proven to weaken its ability to combat the onslaught of secularism. Hansen states that the fundamental question for our secular age is “Does God get to be God? The answer, even for many self-described Christians, is, ‘No, only on our terms.’” Collin Hansen, ed., *Our Secular Age: Ten Years of Reading and Applying Charles Taylor* (Wheaton, IL: The Gospel Coalition, 2017), 6. Therefore, an examination of effective methods for equipping indigenous Ecuadorian pastors to prepare evangelicals in their country for the coming tides of secularism will be vital to helping educate Ecuadorian Christian leaders. Chapter 5 of this dissertation will seek to establish missiological practices for equipping evangelical leaders to combat secularism within the Cuencano mestizo context.

An extensive review of relevant literature is the principal method of investigation for discovering and analyzing these important facets of the history of secularization. Some of the resources referred to in this work are part of my personal library. Additionally, I consulted my fellow Reaching and Teaching missionaries, resources from the James P. Boyce Centennial Library of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Spanish-language resources at a local bookstore in Cuenca and at El Seminario Bautista in Guayaquil. I also utilized online platforms to consult academic articles and previous dissertations regarding pertinent subjects.

Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative inquiry provides the opportunity to gain insight from an emic perspective. Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin explain, “[E]very step of [qualitative inquiry] brings new information and opens windows into the experiences of the people you meet. Qualitative [inquiry] is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate.”¹⁴

The qualitative inquiry I utilize in this dissertation consists of open-ended survey questions to localize the larger cultural phenomenon of secularization. By hearing the thoughts of Cuencanos directly, it becomes possible to determine from an emic perspective whether a significant worldview shift is taking place.

Several cultural researchers, including Carol McKinney, suggest that using a fixed questionnaire as an instrument during qualitative inquiries allows the researcher to collect data “systematically and efficiently.”¹⁵ Therefore, I employed a survey consisting of questions related to the primary cultural markers of secularization, which I developed

¹⁴ Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2012), 1.

¹⁵ Carol McKinney, *Globe-Trotting in Sandals: A Field Guide to Cultural Research* (Dallas: SIL International, 2000), 104.

through my review of literature.¹⁶ The survey included two primary sample groups of random Cuencano mestizos: ages 18 to 35, and 36 and older. Each sample size consisted of interviews with at least thirty people. I found survey participants in a variety of venues including malls, parks, and college campuses.

The survey questions serve to “elicit a broad picture of the participants’ world and to map the cultural terrain.”¹⁷ The questions were open-ended, encouraging participants to explain how and why they feel the younger generation is more or less secular. Following the initial completion of the survey, I later reached out to the participants who provided contact information in order to ask “follow up and probing questions.”¹⁸ This type of qualitative inquiry served to reveal whether the key indicators of secularization are present among my surveyed group of contemporary young Cuencano mestizos.

The results of my qualitative inquiry are detailed in chapter 4 of this dissertation. I assessed the results and categorized them in statistical form via the process of data coding.¹⁹ After analyzing the responses and searching for thematic concepts, I catalogued the answers as numbers: very secular response (0), somewhat secular response (1), or traditionally religious response (2). The coded data was then transferred to a spreadsheet in order to statistically evaluate responses regarding whether significant worldview differences exist between the younger and older generations of Cuencano mestizos. This final step of qualitative inquiry serves to determine the validity of my

¹⁶ See Appendix 2 for a sampling of the qualitative research surveys I developed.

¹⁷ David M. Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step by Step*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 51.

¹⁸ This particular form of qualitative inquiry serves to “clarify and complete the answers, making them intelligible . . . in order to get the depth that is a hallmark of qualitative inquiry by pursuing themes that are discovered, elaborating the context of answers, and exploring the implications of what has been said.” Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, 145-151.

¹⁹ According to Herbert and Irene Rubin, data coding is “the process of grouping interviewees’ responses into categories that bring together the similar ideas, concepts, or themes you have discovered, or steps or stages in a process.” Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, 238.

hypothesis, namely, that a significant increase in secularism is taking place among young Cuencano mestizos.

Missiological Significance

The missiological ramifications of the encroachment of secularism upon a society should not be underestimated. This research project will be directed primarily toward equipping evangelical Christian leaders to recognize and address the advance of secularism from a biblical worldview. Leaders must be taught to disciple believers to live as Christians in a secular context no matter the spiritual consequences. Ecuadorian Christian leaders must be equipped to disciple believers not only to evangelize in a secular context, but also to train the younger generation of Christians to prepare for the lasting spiritual consequences of an increasingly secularized society.

In order to equip evangelical church leaders throughout Ecuador, the following question will be posed and examined in chapter 5: What missiological practices have proven to be effective among missionaries seeking to train indigenous leaders who, in turn, are then able to train up other leaders through deep discipleship among their own cultural contexts?²⁰ Determining the answer to this question is crucial to addressing the central argument of this dissertation. In order to find answers to this vital research question, biblical and historical precedents for theological education, pastoral discipleship, and effective conferral of generational faithfulness will be surveyed. Finding biblically faithful responses to combat the key markers of secularization will be the goal.

Chapter Summaries

This introductory chapter serves to present the main aspects of the dissertation.

²⁰ In chapter 5 the indigenous approach to missions will be examined and contrasted with a missionary-centric approach to cross-cultural ministry. This contrast of missiological methods will serve to determine effective missiological practices for raising up churches that best impact their own cultures from a consistent biblical worldview.

My research thesis and methodologies are stated and explained. Important terminology regarding key aspects of my research is provided. Additionally, the missiological importance of understanding secularization in order to raise up indigenous evangelical leaders is stated. The need to prepare pastors who are equipped to combat a tremendous shift in worldview within their own cultural context is highlighted.

Chapter 2 will survey the history of secularization in Western culture. The origins of secularism will be examined with a focus on the work of Charles Taylor in *A Secular Age*, in addition to a literary review of other relevant sources. I will assess key historical indicators of encroaching secularism in order to identify whether those same markers are now present in young Cuencano mestizos.

Chapter 3 will explore the Ecuadorian context. I will focus on the traditional religious worldview of Ecuadorians from the Spanish conquest of the Inca empire to the present day. I will pay particular attention to Ecuador's unique dichotomy as a conquered nation that officially adopted the Spanish conquistadors' Catholicism while maintaining aspects of its animistic, Incan worldview. Ways in which these syncretistic, traditional beliefs still influence present-day Cuencano mestizos will be detailed.

Chapter 4 will detail my research methodology and report the results of my qualitative inquiry. The qualitative surveys of at least thirty young Cuencano mestizos will reveal whether their worldviews reflect the presence of the key indicators of secularism, as established in chapter 2, more than the previous generation. The end of the chapter will include a statistical analysis of the collected qualitative data between the two generations to determine if significant secularization is occurring.

Chapter 5 will seek to establish a missiological paradigm for equipping evangelical leaders to combat secularism within the Cuencano mestizo context. I will seek to determine effective methods for theological education and pastoral training with a focus on developing a comprehensive and consistent biblical worldview—one capable of combating secularism and every worldly philosophy within the vital institutions of the

church, the family, and the culture.

The conclusion of this dissertation will tie together the previous chapters in order to determine if the thesis of the project was proven correct. Additionally, the concluding chapter will seek to restate which effective missiological practices ought to be employed to equip Christian leaders to prepare their congregations for the potential encroachment of secularism.

CHAPTER 2

A SURVEY OF SECULARIZATION

The increase in secularism among Western cultures is a thoroughly modern phenomenon.¹ A secular society is essentially defined by its indifference toward transcendence and the divine. This apathy toward the supernatural is virtually absent throughout the rest of human history. Humanity has always had an eye to the sky, contemplating the beyond. It would be an unenviable task to try to discover a society in all of history without some form of religion at its core. A primary source of reference in this chapter will be Taylor’s seminal work *A Secular Age*. In the opening chapter, Taylor notes that human history is impossible to study without reference to religion—and not just Christian societies but even early human history: “[I]f you go back even farther in human history, you come to archaic societies in which the whole set of distinctions we make between the religious, political, economic, social, etc., aspects of our society ceases to make sense. In these earlier societies, religion was ‘everywhere’, was interwoven with everything else, and in no sense constituted a separate ‘sphere’ of its own.”² However, numerous modern secularized Western societies are, in fact, characterized by their fixation on the immanent sphere of reality. This chapter will examine the history of

¹ Carl Trueman argues that the unique challenges of our secular age are indeed unprecedented, yet at the same time are the result of hundreds of years of historical developments that have led to this moment in time. Trueman writes, “Rieff and Taylor are both correct in seeing psychological man and the expressive individual as the result of a long historical process and as the normative types in this present age. The psychologized, expressive individual that is the social norm today is unique, unprecedented, and singularly significant. The emergence of such selves is a matter of central importance in the history of the West as it is both a symptom and a cause of the many social, ethical, and political questions we now face.” Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 70. The historical secularization of religion, philosophy, and worldview within Western culture from Medieval Europe to the present day will be the primary subject of this chapter.

² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 2.

secularism as a viable philosophical and practical option among Western societies. Then I will survey the historical progression of secularization followed by its societal and cultural consequences.

The Three Pillars of a Worldview

The process of identifying the worldview of the mestizo Cuencanos is vital to determining if secularization is taking place among the younger generation. In order to identify a worldview, one must first realize the significance of the concept of worldview itself. The term *worldview* comes from the German word *Weltanschauung*.³ A worldview is defined as “a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic makeup of our world.”⁴ Worldviews matter because they are not just sets of ethereal presuppositions which philosophers debate. Rather, one’s worldview affects every area of one’s life. How a person answers the most basic questions regarding existence will inevitably affect how that person goes about living life.

Every worldview is based upon an individual’s beliefs regarding three foundational aspects of interpreting reality: namely metaphysics (objective reality), epistemology (subjective knowledge), and ethics (practical morality).⁵ These basic philosophical categories answer the three foundational questions of worldview formation respectively: “(1.) What exists outside of our minds? (2.) What exists inside of our

³ According to David Naugle, the first instance of *Weltanschauung* appears in Immanuel Kant's work *Critique of Judgment* in 1790. David Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

⁴ James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2015), 195.

⁵ Jeffrey D. Johnson, *The Absurdity of Unbelief: A Worldview Apologetic of the Christian Faith*. (Conway, AR: Free Grace Press, 2016), 1321, Kindle.

minds?, and (3.) How do we feel about it?”⁶ Philosopher and apologist Greg Bahnsen concluded, “Worldviews are systems of interlocking presuppositions. As systems they include metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics all bound up together in a mutually self-supporting system.”⁷ Therefore, this survey of the development of secularism as a plausible worldview will include an examination of how secularism responds to these three pillars of worldview formation. As purposed in the beginning of this dissertation, key markers of secularization will be discovered based upon the three philosophical categories of worldview formation, namely metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

The Essence of Secularism

Several terms are important to understand in order to properly commence a survey of secularism. Chief among these terms is *secularism* itself. The modern English word *secular* stems from the Latin *saeculum* meaning century or age.⁸ The term originally referred to periods of time related to the Roman calendar. However, as the Roman Empire was eventually Christianized, the word began to refer to the world’s present age, particularly in contrast to the eternal heavenly realm. The *saeculum* would come to be contrasted with monastic life. Those who lived in the *saeculum* were often politicians focused on the ordinary issues of culture as opposed to those, such as priests, who had dedicated themselves to a life focused on the eternal. Thus, secular time began to be associated with the mundane aspects of life as opposed to the spiritual.⁹

There are several schools of thought as to the extent of everything modern secularism entails. Some define secularism in terms of its relation to politics and

⁶ Johnson, *Absurdity of Unbelief*, 1321, Kindle.

⁷ Greg L. Bahnsen, *Pushing the Antithesis: The Apologetic Methodology of Greg L. Bahnsen* (Atlanta: American Vision, 2007), 211.

⁸ Susan Dunning, “Saeculum,” *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, last modified November 20, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.8233>.

⁹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 54.

government; they say religion or any reference to the divine should play virtually no part in governmental thought and action. Others define secularism in regard to overall religious adherence among a culture, i.e., a “secular” society refers to one in which a significant number of people no longer adhere to a particular religion.¹⁰

However, the best conception of secularism takes all of these factors into account. Secularism connotes the shift in the default conditions of a culture’s values and beliefs—from a world in which the consideration of God is a given, to one in which even the existence of the divine is doubted and challenged.¹¹ Secularism produces a vacuum of indifference toward the transcendent; in its place comes a focus on the immanent.

Transcendence and *immanence* are two more important terms to define.

Transcendence refers to the aspect of reality which is superior to and beyond the physical realm.¹² Immanence refers to the opposite; it emphasizes the here-and-now, the material realm. One could consider transcendence to be a reference to the supernatural and

¹⁰ According to an article in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia, “At its most basic level secularism simply entails a normative commitment to neutrality on the part of the state toward religious affairs, necessitating that the state should neither favor, disfavor, promote, nor discourage any particular religious (or nonreligious) belief and viewpoint over another ... secularism at its most elementary level is simply a separation of church and state.” This is a clear example of basing an understanding of secularism on a purely political level. Steven Kettell, “Secularism and Religion,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*, last modified January 25, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.898>.

¹¹ Taylor describes these three common schools of thought regarding secularism as follows: “(1) One understanding of secularity then is in terms of public spaces. These have been allegedly emptied of God, or of any reference to ultimate reality. Or taken from another side, as we function within various spheres of activity—economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, recreational—the norms and principles we follow, the deliberations we engage in, generally don’t refer us to God or to any religious beliefs. (2) In this second meaning, secularity consists in the falling off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to church. In this sense, the countries of western Europe have mainly become secular—even those who retain the vestigial public reference to God in public space. (3) Now I believe that an examination of this age as secular is worth taking up in a third sense, closely related to the second, and not without connection to the first. This would focus on the conditions of belief. The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.” Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2-3.

¹² C. Stephen Evans offers a more thorough definition of transcendence in his *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics Philosophy of Religion*: “That which is higher than or surpasses other things. What is transcendent is thus relative to what is transcended. God is conceived by traditional theologians as being transcendent with respect to the created universe, meaning that he is outside the universe and that no part of the universe is identical to him or a part of him. To think of God as transcendent with respect to time is to conceive him as timeless. Theologians have usually balanced an emphasis on God’s transcendence with an emphasis on God’s immanence within the created world as embodied in his knowledge of and action within that world.” (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

immanence an allusion to the natural, material world. For Taylor, the major question of Western secularization was the sorting out of how Western culture progressed from viewing all aspects of life in terms of the transcendent to being able to view everything solely through an immanent frame of reference:

Our question is how we moved from a condition in 1500 in which it was hard not to believe in God, to our present situation just after 2000, where this has become quite easy for many. A way of putting our present condition is to say that many people are happy living for goals which are purely immanent; they live in a way that takes no account of the transcendent . . . by which it became possible to relate to certain realities as purely “natural”, and disintricate them from the transcendent; whereby it eventually became possible to see the immediate surroundings of our lives as existing on this “natural” plane, however much we might believe that they indicated something beyond.¹³

Secularism, by nature, produces an indifference or hostility toward the transcendent. In his book *Seculosity*, David Zahl describes how an obsession with the immanent replaces the transcendent as the default sphere of worship in a secular society (a position clearly noted in the subtitle to *Seculosity: How Career, Parenting, Technology, Food, Politics, and Romance Became Our New Religion and What to Do About It*), “Secularism operates squarely within ‘the immanent frame,’ removed from the transcendent realities that have defined the faith throughout the millennia. Eventually, one starts to wonder if our near-myopic focus on this life masks a faltering confidence in the one to come.”¹⁴

This newfound focus on the material world to the detriment of the transcendent does not mean that secularists have ceased to worship. The Scriptures are clear that all humans are made to worship (e.g., Isa 43:21, Ps 150:6, Matt 4:10, Rom 1:1-32, Rev 15:4 etc.). In his book, *Cultural Apologetics*, Paul Gould notes that a secular culture’s fixation on the immanent is just another form of idolatry:

¹³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 143.

¹⁴ David Zahl, *Seculosity: How Career, Parenting, Technology, Food, Politics, and Romance Became Our New Religion and What to Do about It* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), 174.

As Paul noted in Athens, human beings are inherently religious (Acts 17:16, 22). We all worship something: either the true God or some created portion of reality. “Idolatry is inherently a rejection of God’s authority and a quest for self-definition, self-importance, and self-fulfillment on our own terms.” In a disenchanted culture, our restless hearts and minds seek satisfaction, solace, or love in anything other than God. This is modern idolatry. Believers and nonbelievers in every culture and time have struggled with idolatry, but disenchantment contributes to the pervasiveness and entrenchment of our idolatry. The temptation to engage in false worship is especially strong for us today because it is possible to orient one’s entire life without any appeal to transcendent reality.¹⁵

Consequently, a secular society does not produce a religion-free society because a society without worshippers is an impossibility. Rather, a focus on the immanent sphere produces a worldly dogmatism that few religions can equal. Zahl recounts a humorous anecdote that illustrates this fact:

Tales of friends who’d left small towns for big cities in search of a more open-minded environment, only to discover that their new surroundings weren’t as orthodoxy-free as they’d hoped, had become almost cliché. It sounds like a *Portlandia* sketch, but it is empirically true: the religious impulse is easier to rebrand than to extinguish. This runs counter to popular perception. Bombarded with poll results about declining levels of church attendance and belief in God, we assume that more and more people are abandoning faith and making their own meaning. But what these polls actually tell us is more straightforward. They tell us that confidence in the religious narratives we’ve inherited has collapsed. What they fail to report is that the marketplace in replacement religion is booming. We may be sleeping in on Sunday mornings in greater numbers, but we’ve never been more pious. Religious observance hasn’t faded apace “secularization” so much as migrated—and we’ve got the anxiety to prove it. We’re seldom not in church.¹⁶

The search for meaning and significance is ingrained in humanity. Secularism cannot replace it, but only redirect it inward. As a result, situations like the one that Zahl describes are commonplace. Even in a secular society, human beings still long for meaning, community, and purpose. The difference is found in the fact that secular societies seek to find those traditionally “transcendental” aspects of existence exclusively in the material realm.

¹⁵ Paul Gould, *Cultural Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 77.

¹⁶ Zahl, *Seculosity*, 3.

The Encroachment of Secularism upon the Western World

How did this shift from an almost universally devout focus on the transcendent in the Western world to a virtual antipathy toward even the thought of the divine take place? What occurred over the past centuries to facilitate it? Historian Kevin Madigan tried to answer these questions. He notes that from the 7th century to the 17th century much of humanity was quite uniform in their beliefs about the divine:

Very few [in Medieval European culture] would have doubted the existence of a triune God who had sent his “Son,” both human and divine, to redeem humankind and to set the normative and salvific pattern for human life. Nor would many have doubted that life on this earth was a journey, or pilgrimage, to a domain more real, more permanent—indeed eternal—to be spent in everlasting beatitude with God or never-ending punishment.¹⁷

Obviously, much has changed in the last 400 years. The primary research question to be addressed in this chapter is this—what happened in Western society that made it possible for virtually all areas of culture—family, government, education etc.—to function without reference to the divine? And how has this seismic shift shaped vital societal structures? Taylor states the dilemma of cultural secularization this way:

[T]he change I want to define and trace is one which takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others ... Belief in God is no longer axiomatic. There are alternatives. And this will also likely mean that at least in certain milieux, it may be hard to sustain one’s faith. There will be people who feel bound to give it up, even though they mourn its loss. This has been a recognizable experience in our societies, at least since the mid-nineteenth century. There will be many others to whom faith never even seems an eligible possibility. There are certainly millions today of whom this is true.¹⁸

An important aspect of secularization to consider will be the diminishment of what missiologist Paul Hiebert referred to as “the excluded middle.”¹⁹ Hiebert notes that many non-Western cultures are animistic in nature. That is to say, they attribute actions in

¹⁷ Kevin Madigan, *Medieval Christianity: A New History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), xix.

¹⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 3.

¹⁹ Paul G. Hiebert, “The Flaw of the Excluded Middle,” *Missiology: An International Review* 10, no. 1 (January 1982), accessed October 12, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F009182968201000103>.

the physical realm to spirits, ancestors, and other invisible forces. However, even among professing Christians in the West, many who devote themselves to worshipping a transcendent God often fail to consider the middle realm. See Figure 1 below for an illustration of the various elements of Western two-tiered reality.

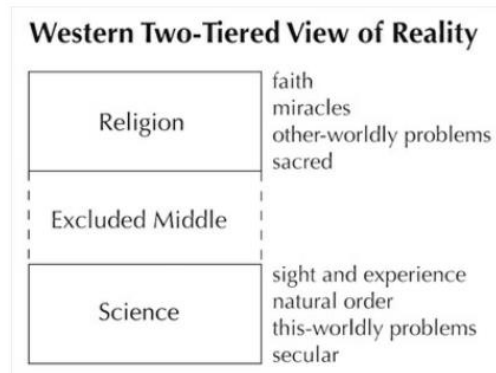


Figure 1. Paul Hiebert’s “Excluded Middle”

Hiebert notes that the “two-tiered” worldview began to emerge in the 17th and 18th centuries with the rise of reliance upon scientific knowledge and materialistic naturalism. He writes,

The result was the secularization of science and the mystification of religion. Science dealt with the empirical world using mechanistic analogies, leaving religion to handle other-worldly matters, often in terms of organic analogies. Science was based on the certitudes of sense experience, experimentation and proof. Religion was left with faith in visions, dreams and inner feelings. Science sought order in natural laws. Religion was brought in to deal with miracles and exceptions to the natural order, but these decreased as scientific knowledge expanded.²⁰

As I will explore in the following chapter, Ecuador has an ingrained heritage of animism dating back to the time before the Inca empire. As a result, the “middle-level” consciousness that ascribes unseen causes for common, everyday experiences is a lasting

²⁰ Hiebert, “Excluded Middle,” 43.

remnant among the older generation of Cuencanos. However, as will be further explored in chapter 4, younger Cuencanos are becoming much more secular. As a result, very little thought is given to middle-level experiences among the younger generation. This chapter will seek to explore how secularization has historically produced a paradigm shift away from middle-level thinking as well as the consequences for that shift in life and society.

A glimmer of the divine. It has already been asserted that secularism produces less consideration of spiritual forces in everyday life. Nonetheless, an interesting phenomenon has been observed among the *most secularized* cultures. In short, people who live in secularized cultures become more and more dissatisfied with exclusively material explanations and merely immanent life goals. This purely immanent reality often leaves secularists feeling empty and unfulfilled, a fact only further accentuated by brushes with the transcendent: beautiful sunsets, a baby's smile, or an awe-inspiring piece of artwork.

These gifts produce a spiritual nostalgia in even the most ardent secularist. Charles Taylor deems this the "Nova-Effect."²¹ James K.A. Smith, in his book *How Not to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*, helps the lay reader better understand Taylor's dense, voluminous book. Smith explains that the Nova-Effect is the result of a "cross-pressured" culture in which people feel "the simultaneous pressure of various spiritual options; or the feeling of being caught between an echo of transcendence and the drive toward immanentization."²² This cross-pressured echo of transcendence wars against what Taylor argued is the drive toward a totally secular "buffered self" which seeks to insulate the modern materialistic individual from all reference to the spiritual realm.²³

²¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 299-321.

²² James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 140.

²³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 26-42.

The remainder of this chapter will seek to explain how Western society has “progressed” from a world in which middle level consideration was given to even the most mundane experiences to a society in which the average individual gives little thought to the supernatural. Regardless, it will be shown that even thoroughly secular individuals remain haunted by thoughts of transcendence triggered by unavoidable spiritual experiences. Atheism once seemed inconceivable to individuals characterized by “porous” attitudes toward the transcendent.²⁴ Now, in order to understand the modern secular milieu, one must understand what changed over the last 500 years to produce the possibility of atheism—or at least agnosticism—moving from inconceivable to the common default worldview in the West.

A Survey of the History of Secularization

The cultural setting of pre-Reformation Western society is important to consider in order to understand what events took place to produce the possibility of our modern secular age. As Taylor consistently emphasizes, the explanation is not a linear story that is easily traceable. Rather, the causal connections stem from multiple distinct streams of thought and events which culminate in the current cultural moment. The story of secularization begins with an “enchanted” Western world that saw spiritual forces at work around every corner.

Metaphysics: The Enchanted West

Pre-Reformation Western Europe was very different than today’s secular Europe. Centuries of Catholic syncretism resulted in an animistic world that attributed middle-level causes to virtually all common events. Medieval Christendom was characterized by sacraments, superstition, and relics. Each of these aspects conveyed a

²⁴ Taylor described the pre-secular West as consisting of “porous-selves” which were always open—porous—to spiritual experiences and explanations in contrast to the modern “buffered-self” which is closed off to transcendent explanations. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 20-27.

spiritual or even magical meaning to everyday life. It is difficult to overestimate just how integral ecclesiastical ritual was to the life of the common citizen in medieval Europe.

Madigan explains how ubiquitous the Christian influence was over the Western world for nearly a millennium:

The church not only formed the institutional framework within which one lived out one's life. Every important event for the individual from birth to death (including, from the ninth century, marriage) was marked by ecclesiastical ritual. The same set of sacraments (set at seven in the late twelfth century) punctuated the lives of Christians in northern England and Iceland, southern Italy, western Spain, and Poland. Monasteries, churches, chapels, parish churches, convents, cathedrals, and simple stone crosses covered the landscape—all professing or representing the same creed. Clergy—priests, bishops, deacons—were everywhere, as were monks, nuns, and other religious. More or less the same liturgy of the Mass was celebrated in the same language across the Continent. Certainly, there were “outsiders” in this culture—principally Jewish communities and sects of heretics—but they were “minorities” in every sense of that modern word. This culture was held together by religious belief expressed in ancient creeds whose authority very few challenged or from which they dissented.²⁵

The established church influenced virtually every sector of society. The metaphysical presupposition of virtually every individual was based on the objective reality that the God of the Bible was real and involved in every aspect of life. The religious landscape also made a solely immanent material world implausible. Medieval Catholic theology taught that mediation—from priests, saints, and relics—was necessary for access to the transcendent.²⁶ Therefore, any hope of answered prayers in regard to health, fertility, or production required these mediators' middle-level intervention. For this reason, throughout the Middle Ages, objects considered today as purely physical took on extremely important spiritual value. Any object that could be associated with a mediator—water, fabric, art, shrines, tombs—became “sacralized” in order to convey spiritual import to the desperate seeker. Eventually, physical access to the spiritual realm would *always* be connected to individuals through the Rosary which allowed devotees of

²⁵ Madigan, *Medieval History*, 264.

²⁶ Madigan, *Medieval History*, 260.

Mary to access her help by reciting the “Ave, Maria” while touching beads that were worn on a bracelet and therefore continually accessible.²⁷

The Social Imaginary. A vital aspect of analyzing any culture is to understand what Taylor described as the “social imaginary.” More than just the intellectual framework that dominates a culture, Taylor described the social imaginary as “the way ordinary people ‘imagine’ their social surrounding, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms, it is carried in images, stories, legends, etc.”²⁸ In other words, the social imaginary defines what a people view as more or less believable.

In his excellent work on reaching a secular world with the gospel, Sam Chan argues that communities informally determine which belief systems are plausible. In fact, the subtitle of his book asserts that Christians need to be aware of these plausibility structures, or social imaginaries, in order to learn *How to Make the Unbelievable News about Jesus More Believable*.²⁹ Chan states that all people have culturally formed plausibility structures that prejudice the population toward judgments about the truth. He defines plausibility structures as, “accepted beliefs, convictions, and understandings that either green-light truth claims as plausible or red-light them as implausible.”³⁰ Chan goes on to highlight the role community plays in forming plausibility structures:

Our community—our trusted friends and family—has a powerful role in forming our beliefs. Our community also shapes how we interpret our experiences. Our community also shapes how we interpret facts, evidence, and data ... Here is the key idea you need to grasp: people will find a story more believable if more people in their community, their trusted friends and family, also believe the story.³¹

²⁷ Madigan, *Medieval History*, 267.

²⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 171.

²⁹ Sam Chan, *Evangelism in a Skeptical World: How to Make the Unbelievable News about Jesus More Believable* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 41.

³⁰ Chan, *Evangelism in a Skeptical World*, 43.

³¹ Chan, *Evangelism in a Skeptical World*, 43.

Understanding how the social imaginary works is vital to understanding the “enchanted” world of Medieval Europe. Individuals in the Middle Ages who saw spiritual influences around every corner could not imagine our secular age. Virtually everyone in their society interpreted reality via the same social imaginary. The plausibility structures of their time never gave “red lights” to the reasonableness of raiding the tomb of a saint in order to find a relic that would lead to the healing of a sick family member. In the same way, a Millennial in modern San Francisco never blinks at the logical dissidence of the idea that it should be legal to kill a baby in the womb at forty weeks but the moment the child passes through the birth canal he or she “magically” gains personhood and the right to life. The two distinct social imaginaries each produce plausibility structures that support equally radical beliefs within their own time and culture. The devoted adherence to plausibility structures in a culture can lead to both outlandish views of reality. The influence of our social imaginary and the plausibility structures it sustains cannot be overstated.

The Reformation and Disenchantment

The enchanted world of the Middle Ages made atheism seemingly inconceivable—both practically and philosophically. Smith summarizes Taylor’s three reasons for this:

1) The natural world was constituted as a cosmos that functioned semiotically, as a sign that pointed beyond itself, to what was more than nature. 2) Society itself was understood as something grounded in a higher reality; earthly kingdoms were grounded in a heavenly kingdom. 3) In sum, people lived in an enchanted world, a world “charged” with presences, that was open and vulnerable, not closed and self-sufficient. It’s not that these features guarantee that all medieval inhabitants “believe in God”; but it does mean that, in a world so constituted, “atheism comes close to being inconceivable” because one can’t help but “see” (or “imagine”) that world as sort of haunted—suffused with presences that are not “natural.”³²

Ultimately, these deeply ingrained spiritual beliefs infused medieval Western

³² Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 27.

European culture, making the emergence of secularism virtually impossible. Therefore, the question must be raised: What changed? How then did Western society move from being such a bulwark against secularism to its birthplace? How did the metaphysical default transition from ultimate objective reality being based upon the God of the Bible, to a metaphysical presupposition that virtually ignored any mention of the transcendent?

In short, the answer is that the West became “disenchanted.” Drawing upon Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Taylor describes how the West eventually began to focus almost entirely on the “natural order.” Interestingly, Taylor does not argue that this disenchantment began with the Enlightenment’s emphasis on naturalistic humanism—nor does he lay the blame at the feet of the scientific revolution spurred by Charles Darwin. Rather, Taylor insists that many *Christians* became disenchanted long before Darwin was on the scene. More specifically, Taylor traces the beginnings of disenchantment—one could even say Western secularism itself—to a surprising source: the Protestant Reformation.

As we consider Taylor’s critique of the Protestant Reformation, it should be noted that he is a committed Roman Catholic who has displayed a misunderstanding of biblical Protestant beliefs.³³ However, his thesis is not without its merits.³⁴ In fact, noted Presbyterian church historian Carl Trueman agrees with Taylor’s analysis of the historical narrative regarding the impact of the Reformation in serving to further the disenchantment of 16th century Europe:

³³ See Smith for a summary of the biases displayed by Taylor throughout his work. For example, Smith disputes Taylor’s explanation of the need for activities like Carnival to resolve and distinguish the relationship between the secular and the sacred. Smith writes: “I do think this is a uniquely ‘Roman Catholic’ framing of the matter and ultimately assumes an implicit understanding of the nature/grace relation. I’m not just saying that the medieval world assumed this Catholic framing, but that Taylor’s framing it this way also reflects a certain bias in this respect. For example, Protestant heirs of Calvin’s vision of ‘Reform’ would see more continuity between the expectations and demands of creational flourishing and eternal flourishing.” Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 46.

³⁴ For further treatment of this subject, see Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 2012).

From a Reformation-Protestant perspective, perhaps the most serious claim is that [Taylor] sees the rise of voluntarism and nominalism in the late Middle Ages as laying the foundation for shifting from a world that naturally carries its own rich meaning(s) to one where human beings create such meaning for themselves. The Reformation, as early fruit of nominalism/voluntarism, plays a central role in the narrative. By abolishing the traditional hierarchical distinction between the sacred and the secular, and thereby sanctifying the ordinary, it performed a twofold service. First, it released Christendom from the monopoly of Rome by offering an alternative (soon to become many alternatives). Second, by making the secular sacred it inadvertently created a context where the sacred could ultimately become secular. The first point is uncontested. The Reformation did shatter the religious unity of Western Europe and did ultimately make religious commitment a matter of choice rather than of geographical birthplace. The idea of “choosing” a church remains a profoundly Protestant idea, one that is confusing to traditional Roman Catholics.³⁵

When the Reformation began to preach against the ability of Catholic sacraments to impart salvific grace upon its recipients, the everyday connection between the porous self and the spiritually infused natural elements began to disappear. Suddenly, the power of God’s Word was the source of grace—not saints and sacraments. Trueman concludes, “The physical and the corporate gave way to the doctrinal and the individual.”³⁶

To appreciate the transformational nature of this shift from the physical to the mental we must understand just how powerful “sanctified” objects were for people in the premodern West. The material world was so charged with spiritual power that the line between personal volition and involuntary spiritual forces acting upon the natural world was virtually indistinguishable. People assumed their destinies were at least somewhat at the whims of the external world. Smith recounts Taylor’s summation of the relationship between personal volition and external forces:

In this premodern, enchanted universe, it was also assumed that power resided in things, which is precisely why things like relics or the Host could be invested with spiritual power. As a result, “in the enchanted world, the line between personal agency and impersonal force was not at all clearly drawn.” There is a kind of

³⁵ Carl Trueman, “Taylor’s Complex, Incomplete Historical Narrative,” in *Our Secular Age: Ten Years of Reading and Applying Charles Taylor*, ed. Collin Hansen (Wheaton, IL: The Gospel Coalition, 2017), 13-14.

³⁶ Trueman, “Taylor’s Complex, Incomplete Historical Narrative,” 16.

blurring of boundaries so that it is not only personal agents that have causal power. Things can do stuff. At this point Taylor introduces a key concept to describe the premodern self: prior to this disenchantment and the retreat of meaning into an interior “mind,” the human agent was seen as porous. Just as premodern nature is always already intermixed with its beyond, and just as things are intermixed with mind and meaning, so the premodern self’s porosity means the self is essentially vulnerable (and hence also “healable”). To be human is to be essentially open to an outside (whether benevolent or malevolent), open to blessing or curse, possession or grace. “This sense of vulnerability,” Taylor concludes, “is one of the principal features which have gone with disenchantment.”³⁷

The Reformation’s insistence on abstract doctrinal truths contrasted sharply with previous eras’ insistence on spiritually imbued physical objects. As Smith puts it, “The Reformers’ rejection of sacramentalism is the beginning of naturalism, or it at least opens the door to its possibility. It is also the beginning of a certain evacuation of the sacred as a *presence* in the world.”³⁸

There were, of course, other consequences to this. For example, meaning moved out of the physical world and into the individual’s mind, and arbiters of meaning switched from communities to the individual.³⁹ Protestants’ emphasis on the priesthood of all believers spurred on individual saints to interpret God’s Word. Eventually, this feature would be corrupted and compromised as individuals now sought to determine objective meanings according to one’s own personal autonomy and experience.

The reformation of vocation. Several other factors served to disenchant 16th century Europe. Taylor calls these causes “Reform.”⁴⁰ Fundamental to “Reform” was a shifting cultural understanding of sacred and secular professions. For centuries, monks

³⁷ Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 29.

³⁸ Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 39.

³⁹ Smith concisely articulates this foundational aspect of secularism, writing, “Taylor’s account of disenchantment has a different accent, suggesting that this is primarily a shift in the location of meaning, moving it from ‘the world’ into ‘the mind.’ Significance no longer inheres in things; rather, meaning and significance are a property of minds who perceive meaning internally. The external world might be a catalyst for perceiving meaning, but the meanings are generated within the mind — or, in stronger versions (say, Kant), meanings are imposed upon things by minds. Meaning is now located in agents.” Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 28-29.

⁴⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 63.

and priests served in exclusively sacred vocations on behalf of not only themselves but the community at large. These professions were dedicated to the transcendent; they allowed other vital vocations like butchers, farmers, and builders to be focused on the mundane—or immanent—aspects of life without which a society could not exist.

Abuses of this hierarchical religious system gradually led to a dissatisfaction among the laypeople who felt both “lesser-than” and looked down upon by the elite religious establishment. As Alister McGrath notes, “[There] persisted a widespread perception in medieval Christianity that those who worked ‘in the world,’ as distinct from monastics and clerics more generally, were engaged in a less worthy way of life and, indeed, were second class Christians.”⁴¹ In fact, misdeeds among the clergy—such as the system of indulgences, which required lay people to *pay for* less time in purgatory—hastened the Protestant Reformation. There was a growing pressure to level the playing field among a very stratified division of society.

In response to this outcry, many theologians sought to recognize the sacred elements of so-called mundane professions. Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin began to preach about the sanctity of vocation and the need to glorify God in every aspect of life, as inspired by 1 Corinthians 10:31. Reformation strongholds like Geneva would become test subjects for a new view of human society in which all people were expected to grow in godliness and view their jobs as opportunities to glorify the Lord. Calvin taught that God called every believer to glorify him “in *every* sphere of human existence,” not only within the walls of a monastery but within every home, school, and workplace.⁴² God expected every believer to pursue purity and sanctification, which sounded quite different than the monastic model of society. McGrath explains the Reformers’ views on the need for every person and every vocation to pursue godliness:

⁴¹ Alister McGrath, “Calvin and The Christian Calling,” *First Things* 94, (June/July 1999): 32.

⁴² McGrath, “Calvin and The Christian Calling,” 33.

In this view, Christians were called to be priests to the world, purifying and sanctifying its everyday life from within. Luther stated this point succinctly when commenting on Genesis 13:13: “What seem to be secular works are actually the praise of God and represent an obedience which is “well pleasing to him.” There were no limits to this notion of calling. Luther even extolled the religious value of housework, declaring that although “it has no obvious appearance of holiness, yet these very household chores are more to be valued than all the works of monks and nuns.”⁴³

The word *vocation* comes from the Latin for “calling.” This significant cultural change of mind greatly contributed to the West’s gradual disenchantment. As the transcendent showed up in the immanent aspects of everyday life, the consequences were massive. Smith notes:

The result is that “for the ordinary householder” this will “require something paradoxical: living in all the practices and institutions of [‘this-worldly’] flourishing, but at the same time not fully in them. Being in them but not of them; being in them, but yet at a distance, ready to lose them. Augustine put it: use the things of this world, but don’t enjoy them; *uti, not frui*. Or do it all for the glory of God, in the Loyola-Calvin formulation.” Religious devotion — and hence expectations of holiness and virtue — is not sequestered to the monastery or the convent; rather, the high expectations of sanctification now spill beyond the walls of the monastery.⁴⁴

Therefore, it became clear that clergy no longer held the only vocations that were influenced by the transcendent. Little by little, the immanent seemed to replace the need for the transcendent.⁴⁵ Reform insisted upon a sort of perfectionism among all members of society that as, Smith remarks, leads to two radically different avenues for relief: “If people aren’t meeting the bar, you can either focus on helping people reach higher or you can lower the bar. This is why Reform unleashes both Puritanism and the

⁴³ McGrath, “Calvin and The Christian Calling,” 34.

⁴⁴ Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 37.

⁴⁵ There is much more to add to this survey of the history of secularization than this chapter could possibly encapsulate. However, it should be noted among Protestants that Taylor, Gregory, and other historians acknowledge the important role the Reformation played in demystifying the culture of medieval Europe which would consequently pave the way for the eventual rise of naturalistic humanism. Smith asks important questions that should be considered as one examines this unintentional consequence of the Reformation: “Taylor’s account celebrates the Reformation’s ‘sanctification of ordinary life’ while also suggesting that this was the camel’s nose in the tent of enchantment — that somehow the Protestant Reformation opened the door to what would become, by a winding, contingent path, exclusive humanism. Are there ways that Protestants can recognize this mixed legacy of the Reformation and yet also affirm it as a renewal movement within the church catholic? If the Protestant Reformation opened a door to exclusive humanism, did it not also open the door that led to Vatican II?” Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 38-39.

1960's. Insofar as Reform is a reaction to this disequilibrium, it can seek to 'solve' the problem in two very different ways—and it will take centuries for this to become clear."⁴⁶

As people placed more emphasis on the individual and less on the external world, they placed less emphasis on the blessings or curses an individual may bring upon a community at large. In the enchanted age, people feared reprisal from offended spirits, which led communities to hold its members accountable to one another. Sin and heresy affected the entire group, and it was therefore punished harshly in order to prevent its consequences. The impetus to inquisition makes more sense in an enchanted, communal age.

However, as belief became more privatized, the collective good was not as dependent upon sniffing out rogue heretics. Taylor employs the term "buffered-self" to describe how individuals began to insulate themselves in their own minds in order to resist the urge to feel susceptible to uncontrollable external forces.⁴⁷ As this buffered-self became more common, disbelief or disobedience to the spirit-world held less sway. Increasingly, one could choose unorthodox beliefs—or no belief in the transcendent at all, a precursor to naturalistic humanism—and still escape any societal castigation. This emerging privacy gradually increased our individualism. As Smith concludes, "Once individuals become the locus of meaning, the social atomism that results means that disbelief no longer has social consequences ... you're free to be a heretic—which means, eventually, you're free to be an atheist."⁴⁸

One need not be particularly astute to draw the connection between the significant reformations of the sixteenth century and the significant reformations of the

⁴⁶ Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 37.

⁴⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 43.

⁴⁸ Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 31.

1960s. However, it is important to trace the secularization of Western society from those two bookends in time in order to see just how prevalent and accepted a secularized, disenchanted world would become.⁴⁹ As we will see, disenchantment by itself did not secularize Western society. There still needed to be a cogent worldview that could place the immanent at the forefront without any need for the transcendent. During the Enlightenment, several thinkers would propose just such systems of thought that would eventually result in the previously inconceivable becoming commonplace.

Renaissance to Romanticism to Enlightenment

There is not a straight path from a Western world in which virtually every individual would affirm Christian theism to a Western world in which Christian theism is simply one option among many. It involves multiple corresponding historical occurrences which coincided to produce the world we inhabit today.

As G. K. Chesterton proposed, “When people turn from God, they don’t believe in nothing—they believe in everything.”⁵⁰ The secularism of the West is not a story of subtraction; it is a story of addition—of multiple gods, of multiple avenues of worship that a post-Christian society has established in order to replace the God they have rejected. As American scholar Will Herberg notes, worship will always occur because, “Man is *homo religious*, by ‘nature’ religious: As much as he needs food to eat

⁴⁹ Taylor writes of the importance in studying the process of disenchantment in order to understand secularism in the modern world: “In general, going against God is not an option in the enchanted world. That is one way the change to the buffered self has impinged. It removes a tremendous obstacle to unbelief. But as I argued above, this was not enough. There has still to be a positive option of exclusive humanism on offer. And here the significance of the change is evident. It opened the way to the kind of disengagement from cosmos and God which made exclusive humanism a possibility. A possibility, but still not a reality. In order to see how it became that, we have to follow a bit more closely the actual progress of disenchantment. How it actually worked out has marked, in many ways, the actual condition of modern Western secularity, and the terms in which the struggles of belief and unbelief now occur.” Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 41.

⁵⁰ G.K. Chesterton, *The Oracle of the Dog* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 211.

and air to breathe, he needs a faith for living.”⁵¹ However, in the secular age, man has replaced worship of the one true God with self-fulfillment and self-absorption. Herberg concludes, “So long as he pursues this quest in self-sufficiency, relying on his own virtue, wisdom, or piety, it will not be God that he finds, but an idol—the self, or some aspect of the self, writ large, projected, objectified, and worshiped.”⁵²

From nominalism to naturalism. As we continue down the path from the Reformation to modern Western secularism, a survey of the important actors and factors that contributed to the ever-progressing march toward secularism will be examined. It is important to note that several vital contributions of humanist philosophy were already in place before the radical reformations of the sixteenth century. Chief among these was the gradual rise of nominalism within the ranks of the European universities and medieval scholasticism. Nominalism is defined as “the claim that universal terms such as goodness, justice and fatherhood are merely names and do not denote any objective, universal qualities. Thus, the nominalist holds a view opposite to that of the Platonic realist who accepts the independent reality of universals.”⁵³

William of Occam is most notably associated with the rise of nominalism. Occam was a Franciscan friar most famous for his “razor” which stated that explanations of odd phenomenon “ought not to multiply entities beyond necessity.”⁵⁴ In other words, the simplest explanation is usually the best one. Unwittingly, Occam’s ideas and influence helped to set the stage for naturalistic philosophers, such as David Hume, who would apply his teachings to the idea of miracles and God himself implying that the

⁵¹ Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (New York: Doubleday, 2012), 350.

⁵² Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, 351.

⁵³ Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics Philosophy of Religion*, 82.

⁵⁴ Paul Vincent Spade, *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

simplest solution was never a miracle.⁵⁵ Additionally, Occam's embrace of nominalism would provide a foundation for future philosophers to reject the existence of universal truths, instead replacing absolutes with a metaphysical relativism. Brad Gregory summarizes the widespread results of nominalism within medieval Western society:

When combined with an either-or categorical distinction between natural and supernatural plus nominalism's heuristic principle of parsimony known retrospectively as Occam's razor ... the intellectual pieces were in place, at least in principle, for the domestication of God's transcendence and the extrusion of his presence from the natural world.⁵⁶

As nominalism began to take root among scholastics in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Reformation simply provided the political and institutional groundwork for its ideological consequences to flourish. A metaphysical shift began to take place in which the most important objective reality was no longer found in the spiritual realm but in the physical world. The results, in combination with factors previously noted, would usher in major changes to society and culture beginning with the Renaissance.

Renaissance religion and philosophy. As the Reformation took root throughout much of seventeenth-century Europe, institutional homogeneity of religion waned among the populace. This provided the freedom of thought that would lead to a renaissance of literature, art, and philosophy. As Gregory notes, in combination with more relativistic metaphysics, ancient philosophical traditions such as Platonism and Stoicism would provide the intellectual framework for much of what we now know as modern science.⁵⁷ For example, mathematics became especially important within the framework of revitalized Platonism. Furthermore, scientists began to explain natural

⁵⁵ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1777).

⁵⁶ Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 822, Kindle.

⁵⁷ Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 830, Kindle.

phenomena with mathematics as opposed to transcendent, metaphysical causes.

Consequently, the groundwork was laid for the modern secular idea that science and religion are at odds.⁵⁸

As the Renaissance humanists emerged, Protestants were busy with battles over doctrine and practice—among themselves and especially against the Catholics. This allowed humanists to proceed largely uncontested in the marketplace of ideas and to eventually gain the upper-hand in the public sphere. Gregory explains how the emergence of Renaissance humanism eventually led to deism and then atheism among the cultural elite:

The Reformation chiefly matters for the emergence of modern science in quite another way: the intractable doctrinal disagreements among Protestants and especially between Catholics and Protestants, as we shall see, had the unintended effect of sidelining explicitly Christian claims about God in relationship to the natural world. This left only empirical observation and philosophical speculation as supra-confessional means of investigating and theorizing that relationship ... Hence metaphysical univocity in combination with Occam's razor opened a path that would lead through deism to Weberian disenchantment and modern atheism.⁵⁹

As previously noted, the path toward Western secularism is a winding road full of convergent factors. The process of “immanentization” and its focus on the natural world was occurring within Christianity as a newfound fascination with the natural sciences flourished throughout the larger world. As Protestants sought to bring Christ to the world, many focused on bringing the world to Christ, that is, using the emerging discoveries in the physical sciences to better worship God. As Taylor writes, “So it is not altogether surprising that this attempt to bring Christ to the world, the lay world, the

⁵⁸ See Edward Grant, *Physical Science in the Middle Ages* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1971), 36-59 and Peter Dear, *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge and Its Ambitions, 1500–1700* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 15-18. Gregory also notes how Amos Funkenstein explained how these philosophical revivals contributed to the peculiar confluence of theology and physics in the seventeenth century. From Platonism came mathematization—only mathematics would have to function as an explanatory language applicable to the motion of things in the imperfect world of appearances, rather than derive metaphysically from or depend upon the transcendent world of extra-material ideas. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 834-837, Kindle.

⁵⁹ Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 875-876, Kindle.

previously unhallowed world, should inspire a new focus on this world.”⁶⁰ The eventual shift to scientism⁶¹—as we will later examine—within the secular community was not inevitable. As Smith argues:

This was primarily a revolution in devotion, not metaphysics. Thus “the new interest in nature was not a step outside of a religious outlook, even partially; it was a mutation within this outlook.” While this shift might, from a later vantage point, look like the first step toward exclusive humanism and pure immanence, it was not at the beginning — and could have gone otherwise. “That the autonomy of nature eventually . . . came to serve as grist to the mill of exclusive humanism is clearly true,” Taylor concludes. “That establishing it was already a step in that direction is profoundly false.”⁶²

Enchantment in art and aesthetics. Shifts in society are always displayed and preserved in art and aesthetics. A great example of immanezation within Christendom is found in the shift from medieval art to Protestant Renaissance art. The Catholic art of the Middle Ages is primarily focused on the transcendent, full of sweeping panoramas of heaven and angelic depictions of Jesus, Mary, and their halos and glorified faces. However, as the Renaissance emerges, artists—both Christian and non-Christian—begin to emphasize the here and now. Consider Michelangelo’s *David* and its emphasis on the power and autonomy of the male body. Or consider DaVinci’s obsession with human anatomy.

But perhaps no artist is a better example of Renaissance immanezation within Christendom than Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669). Rembrandt is widely considered to

⁶⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 94.

⁶¹ Christian apologist and philosopher J.P. Moreland describes the philosophical notion of *scientism* as, “roughly the view that the hard sciences alone have the intellectual authority to give us knowledge of reality. Everything else—especially ethics, theology, and philosophy—is, at least according to scientism, based on private emotions, blind faith, or cultural upbringing. As a result, these disciplines, long regarded by the Western world as a source of knowledge and a path of wisdom, are said to give us no truth about reality, at least no truth that could be supported by evidence and argumentation—which, according to scientism, means that theology and philosophy offer no truth at all.” J.P. Moreland, *Scientism and Secularism: Learning to Respond to a Dangerous Ideology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 23.

⁶² Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 41.

be the greatest Protestant artist in history. He was born in the Dutch Republic to a father who was devoted to Christ and the Dutch Reformed Church. Because Rembrandt embraced Protestantism so completely, much of his art reflects the worldview of the Protestant Reformation. In *State of the Arts*, Gene Veith explains the importance of portraits. He says these paintings depicted individuals' humanity, the fact that they were made in the image of God. Veith explains why Reformation painters emphasized this:

The acceptance of portraiture led to a flowering of the art form in the Reformed countries. Leo Jud, a colleague of Zwingli and a fellow iconoclast, distinguished between artificial images of God made by human beings and the true image of God made by God Himself. In other words, those interested in seeing the image of God need only look at a human being, whom God Himself made in His own image. Portraits depict "living images made by God and not by the hands of men." This profound concept underlies the work of those painters known as the Dutch masters, including perhaps the greatest Protestant painter, Rembrandt.⁶³

Understanding the background and worldview of Rembrandt will help us to further appreciate Renaissance Christians' newfound focus on the immanent in order to glorify God. "An Old Man in Red" (see Figure 2 below) is an excellent example of Rembrandt's appreciation for human dignity and his ability to capture the intricacies of the human spirit. The primary concept to note in this painting is the manner in which the viewer's gaze is drawn to the older gentleman's face and hands. Notice, the master painter uses broad, dark brushstrokes in the background to ensure the attention is focused on his subject. The lighting of the painting draws one's attention to the worth and dignity of the subject's eyes and face.

⁶³ Gene Edward Veith, *State of the Arts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 59.



Figure 2. “An Old Man in Red”

Rembrandt went through a period in the 1650’s where he painted multiple portraits of older people, including this particular man—whose name is unknown—more than once. It seems as if Rembrandt wanted to communicate the value and dignity of age, even as he himself was advancing in years.

The old man seems to be regal and noble in his latter years despite the fact—or perhaps because of the fact—that he has lived a long life of strife and work in this fallen world. This painting communicates the virtue of work and diligence. In that sense, it is a distinctly *Protestant* painting. Many of Rembrandt’s subjects, including “An Old Man in Red,” display and dignify ordinary people from various walks of life. As Veith notes:

In the face of his subjects—children, merchants, ordinary families—the depths of their personalities are suggested. One can discern their dignity and value as having been created in the image of God ... furthermore, the Reformers taught that one need not be a priest or a nun to lead a godly life, but that all vocations—those of farmers, merchants, magistrates, artisans, painters—can be means of serving God and one’s neighbor. This blurring of the distinction between sacred and secular vocations is also evident in the Dutch paintings. Many depict people at work: a butcher in his shop, soldiers marching by, businessmen in a meeting, servants at their chores.⁶⁴

Ultimately, in “An Old Man in Red,” Rembrandt has created an ode to the dignity of the image of God in every human person. The fact that Rembrandt was a realist—seeking to paint his subjects exactly as God created them—serves as a further testament that the immanentization of post-Reformation Europe is reflected in all aspects of culture including art and aesthetics.

Both Romanticism and the Renaissance would lay the foundation for immanization within the intellectual realm and within important cultural spheres such as art and aesthetics. In fact, one could argue from history that although secularized philosophy was important for rationalizing secularism in the West, it was actually the secularization of cultural institutions such as art that would have the greatest impact in popularizing secular ideas. Smith notes that Taylor came to a similar conclusion:

What is unique in Taylor’s story is the significance he accords to both the Renaissance and Romanticism. Philosophical accounts of modernity — and hence our present (or “postmodernity”) — tend to have an epistemological fixation that seizes upon the Enlightenment as the center of the story. But Taylor’s account is much more nuanced, recognizing early and important shifts in the Renaissance. Even more importantly, Taylor accords a central role to Romanticism as a turning point — a kind of countermodernity within modernity. This is why “we can see the Victorians as our contemporaries in a way which we cannot easily extend to the men of the Enlightenment.” In contrast to the subtraction stories that focus on scientific enlightenment, Taylor considers the central role of art in creating this “open space” that characterizes our secular age. One of the features of post-Romantic art, he suggests, is a fundamental shift from art as mimesis to art as poesis — from art imitating nature to art making its world.⁶⁵

In a similar vein, modern art and aesthetics has represented the changing

⁶⁴ Veith, *State of the Arts*, 60.

⁶⁵ Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 369.

religious landscape in the West, while also exhibiting important counter-cultural attempts to reimagine what we have lost. For example, twentieth-century literary giants such as C.S. Lewis and J.R.R Tolkien created *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Lord of the Rings* sagas to “re-enchant” Western literature with reminders of the world’s majestic nature. The authors sought to give back to the world all the benefits it had lost due to modernism and secularization. Lewis and Tolkien understood that even as the world was secularizing, the actual individuals involved in the cultural shift still had a cross-pressured yearning deep within for connection to the transcendent and the unseen realms. As a result, the books would not only become classics in their own time, but they would endure to the present and continue to inspire generations of readers who are also desperate for a glimpse into the enchanted world that was lost so long ago.

Patrick Curry wrote an excellent article for *The Journal of Contemporary Religion* in which he examined Tolkien’s understanding of re-enchantment in the modern world. Curry quotes Zygmunt Bauman’s explanation of the motivation for artists like Tolkien to help the modern world regain the wonder at creation that had been lost through modernization:

Restoring to the world what modernity, presumptuously, had taken away; as a re-enchantment of the world that modernity had tried hard to disenchant ... The war against mystery and magic was for modernity the war of liberation leading to the declaration of reason's independence ... [the] world had to be de-spiritualized, deanimated: denied the capacity of subject ... It is against such a disenchanted world that the postmodern re-enchantment is aimed.⁶⁶

Curry also quotes Chesterton and his argument regarding the need for wonder in a world in which modernism has supposedly found all the naturalistic mechanisms necessary to explain the universe:

The man of science says, “Cut the stalk, and the apple will fall”; but he says it calmly, as if the one idea really led up to the other. The witch in the fairy tale says, “Blow the horn, and the castle will fall”; but she does not say it as if it were

⁶⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992), x-xi, quoted in Patrick Curry, “Magic vs. Enchantment,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 14, no. 3 (1999): 407.

something in which the effect obviously arose out of the cause. Doubtless she has given the advice to many champions, and seen many castles fall, but she does not muddle her head until it imagines a necessary connection between a horn and a falling tower. But the scientific men do muddle their heads, until they imagine a necessary mental connection between an apple leaving the tree and an apple reaching the ground. . . . They feel that because one incomprehensible thing constantly follows another incomprehensible thing the two together somehow make up a comprehensible thing. . . . The only words that ever satisfied me as describing Nature are the terms used in the fairy books, “charm”, “spell”, “enchantment.” They express the arbitrariness of the fact and its mystery. A tree grows fruit because it is a magic tree. Water runs downhill because it is bewitched. The sun shines because it is bewitched. . . . I deny altogether that this is fantastic or even mystical. . . . It is the man who talks about “a law” that he has never seen who is the mystic.”⁶⁷

In the absence of awe and wonder at creation—the natural outworking of an “enchanted” understanding of creation—art and life suffer the slow death of a sterile mechanical grinding halt. Just as the human body is dead without the spirit, when the spiritual realm of creation is forgotten, the physical world suffers. As Curry concludes, “It is possible—and urgent—to encourage and sustain Enchantment. What does so is living life as nature’s art; and the art of living in and with nature.”⁶⁸

Philosophical contributions to secularization. Renaissance-era philosophy laid the foundation for significant societal changes that would ultimately result in the secularization of Western philosophy. Among the most influential post-Reformation philosophers were Rene Descartes, Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. These philosophers and their followers eventually divided into different epistemological factions—rationalism, empiricism, existentialism, etc. But their philosophical method shared an epistemological foundation: knowledge centered upon the individual, not the divine.

The father of modern secular philosophy is Rene Descartes (1596–1650). Descartes was a French mathematician who sought to deconstruct traditional

⁶⁷ Nigel Forde, ed. *A Motley Wisdom: The Best of G.K. Chesterton* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), 274-276, quoted in Patrick Curry, “Magic vs. Enchantment,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 14, no. 3 (1999): 409.

⁶⁸ Curry, *Magic vs. Enchantment*, 421.

epistemology. He did so by questioning everything he thought he knew and took for granted. Though Descartes doubted his experiences, he realized that he could not doubt the fact that he was doubting. Though this may seem incoherent, these reflections enabled him to conclude that the foundation of philosophy is that he exists as a self-conscious being. Thus, his famous phrase, “Cogito ergo sum.” Or: “I think, therefore, I am.”⁶⁹

Cartesian philosophy led to the secularization of Western society insofar as it advanced Descartes’ contention that people may understand the transcendent based upon their logical deduction. In other words, the fact that God exists finds its foundation on an individual’s rational conclusion. Christian philosopher Jeffery Johnson reflects on this:

Because [Descartes] could not be sure his body existed, he concluded his existence lay in thinking rather than in any physical substance. By doubting, He also deduced that he could not be perfect, “for I saw clearly that it is a greater perfection to know than to doubt.” Because he was able to conceptualize that which is entirely perfect, he determined that the idea of that which is perfect could not have arisen within himself any more than it is logical for that which is lesser to produce that which is greater. “Hence it follows,” he argued, “that something cannot come into being out of nothing, and also that what is more perfect cannot come into being from what is less perfect.” Accordingly, since Descartes saw that he was able to perceive not only a more perfect thing, but the most perfect thing, he reasoned that this conception of the most perfect thing could not have proceeded or originated out of anything other than God Himself. In this fashion, Descartes logically deduced that God also existed, and on this rational foundation (based on pure reason), he went on to deduce the rest of his worldview.⁷⁰

In short, Descartes replaced revelation with reason. He believed human beings could discover the truth about the world through their own intellectual faculties. Truth was not delivered downward—to humanity from God. Rather, humanity is able to scale the mountain of truth upward—to discover God based upon reason alone. Although Descartes believed in God, he had nonetheless laid the foundation for secular humanism and individual intellectual autonomy that would revolutionize Western culture.

Empiricist philosophers such as Hobbes and Locke would follow Descartes but

⁶⁹ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 3rd ed., 1993), 19.

⁷⁰ Johnson, *Absurdity of Unbelief*, 1414, Kindle.

add another layer to his rationalistic philosophy. They devised what came to be known as “social contract theory.” Hobbes and Locke disagreed with Descartes regarding the source of knowledge, even as they agreed with him regarding the sufficiency of the intellect to determine reality.⁷¹ The empiricists contended that experience as led by the sense—not reason alone—was the ultimate source of knowledge. As a result, these philosophers confined knowledge to the physical world. After all, if knowledge can only be determined by the senses—and physical senses are obviously limited to the physical world—then it must be that the universe is a closed system. The transcendent realm is simply inaccessible to true human knowledge. Johnson summarizes empiricism when he writes, “Knowledge is limited to what is physical and can be discerned by the senses. Because God does not exist as a part of the observable universe, if He exists at all, He is not an object of knowledge seeing that He cannot be detected by the empirical senses.”⁷²

Like the aforementioned William of Ockham, Hobbes was a committed nominalist. In his most famous work, *Leviathan*, Hobbes argued that human nature consists of nothing more than an individual pursuit of meaning which only the individual can construct for himself. In one of the most well-known passages of early modern philosophy, he writes about “the state of nature”:

In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.⁷³

All autonomous individuals fear death, so they must consent to a social contract in order to form a safe society, one that prevents lack among its people as much

⁷¹ Johnson, *The Absurdity of Unbelief*, 1373, Kindle.

⁷² Johnson, *The Absurdity of Unbelief*, 1440, Kindle.

⁷³ Thomas Hobbes, "Chapter XIII: Of the Natural Condition of Mankind As Concerning Their Felicity, and Misery," *Leviathan* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968).

as possible. Hobbes' ideas about the origin of human nature and society contradicted biblical teaching regarding creation, the Garden of Eden, and the Fall. However, because of Hobbes, philosophers and scientists no longer needed to consider transcendent principles like justice, mercy, or human rights when considering how individuals should act and societies should function. Hobbes proposed a naturalistic—that is, a godless—purpose for humans. They ought to prioritize self-preservation over all else, which set the stage for Darwin's theory of natural selection and survival of the fittest.

Another philosopher also advanced the humanistic social contract: John Locke. Unlike Hobbes, Locke was a Protestant Christian. But like Hobbes, Locke advocated for autonomous individualism that ultimately led to the rapid secularization of Western European society. Historian Jerrold Seigel argues that Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) marks the transition point from Medieval thought to a modern epistemological conception of subjectivity.⁷⁴

Like other social contract theorists, Locke did not base the goals of human society on transcendent principles. He acknowledged that people were self-serving individuals who wanted to survive the elements. As Christian intellectual Nancy Pearcey recounts, "Locke's picture of society is atomistic, where all that exists ultimately are individuals and their needs or wants."⁷⁵ Additionally, Locke further relativized morality by stating that religious truth claims are nothing more than "speculative opinions."

Gregory writes:

Locke asserted that "purely speculative opinions" such as "the belief of the Trinity, purgatory, transubstantiation" and the like give "no bias to my conversation with men" and are without "any influence on my actions as I am a member of any society." What seventeenth-century Catholics continued to regard as authoritative truth claims based on God's actions in history as promulgated by the church

⁷⁴ Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁷⁵ Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, Books, 2005), 382.

established by Jesus, Locke demoted to “purely speculative opinions.” That was quite a reclassification.⁷⁶

Furthermore, Locke would be among the most vocal advocates of a radically new idea: religious freedom. In his influential *Letter Concerning Toleration*, Locke argued that individuals have the right to choose their religion. These rights were based on his epistemological framework of autonomous individualism. It is not hard to see how individual religious choice eventually paved the way for a Western world in which one may choose atheism just as easily as Anglicanism. Gregory’s summary regarding religious freedom’s effects is useful:

In the late seventeenth century the future was far from realized, but the seeming solution for taming a disruptive, divided Christendom was beginning to be articulated. In the aftermath of religio-political violence and amid the continuing suppression of religious dissenters in one way or another in most countries, a bargain was struck. “Freedom of religion” would triumph, whereas Christianity as an institutionalized worldview would be abandoned like the wake left behind a Dutch merchant ship in the North Sea. By offering satisfaction to individuals who were understandably content to believe as they pleased and worship as they wished. . . . Such a society would doubtless be quite different from the forms of human life it was displacing, because Christianity itself was being so radically redefined as a private and highly circumscribed matter of individual preference.⁷⁷

The Enlightenment. The Renaissance and the Reformation gave way to the Enlightenment and its even greater focus on scientific advancement and human achievement. Many of the aforementioned philosophical changes were spurred on by the revolutions in the physical sciences as well as the fallout from violent conflicts within European Christendom. Pearcey vividly describes the radical ways the Enlightenment led to the secularization of Western culture:

As the medieval period merged into the Renaissance (beginning roughly in the 1300s), a drumbeat began to sound for the complete emancipation of reason from revelation—a crescendo that burst into full force in the Enlightenment (beginning in the 1700s). The credo of the Enlightenment was autonomy. Overthrow all external authority, and discover truth by reason alone! Impressed by the stunning successes

⁷⁶ Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 3606-3610, Kindle.

⁷⁷ Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 3625-3629, Kindle.

of the scientific revolution, the Enlightenment enthroned science as the sole source of genuine knowledge. . . . [I]t insisted that nature was the sole reality, and scientific reason the sole path to truth. Whatever was not susceptible to scientific study was pronounced an illusion. Though reason was touted as philosophically neutral, in reality it began to be identified with scientific materialism.⁷⁸

Epistemology: Reason—the watchword of the Enlightenment. One of the Enlightenment’s leading voices was philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.⁷⁹ Rousseau was born in Geneva in 1712 and died in 1778. His most influential contribution to the Enlightenment’s rapidly advancing secular humanism was his assertion that humans are radicals by nature. Pearcey explains what made his worldview so radical:

Rousseau said the way to grasp the essence of human nature was to hypothesize what we would be like if we were stripped of all social relationships, morals, laws, customs, traditions—of civilization itself. This original, pre-social condition he called the “state of nature.” In it, all that exists are lone, disconnected, autonomous individuals, whose sole motivating force is the desire for self-preservation—what Rousseau called self-love (*amour de soi*). Social relationships are not ultimately real; instead they are secondary or derivative, created by individual choice.⁸⁰

Rousseau defends this claim in his influential book, *The Social Contract*. The book is perhaps most well-known for Rousseau’s contention that, “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.”⁸¹ Every social relationship, according to Rousseau, was merely a construct that limited an individual’s freedom and happiness. Ultimately, society itself—including marriage, family, work, and religion—oppressed an individual’s autonomous choices.⁸²

⁷⁸ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 101.

⁷⁹ Pearcey suggests that much of modern communism—which at its heart is unflinchingly atheistic—finds its roots in the philosophical writings of Rousseau. She explains, “Most of the ideologies that bloodied the twentieth century were influenced by Rousseau. His writings inspired Robespierre in the French Revolution, as well as Marx, Lenin, Mussolini, Hitler, and Mao. Even Pol Pot, who massacred a quarter of the population in Cambodia, was educated in Paris and read his Rousseau. So if you get a grip on Rousseau’s thinking, you have a key to understanding much of the modern world.” Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 137.

⁸⁰ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 137.

⁸¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Chicago: Penguin Books, 2004), 1.

⁸² Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 137

All this raises at least one question: How did Rousseau himself live? He often isolated himself for extended amounts of time to develop his philosophy more deeply. Gregory emphasizes the fact that Rousseau valued his independence so much that he began to elevate isolation to a necessity in his life and philosophy. Rousseau illustrated his need for seclusion, writing, “[T]he work I had undertaken could only be carried out in complete isolation [*dans une retraite absolue*]; it would require lengthy and peaceful meditations that are incompatible with the commotion of life in society.”⁸³ Rousseau eventually reached a conclusion similar to Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum*. Rousseau became quite sure that only self-contemplation could provide incontrovertible answers to the meaning of life. He also brought his emphasis on individualism into his novels, which greatly influenced Romantic literature and subsequently brought secularized philosophy into popular culture. Rousseau laid the philosophical foundations for a Western culture completely dependent upon individual self-autonomy for its determination of “truth” and values. The epistemic default had shifted from a foundation for knowledge based in the objective truth of God to a relativistic individual epistemology where truth was based upon the individual to decide and discover for oneself.

Like Rousseau, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) laid the bedrock for Enlightenment-era rationalism through his most famous work, *A Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant wanted to build a bridge between rationalist and empiricist philosophers by arguing that all humans must submit to pure reason as discovered through experience. According to Kant, the Enlightenment happened so that humans could move beyond their “immaturity” by exercising reason. As a result, we would build an advanced society marked by peace and harmony. Kant wrote, “Enlightenment is the exodus of human beings from their self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to make use of

⁸³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres Completes*, ed. Gagnebin and Raymond, vol. 4 (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 565, quoted in Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 2559-2560, Kindle.

one's own reason without guidance from someone else . . . *Sapere aude!* Have courage to make use of your own reason! That is the watchword of Enlightenment.”⁸⁴ Future philosophers like Georg Hegel would dispute many details of Kant's metaphysics; nonetheless, the foundation was in place for an intellectual individualism that dominates academia up to the present day.

The conquering Kantian divide. Future secularists also found merit in a critical idea that has come to be known as “the Kantian divide.” Building upon Descartes' secular dualism—which states that mind and matter were distinct realms of reality⁸⁵—Kant further separated the empirical workings of the material universe from the immaterial realm of the human mind and volition. Kant defended the Newtonian model of science against Enlightenment-era skeptics like David Hume. Hume had argued that empiricists cannot claim to actually know how the universe functions; they can only perceive it to be certain ways depending on how the senses inform the brain.⁸⁶

Kant disagreed; he was convinced that Newtonian physics need not be bound to such skepticism. Therefore, Kant sought to argue philosophically as to why human beings were not merely cogs in the Newtonian universal machine, but rather individuals with real freedom, volition, and values. Chapter 5 of this work will feature a necessary critique of materialistic naturalism, which is essential for Christian leaders to combat secularization. But it should be noted here that Hume is closer to the truth than Kant. Ultimately, if there is no God and if reality is simply composed of the material realm,

⁸⁴ Immanuel Kant, “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?” [1784], in Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. 8, *Abhandlungen nach 1781* (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1923), 35 (emphasis in original) as quoted in Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 2934, Kindle.

⁸⁵ The novelist Walker Percy speaks of the “dreaded chasm that has rent the soul of Western man ever since the famous philosopher Descartes ripped body loose from mind and turned the very soul into a ghost that haunts its own house.” Walker Percy, *Love in the Ruins* (New York: Avon, 1978), 181.

⁸⁶ David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955 [1748]), 5.1: 55.

then there is, in fact, no legitimate argument for true human volitional freedom. Pearcey notes that Kant likely understood the ultimate consequences of his worldview.

Nonetheless Kant persisted, as Pearcey recalls,

In the end, Kant threw up his hands and simply insisted that regardless of what science says, we must act “as if” we were free. But that little phrase gives away the store: It implies that we know better, that we’re tricking ourselves, and that moral freedom is little more than a useful fiction. In Kant’s formulation, says philosopher Colin Brown, freedom, God, and immortality “look suspiciously like pieces of wishful thinking.”⁸⁷

Many have noted the lasting legacy of the Kantian divide: reality gets divided into two spheres—an upper story and a lower story. The upper story consists of individuals’ subjective realities that should not—indeed, *cannot*—be imposed as true for anyone else. The lower story consists of publicly verifiable truth that can be empirically observed and proven. Secularists claim this lower story consists of objective truths that apply to everyone. Pearcey’s book title—*Total Truth*—means to convey that without a worldview that includes the transcendent truth of God, no one can consistently live according to the Kantian divide. She writes:

Today the fact/value dichotomy has become part of the familiar landscape of the American mind. Children pick it up every day in the typical school classroom. Fields like the humanities and social studies have been taken over by postmodernism. In English classes, teachers have tossed out their red pencils, and act as though things like correct spelling or grammar were forms of oppression imposed by those in power. But paradoxically, if you go down the hallway to the science classroom, you’ll find that there the ideal of objective truth still reigns supreme. Theories like Darwinian evolution are not open to question, and students are not invited to judge for themselves whether or not it is true. It is treated as public knowledge that everyone is expected to accept, regardless of their private beliefs. By the time these students go to college, they’ve learned the lesson very well. . . . Do you recognize the dichotomy? The vast majority of students arrive in the classroom already convinced that science constitutes facts while morality is about values.⁸⁸

This unfounded dependency on the natural realm will be further examined in Chapter 5.

⁸⁷ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 105-106.

⁸⁸ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 107.

For now, it is enough to say that Kant's influence on the secularization of Western society has outlasted Hume's pure skepticism. Why? Because Kant at least gave a nod to transcendent qualities that people encounter every day in our cross-pressured sphere.

Albert Mohler notes the lasting impact of the Enlightenment upon Western culture, writing,

In the Enlightenment, modernist philosophers such as Descartes, Locke, and Kant confronted Western culture with a series of questions that ultimately transformed the notion of truth in the Western mind. The result was a totalitarian imposition of the critical model of rationality upon all truth, the claim that only scientific data can be objectively understood, objectively defined, and objectively defended. In other words, the modernist worldview does not allow for the concept of special revelation and openly attacked the possibility of supernatural intervention in world history. Modernity thus presented the church of the Lord Jesus Christ with a significant intellectual crisis.⁸⁹

The cross-pressured secular West. Enlightenment rationalism continued to grow and shift through the 19th century. This includes Darwinian Naturalistic Materialism which sought to provide a natural—in other words, an immanent—mechanism for the vast variety of observable life on earth. However, the most enduring consequence of the Enlightenment was a newfound reliance on human reason and individual ability to answer life's most important questions without reference to any transcendent sources of knowledge.

Taylor argues that the 19th century West provided the world something totally new. In short, the leading thinkers of the era rejected the biblical cosmos. An explosion of unbelief in Western culture led to a new social imaginary in which the entire scope of reality shifted from “cosmos” to universe. Though these two terms—cosmos and universe—are synonymous to many of us, according to Taylor the differences between them are immense. Smith explains this shift as “the move of spontaneously imagining our cosmic environment as an ordered, layered, hierarchical, shepherded place to

⁸⁹ R. Albert Mohler, *The Gathering Storm: Secularism, Culture, and the Church* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2020), 13.

spontaneously imagining our cosmic environment as an infinite, cavernous, anonymous space.”⁹⁰ Instead of understanding reality as a place created specifically suited to the needs of human beings, the universe became random, arbitrary, and anonymous and human beings therefore have no inherent meaning or purpose. The social consequences of this shift are difficult to overestimate. C.S. Lewis wrote much of his most famous literature—including *The Chronicles of Narnia* series, and *The Space Trilogy*—as an attempt to recapture the idea of the medieval cosmos. Lewis, as eloquent as ever, wrote the following in *Out of the Silent Planet* which clearly accentuates his desire to draw the reader out of “space” and back into the Christian “cosmos,”

He had read of 'Space': at the back of his thinking for years had lurked the dismal fancy of the black, cold vacuity, the utter deadness, which was supposed to separate the worlds. He had not known how much it affected him till now - now that the very name 'Space' seemed a blasphemous libel for this empyrean ocean of radiance in which they swam. He could not call it 'dead'; he felt life pouring into him from it every moment. How indeed should it be otherwise, since out of this ocean all the worlds and all their life had come? He had thought it barren: he now saw that it was the womb of worlds, whose blazing and innumerable offspring looked down nightly even upon the earth with so many eyes-and here, with how many more! No: Space was the wrong name. Older thinkers had been wiser when they made it simply the heavens. The heavens which declared the glory.⁹¹

One obvious consequence of secular society pitting the biblical cosmos against random, arbitrary space and time was that religion and science became cast as enemies. In prior eras, Christianity had produced history’s most renowned and accomplished scientists: Isaac Newton, Johann Kepler, Blaise Pascal, and the like. These men sought to discover more about God through his grand design of the cosmos.⁹² But during the Enlightenment, many scientists began to adhere to a purely mechanistic and naturalistic

⁹⁰ Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 71.

⁹¹ C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (London: Harper Collins, 1938), 30.

⁹² Pearcey states that founders of the scientific revolution during the renaissance “were inspired in their scientific discoveries by the conviction that they were revealing the intricate plan of a Divine Artisan.” Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 180. As a result of the Reformation, science had become a Christian vocation in which many intellectual sought to glorify God and discover more about him through new scientific discoveries about God’s world.

universe which had no room for God but rather glorified human reason and ability.

Darwinian evolutionary theory illustrates this worldview shift. Darwin wanted to explain “how blind and gradual adaptation could counterfeit the apparently purposeful design that seemed so obviously a function of mind.”⁹³ Before Darwin, almost everyone looked at creation and saw an intelligent creator. This instinct was so fundamental to the social imaginary that Darwin had to provide a framework in which a randomized, uncreated universe could produce the vast array of organisms that only “seem” to display evidence of creation. Pearcey explains that Darwin’s goal was to explain how purely natural, random processes could produce these seemingly intelligent features. Pearcey writes:

Surprisingly, Darwin himself never denied the evidence for design. His goal, however, was to show that the same evidence could be accounted for by purely natural forces. In other words, he hoped to demonstrate that living things only appear to be designed, while actually being products of noncognitive forces. Natural selection was proposed as an automatic, mechanistic process that could mimic the effects of intelligence.⁹⁴

In fact, Darwin inspired modern atheist Richard Dawkins to write a book entitled *The Blind Watchmaker*—a reference to William Paley’s famous teleological tome against naturalistic materialism entitled *The Divine Watchmaker*. Paley sought to show that the apparent design of creation can only be explained by appealing to a divine designer—to refute any arguments for the necessity of an intelligent designer, insisting that all the mechanisms of living organisms can be explained as the result of natural selection. Secularists have relied on Darwin’s arguments ever since.

In the 20th century, George Gaylord Simpson echoed Darwin’s blind watchmaker argument by insisting that natural selection provides the explanation for apparent design and “achieves the aspect of purpose without the intervention of a

⁹³ Neal C. Gillespie, *Charles Darwin and the Problem of Creation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 83-85.

⁹⁴ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 183.

purposer, and it has produced a vast plan without the concurrent action of a planner.”⁹⁵ Ultimately, the Enlightenment provided a sufficient naturalistic explanation for the complexity of living organisms on earth. This satisfied the intellectual elite who wanted to advance the cause of secularism in Western culture.

The clarity of the “apparent” design in nature that Darwin sought to refute is a perfect example of the cross-pressured society secularism inevitably creates. Secularists are constantly bombarded by the transcendent, so much so that they must create some sort of intellectually satisfying explanation. Cross-pressured existence among both secularists and theists in a secular society is the result of what Taylor deemed *the nova effect*. Simply put, the nova effect argues that the explosion of new worldview options in Western society led to doubt regarding the truth of reality that everyone experiences.

After all, Enlightenment-era Christians also began to feel the cross-pressure of increasing immanentization. For example, Smith argues that dogmatic young-earth creationism grew out of a desire to combat an increasing adherence to dialectical materialism and evolutionary theory. In fact, Smith argues that Christians unwittingly agree to fight intellectual battles solely within the confined reality of the immanent. By default, this gives the secularists “home field” advantage. Smith goes on to argue that fundamentalism inadvertently conceded its manner of arguing to secular modernism:

[E]ven believers end up defending a theistic universe rather than the biblical cosmos. Eliminating mystery as a consequence of Protestant critiques of allegorization, even believers end up reading the Bible as if it were a treatise on such a universe; in short, you get the emergence of young earth creationism. Indeed, we only get the so-called war between science and religion once the modern cosmic imaginary has seeped into both believers and unbelievers; at that point, “these defenders of the faith share a temper with its most implacable enemies.” In other words, no one is more modern than a fundamentalist. This is why the “face-off

⁹⁵ George Gaylord Simpson, “Plan and Purpose in Nature,” *Scientific Monthly* 64 (June 1947): 481-495; cited in Simpson *This View of Life: The World of an Evolutionist* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1964), 190-191.

between ‘religion’ and ‘science’” has a “strangely intra-mural quality.”⁹⁶

It is evident from the very beginning of secularized society that there was never truly a war between science and religion, or belief and unbelief. Rather, *everyone* in a secular society is cross-pressured to consider various alternatives due to the nova effect. As a result, both sides often reduce their dogmatism, and the culture becomes encamped in a “cross-pressured no-man’s-land.”⁹⁷ This arrangement becomes clearer as we move on to examine modern secularization in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Modern Secularism

Contemporary Western secularism is the culmination of centuries of ideas and events. Among the most glaring consequence of increasing secularization is the rising percentage of “nones,” that is, those who claim no religious affiliation. The Pew Research center has consistently documented the decades-long decline of Christianity in America. For example, from 2009 to 2019, the percentage of Americans who identify themselves as Christians has declined from 78 percent to 65 percent; meanwhile, over that same decade, the religiously unaffiliated has increased from 16 percent to 26 percent.⁹⁸

The last decade also saw a major decline in attendance at religious gatherings. The number of Americans who say they attend religious services at least once or twice a month declined from 54 percent to 45 percent; the number who said they attend a few times a year, seldom, or never increased from 45 percent to 54 percent—an apparently direct reversal of religious attendees in the span of just a decade.⁹⁹

Perhaps most notably, the gap between religious adherence is largest between

⁹⁶ Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 72.

⁹⁷ Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular*, 73

⁹⁸ “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” Pew Research Center, last modified October 17, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

⁹⁹ Pew Research Center, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace.”

younger and older generations. Among the Silent Generation—born between 1928 and 1945—84 percent of Americans claim Christianity, and only 10 percent claim no religious affiliation. However, among Millennials—born between 1981 and 1996—less than half adhered to Christianity (49 percent) while an almost equal number claimed no religious affiliation (40 percent).¹⁰⁰ The result of a changing metaphysical presupposition regarding the objective reality of a transcendent God has been displayed in a resulting decline in traditional religious service attendance. In short, America is becoming increasingly secularized—see Figure 3 below.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Pew Research Center, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace.”

¹⁰¹ Figure 3 is taken from the Pew Research Center, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace.”

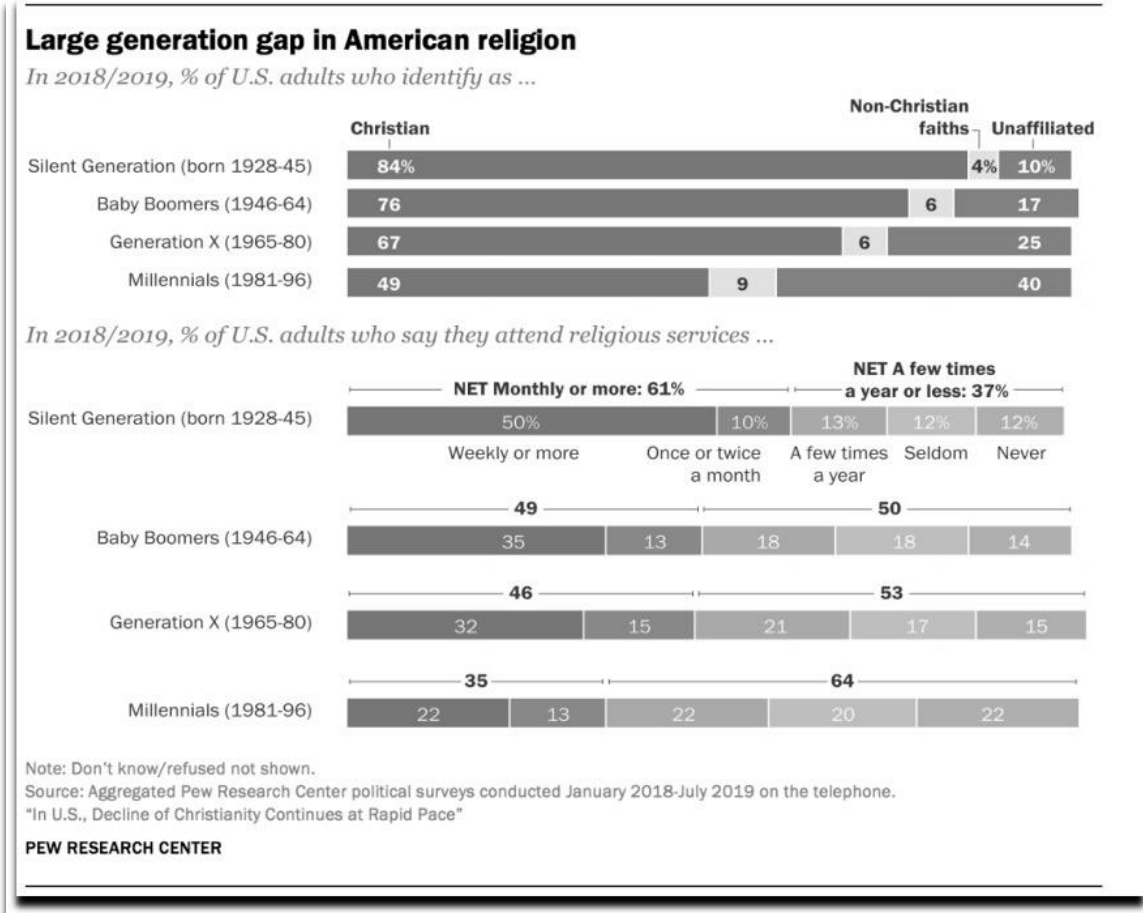


Figure 3. Generational differences in religious adherence

Yet, modern secularism cannot be so simply defined as a lack of religiosity. While it is striking that an increasing number of people identify themselves as religious *nones*, the truth is that people are just as religious as ever. The difference lies in the focus of their worship.

Michael Hout, a sociologist at New York University, wrote about this seemingly contradictory phenomenon: “Americans identified less and less with organized religion over the past two decades. Yet apparently, many people who no longer identify

with a religion are not consistently nonreligious.”¹⁰² Though recent research consistently finds rising numbers of religious *nones*, the issue is not so straightforward. Secularism does not produce people who do not worship; it produces religious adherents who worship virtually anything except the transcendent God of the Bible.

Researchers have consistently found that significant percentages of modern Americans who identify as *nones* in one survey or interview will respond with some sort of religious adherence in subsequent interviews. Hout terms this “in-between” status as *liminal*—from the Latin *limen* for “threshold.” He explains that these “liminal” secularists are “standing on the threshold of organized religion . . . and when asked about their religion, either enter by declaring a religious preference or step outside by stating no religious preference.”¹⁰³ Hout’s research shows that for every consistent religious *none*, there are actually two *liminals* who vacillate between various states of religiosity: “Findings here, based on three-wave panel data, double the estimate to about two liminals for every committed nonreligious person.”¹⁰⁴ In fact, for every person who consistently claims to have no religious affiliation there is one religious none who will later on claim to have some sort of religious affiliation—even if that affiliation is not traditional Christianity of some tradition.¹⁰⁵ These findings suggest that the vast majority of people in secular Western society are not truly committed to dogmatic belief or unbelief. Rather, they are willing to waffle between various—often inconsistent—views of reality.

Hout concludes that this is consistent throughout Western society: “Perhaps many Americans are like the Britons who embrace neither the organized religions nor

¹⁰² Michael Hout, “Religious Ambivalence, Liminality, and the Increase of No Religious Preference in the United States, 2006-2014,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 56, no. 1 (March 2017): 53, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.sbts.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=e84d981c-7afd-4b06-893c-3d8b2b22d2da%40sdc-v-sessmgr01>.

¹⁰³ Hout, “Religious Ambivalence,” 55.

¹⁰⁴ Hout, “Religious Ambivalence,” 60.

¹⁰⁵ Hout, “Religious Ambivalence,” 60.

commit to a denial of religion.”¹⁰⁶ Indeed, British researchers have reached very similar conclusions, particularly among the younger generations. For example, an article entitled, “Young British religious ‘nones’: findings from the Youth on Religion Study” communicates very similar findings—remember that Britain, as with the rest of Europe, is much further along in the process of secularization than the US—regarding the vast spectrum of belief among secularized religious *nones*:

Distinguishing between self-reported identities is important, particularly between atheists and the broader group of religious 'nones'. The former generally do not believe in God, while the latter may say they do. Indeed, Cragun found that only 56% of survey participants who identified as 'no religion' believed 'there is no such thing as God', and Bullivant similarly found the adults may say they had 'no religion' but still believe in God. Comparable findings have emerged from two recent British YouGov surveys of 8455 adults where fewer than half of the no religion group say they are atheist, and only 13% indicate that they are strongly anti-religious. Around half appear to be what Woodhead has referred to as 'doubters and believers': 5.5% and 11%, respectively, thought that there is definitely, or probably, a God or some 'higher power', compared with 39% and 29% of those with a religious identity. One in four of these 'nones' further say they have taken part in some form of spiritual practice during the previous month even if none had taken part in communal religious practices such as worship. Perhaps more strikingly, and as illustrated by Figure 1, only just over half ($N = 976$, 50.9%) of the survey sample identifying themselves as non-religious categorically stated that they did not believe in God. The largest group among the remainder ($N = 485$, 25.3%) were unsure about the existence of God, while 5.3% ($N = 101$) said they did not believe in God but did believe in a Higher Power of some kind, and 10% ($N = 192$) said they believed in God at least some of the time. Of the remainder, 6.1% ($N = 116$) said that they had doubts but did believe in God, and 2.5% ($N = 47$) were sure that God really exists. The following quotations from the qualitative data illustrate this diversity in beliefs about God.¹⁰⁷

The British study also finds a similar vacillation between religious commitments among the younger generation of Britons. The authors conclude, “Young people in the Youth on Religion study reported fluidity in religious practices that depended on where they were and who they were with. For instance, some participants

¹⁰⁶ Hout, “Religious Ambivalence,” 61.

¹⁰⁷ Nicola Madge and Peter Hemming, “Young British Religious ‘Nones’: Findings from the Youth on Religion Study,” *Journal of Youth Studies* 20, no. 7 (September 2017): 874-875, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2016.1273518>.

described how they would present themselves differently when with friends or with families and members of their nominal faith.”¹⁰⁸

Modern secularism is also marked by a rise in ambivalence toward singular religious commitment. Secularism by nature breeds a focus on the immanent and disregards the transcendent. As a result, younger generations of Western secular societies, often fail to ask questions that enchanted previous eras: Does God exist? Is there a spiritual realm? What constitutes morality? Many young people do not even contemplate such questions. As a result, when secularized people are asked about religion, spirituality, or the transcendent, they often do not know what to say apart from “I don’t know” or “It simply does not matter.”

The term *apathism* has been developed to describe this type of ambivalence toward transcendence. K. Robert Beshears defines apatheism as “indifference and apathy toward the existence of God. In our secular age, a person adopts apatheism when they feel a sense of existential security absent God, effectively dissolving their reason, motivation, and desire to care about questions related to his existence.”¹⁰⁹ The uncertainty of life is bolstered by secularism’s lack of immutable authority and meaning. Apathy is only one of many desperate states that secularism will produce in the human soul. Beshears concludes that recognizing this apathy and then asking penetrating questions to elicit a “wake-up call” to their ambivalence is necessary in reaching the religiously apathetic: “One way to generate interest in God questions is to cause an apatheist to doubt their existential security absent God by pushing on tension points in their

¹⁰⁸ Madge and Hemming, “Young British Religious ‘Nones’,” 886.

¹⁰⁹ K. Robert Beshears, “Athens without a Statue to the Unknown God,” *Themelios* 44, no. 3 (December 2019): 517, <https://tgc-documents.s3.amazonaws.com/themelios/Themelios-44-3.pdf>.

beliefs.”¹¹⁰ As chapter 5 of this dissertation will examine, once one begins to understand the fundamental weaknesses of secularized religious adherence, one ought to have complete confidence that the gospel can indeed awaken the sleeper as Ephesians 5:14 commands.

The impact of modern secular education. As the focus shifts from the historical and philosophical foundations of Western secularism to its modern-day consequences, perhaps no area of culture has played a bigger role in the secularization of the common person than what education has contributed to shaping the Western worldview. More young people than ever before are attending public schools and universities. Over the last decade the percentage of Americans who have earned a college bachelor’s degree has risen from twenty-eight percent in 2009 to over a third of the population in 2019 (33.4 percent). Even more striking is the fact that in 1940 just over four percent of Americans had a four-year degree. Once again, the generation gap is evident as thirty-seven percent of Americans ages twenty-five to thirty-four have a four-year degree compared to just under thirty percent of the population age fifty-five and older.¹¹¹ These numbers are important to understand when examining the increase in modern secularism because academia is perhaps the most secular institution in all of Western society. The secularization of modern American education can be traced back to one man—John Dewey.

¹¹⁰ Beshears, “Athens,” 523. Beshears argues that Christian ought to focus on raising doubts regarding the validity of the worldview of the apatheist. Only by causing alarm regarding the consequences of unbelief may an ambivalent person begin to see the possibility of eternally dreadful consequences as a result of their inaction: “If the apatheist is asked to think objectively about their beliefs without doubt, then disinterest will drain power from any penetrating questions asked. Objective thinking alone is powerless against apathy. We must first take a step backward in these dialogues to enlist the apathy-neutralizing aid of doubt. If the apatheist first *doubts* their beliefs, then their doubt will stir within them a curiosity-driven *interest*, which prevents their doubt from being defused in apathy and, further, inspires an exploration of self-discovery as they *think objectively* about their beliefs. Doubt about shortcomings in their beliefs stimulates an apatheist’s interest.” (Beshears, “Athens,” 521).

¹¹¹ Mark Mather, Paola Scommegna, and Lillian Kilduff, “Aging in the United States,” *Population Bulletin* 70, no. 2 (July 2019): <https://www.prb.org/resources/fact-sheet-aging-in-the-united-states/>.

No single individual has been as influential in the American educational system as John Dewey. In fact, the secularization of American public education finds its foundation in the educational philosophy and practice of Dewey. The radical change that Dewey began to implement in the American educational system has “often been described as a *revolt* (emphasis added).”¹¹² In his book, *John Dewey and the Decline of American Education*, Henry Edmondson stresses Dewey’s impact:

[T]o the degree that American educational philosophy is unsound, that weakness is largely attributable to the influence of John Dewey, the progressive turn-of-the-century reformer whose impact on American education is incalculable. Yet Dewey’s ideas, and their impact on American educational thought, are poorly understood, especially among the very people who run our schools. . . . These ideas, often imported into the schools without sufficient consideration, have gone on to undermine and distort American educational philosophy. The result has been the deterioration, confusion, and disarray we see all around us, a situation that will not markedly improve until we acknowledge and understand the intellectual source of our plight.¹¹³

Pearcy reaffirms the impact of Dewey on American education, writing, “John Dewey did more to shape educational methodology than anyone else in the twentieth century.”¹¹⁴ Dewey has many advocates today, but, as we will see, he has become “the *bête noire* of traditionalist educational reformers.” Edmondson goes on to illustrate the divisive nature of Dewey’s revolt: “To be sure, Dewey is not only controversial, but is regarded with antipathy by some, including the individual who, with overblown rhetoric, told me that Dewey is ‘the Antichrist!’ How do we explain this controversial legacy that only seems to grow more intense with each passing year, and with each drop in the academic performance of American student?”¹¹⁵ Answering this question requires understanding Dewey’s life and philosophy.

¹¹² Oscar Handlin, *John Dewey’s Challenge to Education: Historical Perspectives on the Cultural Context* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 16.

¹¹³ Henry T. Edmonson, *John Dewey and the Decline of American Education: How the Patron Saint of Schools Has Corrupted Teaching and Learning* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), xiv.

¹¹⁴ Pearcy, *Total Truth*, 238.

¹¹⁵ Edmonson, *John Dewey and the Decline of American Education*, 2.

Dewey was born in Burlington, Vermont in 1859, the same year that Charles Darwin published his *Origin of Species*. Dewey grew up in a Congregational Christian home.¹¹⁶ He even claimed to have had a “mystical experience,” with God in his early teen years.¹¹⁷ However, after entering the University of Vermont at sixteen, Dewey embarked on a slow, gradual process of losing his faith. He was heavily influenced by philosophical naturalism and Darwinism in particular. As Arthur Wirth notes in his biography of Dewey, he wrestled with the nihilistic claims of naturalism over and against the traditional philosophy of religion:

He was confronted with a philosophical problem that preoccupied him for a lifetime: How to resolve the chasms that seemed to separate the material and moral sciences. At Vermont this issue was represented in the gap between the organic, evolutionary view of Huxley and the dominating philosophy on campus, which Dewey described as Scottish intuitionism. The latter was a standing as the champion of traditional morals and religion as against the skeptical tendencies in sensational empiricism.¹¹⁸

Dewey completely discarded his Christianity in his thirties and embraced Darwinian naturalism in a way that could only be called religious zealotry. Naturalism itself would become his religion. Dewey was among the faith’s greatest evangelists as Paul Conkin notes in *Puritans and Pragmatists*, Dewey became known “as a quiet-spoken evangelist of a redeeming form of humanism and naturalism.”¹¹⁹ Pearcey recalls that Dewey even presented his “evangelical Darwinism” in book form: “Dewey even presented his ‘redeeming’ naturalism in a book titled *A Common Faith*, urging his followers to cultivate a ‘religious’ devotion to social ideals. This was a form of religion

¹¹⁶ According to Arthur Wirth, it should be noted that Dewey’s mother came from a Universalist church background, but by all accounts, was a very devout and active member of the local Protestant Congregational church throughout Dewey’s upbringing in Vermont. Arthur G. Wirth, *John Dewey as Educator: His Design for Work in Education (1894 – 1904)* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966), 6.

¹¹⁷ Wirth, *John Dewey as Education*, 6.

¹¹⁸ Wirth, *John Dewey as Educator*, 7.

¹¹⁹ Paul K. Conkin, *Puritans and Pragmatics: Eight Eminent American Thinkers* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 354.

consistent with his belief that humans were merely biological organisms seeking to control the environment through scientific inquiry.”¹²⁰

Dewey’s passion for Darwinism would go on to become the basis of his educational philosophy.¹²¹ This educational philosophy would come to be known as philosophical pragmatism. Dewey, along with William James, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. were the central figures in the development of philosophical pragmatism. The chief end of these men was to craft Darwinian naturalistic philosophy into a holistic worldview that rivaled traditional religion.¹²² They sought to create a worldview that would serve to affect every area of life from a naturalistic outlook, including education. Pearcey elaborates on these goals: “The pragmatists ‘sought ways of preserving some of the heart values of the older religion’—not by retaining any of the actual content of religion, but by finding ‘rich and inspiring versions of naturalism to replace it.’ Which is to say, by turning Darwinian naturalism itself into a comprehensive philosophy that would satisfy the need to make sense of life.”¹²³

This naturalistic, philosophical pragmatism affected American education in profound ways. Since naturalism asserts that there is no God, then it logically follows that there is no absolute truth. The goal of education, therefore, shifts from discovering realities *outside* of oneself to the ultimate importance of how each individual interprets reality *within* oneself. Objectivity is replaced by relativity. Ernest Bayles, in his book *Pragmatism in Education*, explicitly states that pragmatism is:

[A] matter of taking relativity seriously. . . . The best point at which to begin a discussion of pragmatism is the idea that no aspect or item of human experience can be dealt with as a “thing-in-itself,” but only as a figure against a background,

¹²⁰ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 239.

¹²¹ Dewey developed and advocated for a naturalistic philosophy of education totally opposed to the historical, classical Christian pedagogy as previously described in this work.

¹²² Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 228.

¹²³ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 228.

viewed from a given angle of envisionment or point of reference, and viewed by a person who brings to the situation a set of insights on the basis of which he tends to interpret the experience.¹²⁴

Ultimately, this pragmatic philosophy of education made teachers into facilitators instead of instructors. Their job became one of allowing students to construct their own answers based on their feelings of what works best—“a kind of mental adaptation to the environment,” (harkening back to Darwinian evolutionary biology).¹²⁵ As Pearcey notes, relativism would become (and continue to be to this day) the new standard of institutional education in America:

Of course, this is inherently relativistic: After all, what works for me may not work for you. (In fact, it might not even work for me all the time.) Thus pragmatism inevitably leads to a pluralism of beliefs, all of them transient and none of them eternally or universally true. Does this sound familiar? Dewey is the source of much of today’s moral education, where all values are treated as equally valid and students simply clarify what they personally value most. Teachers are rigorously instructed not to be directive in any way, but only to coach students in a process of weighing alternatives and making up their own minds. Any value that students choose is deemed acceptable, whether or not it comports with accepted moral standards, as long as they have gone through the prescribed series of steps. Why? Because, as one textbook puts it, ‘None of us can be certain that our values are right for other people.’ Each individual has to become an autonomous decision maker, determining his values strictly on his own. The underlying assumption of this approach is philosophical naturalism.¹²⁶

With philosophical naturalism—the basis of Dewey’s pragmatic educational philosophy—firmly entrenched as the core of educational philosophy in America, the historic Christian worldview roots of education in America was as good as gone. This seismic shift—from theistic underpinnings of education to secular naturalism, from objectivity to relativism, from teachers as instructors of truth to teachers as facilitators of opinions—would not occur without resulting in devastating consequences for education in America. When it comes to the area of education, the naturalistic worldview of John Dewey—and its subsequent application to Dewey’s philosophy of education—has had

¹²⁴ Ernest Edward Bayles, *Pragmatism in Education* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 2.

¹²⁵ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 239.

¹²⁶ Pearcey, *Total Truth*, 239.

devastating consequences for education in the Western world.

As previously noted, Dewey's naturalistic philosophy was known as pragmatism. His goal was to focus on the practical over the abstract when it came to education. However, as Edmondson points out, the results of Dewey's philosophy of education were anything but real-world, useful outcomes: "Ironically, Dewey's educational system has every appearance of being grossly impractical. . . . There are times when Dewey's unrelenting passion for discrediting and demolishing all that is traditional compromises his pragmatism to the point that his philosophy descends to nihilism."¹²⁷ It is clear over and over again in Dewey's writings that his antagonism for religion (and for God himself) resulted in Dewey employing authoritative tones regarding the evils of objective truth, and good or evil value judgments. Dewey, as with every other person who tries to hold to a naturalistic worldview, is irreconcilably contradictory as he sets up his own value judgments and demands that others abide by them; namely that they not make value judgments. As a result, Dewey comes off as unceasingly rigid as Edmondson confers; "Dewey's real opposition, though, may arise from his concern that a belief in objective truth is an impediment to the promulgation of his own philosophical ideas. Indeed, for someone so ostensibly concerned that students think for themselves, Dewey can be surprisingly dogmatic."¹²⁸

The consequences of this inconsistent worldview trying to be applied to education has been nothing short of disastrous for education in America. Anthony Esolen devotes two chapters of his book, *Out of the Ashes: Rebuilding American Culture*, to an examination of the utter failures of education in America. He writes that an unbiased examination of education in the West leads one to the following dire conclusion: "Any dispassionate observer must conclude that education in the United States, and in many

¹²⁷ Edmondson, *John Dewey and the Decline of American Education*, 7.

¹²⁸ Edmondson, *John Dewey and the Decline of American Education*, 7.

other Western nations, is in a bad way. I am not talking about troubles that are easily remedied or errors that require adjustment and reform. I am talking about whether education as the West has known it for eight hundred years is any longer possible.”¹²⁹

Ultimately, it is impossible to remove the biggest philosophical questions in life (Where did we come from? What is our purpose? Where are we going?) from one’s education and expect to develop well rounded, well-adjusted students. Esolen articulates this point thusly: “To take the highest things out of a curriculum is to attempt to win a temporary consensus by sacrificing what the education of a human being ultimately is for. We avoid religious questions at the cost of avoiding the most human questions. And thus education, which should be human, is reduced to the mechanical and the low.”¹³⁰ The Darwinian, naturalistic worldview of Dewey, which served as the foundation of his pragmatic philosophy of education, did exactly that – it served to remove those highest, most important of questions from education. As a result, the American education system produces students who, on average, are base and ignorant, unable to engage life’s most pressing issues.

Ethics: Practical Consequences of Modern Secularism

One’s worldview affects every area of one’s life, including one’s philosophy of ethics. In his book *Contours of a Worldview*, Arthur Holmes argues that only the Christian worldview can consistently make sense of every area of life in light of a Creator God. Holmes ultimately concludes that naturalistic philosophy is not consistent in its logical and practical fulfillment of its atheistic propositions: “Anthropocentrism gives way to a thoroughly theocentric approach to everything. And this, as we shall see, has

¹²⁹ Anthony Esolen, *Out of the Ashes: Rebuilding American Culture* (Washington: Regnery, 2017), 71.

¹³⁰ Esolen, *Out of the Ashes*, 70.

far-reaching ramifications for ethics and society, for work and technology, and for art and even play. What makes the world and history what they are is not impersonal nature nor arbitrary fate nor human device but rather the creative activity of God.”¹³¹

The impact of secularism on marriage and the family. There is perhaps no institution more vital to human flourishing than that of marriage. The Bible presents marriage as God’s chosen means for communicating the relationship between Christ and the Church: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church” (Eph 5:31-32). Therefore, it is vital to examine the impact that secularism has had upon this most important of cultural institutions.

How has a shifting metaphysic that disregards the transcendent God and an epistemology focused on self-autonomy affected the practical ethics of sexuality, marriage, and the family? Mohler argues, “An ethic of personal autonomy has produced successive generations who think of the world as the arena of their own personal fulfillment and of marriage as an outdated relic of an outgrown culture of obligation.”¹³² As a result, marriage is no longer seen as necessary to sexual expression or individual identity. The philosophical changes that began in the 1600’s culminated in the sexual revolution of the 1960’s.

In *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, Carl Trueman’s seminal work on the self-autonomous modern secular individual, the author remarks upon the fact that modern man is a reflection of centuries of secularizing thought, writing, “If individuals today—be they avid sports fans, shopaholics, or transgender people—place an inner sense of psychological well-being at the heart of how they conceptualize happiness, then

¹³¹ Arthur F. Holmes, *Contours of a World View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 70.

¹³² Mohler, *Gathering Storm*, 57.

they stand in a cultural line that includes Rousseau and the Romantics. The therapeutic society did not originate with the 1960s. Its origins go back centuries.”¹³³ The metaphysical and epistemological shifts previously detailed in this chapter, culminated in a new sexual ethic that place the focus on a relativized and subjective individual autonomy over one’s own existence. As a result, sexual acts that had been seen as contrary to the ingrained nature of objective reality—such as homosexuality, abortion, and transgenderism—have become the modern hallmarks of a liberated, self-autonomous secular individual.

The absence of a common metaphysical commitment among individuals in the modern, secular West, has led to a subjective individualism in which morality is at the whim of the emotional state of the day.¹³⁴ As a result, marriage and family became subservient to the needs and desires of individual fulfillment. Even the seemingly obvious differences between the two sexes has been turned into an arena for self-indulgence. Mohler writes of the devastating consequences of an ethic that disregards metaphysical grounding in a Creator God:

The attempts to redefine gender as unimportant, and a created tool of men to suppress women demeans and defames the will of the glorious, gracious God of the universe who made men and women with distinctive roles—not as a form of punishment or in any way attempting to degrade a particular sex. Indeed, as the society tries to liberate itself from the verity and virtue of gender, it only sows greater confusion, consternation, and chaos. Living outside God’s designs portends only to destruction.¹³⁵

The results of this shifting sexual ethic are evident in all aspects of marriage

¹³³ Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 194.

¹³⁴ Trueman elaborates on the consequences of modern secularism in regard to metaphysics and ethics, writing: “Take away the notion of human nature, and all that is left is free-floating, subjective sentiment. The seeds of today’s moral anarchy, where personal emotional preferences are constantly confused with moral absolutes, is thus to be found in the nineteenth century. Nietzsche, Marx, and Darwin each, in their different ways, abolished metaphysics, and at least the first two demanded that human beings face that fact and rebuild their meaning and identity in that new light.” Trueman, *Triumph of the Modern Self*, 195.

¹³⁵ Mohler, *Gathering Storm*, 69.

and family life in Western secular society. People increasingly view marriage as unnecessary for sexual activity. According to the Pew Research Institute, two-thirds of Americans say that pre-marital sex is morally acceptable and nearly 80 percent of people claim to have had sex outside of marriage by the age of 20.¹³⁶ Marriage is being delayed until later in life on average than ever before. The average age for a first marriage is now 30 for males and 28 for females.¹³⁷ The birth-rate has declined to the lowest percentage ever recorded as procreation is increasingly divorced from sexuality in secular culture, “The Wall Street Journal ran an editorial entitled ‘America’s Millennial Baby Bust.’ As the paper reported, the US birth rate has hit a thirty-two-year low. During the period between 1960 and 2017, the US fertility rate (births per woman) was virtually cut in half. The dramatic fall in the fertility rate coincided with the development of the birth control pill.”¹³⁸ The facts and figures show a shifting ethic regarding marriage and sexuality that researchers note, “coincide with the country’s relationship to religion continuing to change.”¹³⁹ Everything ultimately boils down to worship even in a secular culture.

The secular emphasis upon individual autonomy and an exclusive focus on the immanent sphere of existence has led to a widespread relativistic personal ethic. As a result, the institutions of marriage and the family have been transformed in secular cultures. The secular worldview has produced a shift in the area of ethics that has resulted in a decrease in reliance upon the traditional biblical emphasis on the importance of marriage and childbearing. Consequently, secularized cultures are marked by individuals

¹³⁶ “Key Takeaways on Americans’ Views of and Experiences with Dating and Relationships,” Pew Research Center, last modified August 20, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-takeaways-on-americans-views-of-and-experiences-with-dating-and-relationships/>.

¹³⁷ “Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 2016,” United States Census Bureau, last modified April 22, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2021/demo/p70-167.html>.

¹³⁸ Mohler, *Gathering Storm*, 60.

¹³⁹ Pew Research Center, “Key Takeaways on Dating.”

who divorce sexual activity from marriage, marry later in life if ever, and have far fewer children than any previous generation. These practical consequences upon the everyday lives of individuals and societies as a whole as the result of the encroachment of secularism are difficult to overstate.

Conclusion

In the end, this survey of the history of secularization shows that worldview is of utmost importance. The consequences of one's worldview affects every area of one's life. When entire institutions – government, academia, etc.– deliberately decide to adopt a naturalistic, nihilistic worldview, the devastating consequences previously examined will inevitably follow. Esolen concludes that all of the most meaningful aspects of reality revolve around worship:

The great questions of human existence are and always will be religious, whatever the answers might be that one culture or another, or one author or another, may have ventured. Josef Pieper says that in the whole history of man there is no celebration, properly speaking, without the gods, no matter how tenuous the association may have become. We may say also that in the whole history of man there is no education of a human soul unless the divine animates it. Otherwise it is mere training, fit for a dog, or habituation, fit for a machine, or political indoctrination, fit for no creature that has ever breathed upon earth.¹⁴⁰

One's view of reality will shape the way one lives, moves, and has their being.

Understanding the life-altering consequences of secularism should serve to motivate believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to more confidently preach the gospel that shapes and transforms the entirety of the human soul for God's glory and the good of mankind.

In summary, my research via literary review throughout this chapter has served to discover three key factors related to three primary areas of foundational worldview development—namely metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics—that are present in the historical secularization of Western societies: (1) A decrease in traditional transcendent religious belief and worship service attendance as related to metaphysical convictions. (2)

¹⁴⁰ Esolen, *Out of the Ashes*, 70.

A shifting epistemology as evidenced by an increase in reliance on individual autonomy and trust in rationalism. (3) A decrease in reliance upon and belief in the importance of a traditional biblical nuclear family structure as evidencing a shifting practical ethic.

Utilizing these key indicators of increasing secularism, I intend to determine if these markers are present in modern Cuencano culture. Before doing so, a survey of the historical context of Ecuadorian culture is necessary to serve as a backdrop to a proper evaluation of whether the aforementioned key markers of secularization are present.

Therefore, attention will now be given to an historical survey of the Ecuadorian context into which secularism is attempting to encroach.

CHAPTER 3

THE ECUADORIAN CONTEXT

Ecuador is a diverse and beautiful country located along the Andes mountain range in northwestern South America. Ecuador is one of the smallest countries on the continent. Nonetheless, vast cultural and geographical differences exist throughout the various regions and people groups of Ecuador—from the Afro-Ecuadorians of the western coast, to the indigenous Quichua peoples of the central Andean mountains, to the mestizo peoples of the major cities, to the numerous tribes of the Amazon rainforest in the orient. The country’s rich history dates back to the indigenous tribes of the ancient world and continues through the rise of the incredible Inca empire in the twelfth century, the Spanish conquest of Latin America in the sixteenth century, and the battle for independence and formation of Grand Columbia in the nineteenth century. This heritage all contributes to the vibrant culture that exists in the present day.

Christianity did not arrive in Ecuador until five hundred years ago. Within the first century following the life of Jesus Christ, the gospel had spread throughout parts of Africa, Asia, and Europe. However, by the time the Spanish invaded Ecuador in the sixteenth century, Latin America would receive a form of Inquisitional Roman Catholicism that was far removed from the biblical faith of the early church.¹

¹ Note that I do not consider the arrival of Roman Catholicism as having brought the biblical gospel to Ecuador. This is because Roman Catholicism relies upon the authority of their ecclesiastical hierarchy over and above the authority of the Bible. Therefore, the dilution of the biblical gospel through centuries of Catholic tradition has resulted in an official Roman Catholic definition of the gospel that is far removed from the biblical doctrine of salvation by unmerited grace through faith in Christ and not of works, lest any man should boast (e.g. Eph 2:8-9). Wayne Grudem concisely defines the differences between a Roman Catholic and an evangelical Protestant understanding of justification: “The logical consequence of [the Roman Catholic] view of justification is that our eternal life with God is not based on God’s grace alone, but partially on our merit as well ... [this view] ultimately makes forgiveness of sins and right legal standing before God a matter of our own merit, not a free gift from God ... and ultimately

The purpose of this chapter is to survey the history of Ecuadorian religious culture in order to highlight the vast differences between traditional Ecuadorian beliefs and modern secularism among young Cuencano mestizos. Researching the history of religious worldview development among Ecuadorian Cuencanos will serve to establish a baseline belief system from which it will be shown that many older Cuencano mestizos still operate under to this day. This chapter will describe the development of animistic, syncretistic, inquisitional Catholicism that was imported into Ecuador via the Spanish Conquistadors in the 16th century. Chapter 4 will then show that the traditional Ecuadorian religion practiced by many older Cuencano mestizos is not far removed from the deeply ingrained enchanted Catholicism of the Middle Ages as described in chapter 2. Establishing this fact will serve to show how remarkable the sudden turn to secularism among young Cuencanos truly is.

Ecuadorian Religious History: From Incan Animism to Catholic Syncretism

In order to sufficiently understand the encroachment of secularism upon Ecuador, it is important to undertake a brief survey of the history of the country in order to better understand the roots of the traditional religious worldview of the older generation. Several pressing questions need to be posed and researched in order to adequately navigate this task. What was society like when Western religion arrived in what is now Ecuador? How did the Spanish conquest over the Incans—and its subsequent forced conversion to Roman Catholicism, syncretism, and the resulting religious superstition—affect the religious worldview of Cuencano mestizos? These historical

destroys the heart of the gospel. That is what Martin Luther so clearly saw and that is what gave such motivation to the Reformation. When the good news of the gospel truly became the good news of totally free salvation in Jesus Christ, then it spread like wildfire throughout the civilized world. But this was simply a recovery of the original gospel, which declares, ‘The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (Rom 6:23), and insists that ‘There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus’ (Rom 8:1).” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 729.

research questions will be examined throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Pre-Columbian Ecuador: From the Inca Empire's Rise to the Spanish Conquest

The history of the pre-Columbian Andean people is truly remarkable. Among its most significant aspects is the domination of the entire Andes by one of the most notable empires in history, the Inca. The Inca Empire began in what is now southern Peru near the city of Cuzco in the twelfth century A.D.² There was little to distinguish the Inca from all their indigenous neighbors, that is, until they began conquering their region in the early fifteenth century. An oral, agrarian people of no written record, the earliest date that can confidently be established as the beginning of the expansion of the empire is AD 1438. At that time, Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui usurped the throne from his brother Inca Urcon. Under Yunpanqui (1438-71) the Inca conquered territory south to the Titicaca Basin and north to present-day Quito, Ecuador, making subject peoples of the powerful Chanca, the Quechua, and the Chimú.³ The Inca came to dominate indigenous peoples throughout the Andes that, by some estimates, have roots dating back thousands of years.⁴

During the Inca Empire's century of conquest, one of the peoples that they subjugated were the Cañari of the highlands of south-central Ecuador. In fact, the Incan ruler, Huayna Capac, so loved the beauty of the Ecuadorian landscape, that he decided to move his residence there from Peru shortly before the arrival of the Spanish in 1532. The

² Spanish eyewitnesses indicated that the Inca themselves only applied the term *Inca* to the rulers of the empire. The Inca emperor was believed to be the direct descendent of the sun god *Inti* who was the primary deity in the pantheon of gods among the Inca. As a result, the Inca emperor was worshipped and protected at all costs, including Atahualpa of whom it is said that his bodyguards held him up to protect him from the Spanish conquistadors even as the Spaniards cut off their limbs the bodyguards would not stop trying to protect the Inca. For further study on Inca culture refer to the following outstanding work: Kim MacQuarrie, *The Last Days of the Incas* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007).

³ "Inca People," Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified July 8, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Inca>.

⁴ University of Cuenca, *Claves de la Historia de Cuenca: Cátedra Abierta de Historia de Cuenca y su Región* (Cuenca, Ecuador: University of Cuenca Press, 2017), 17.

conquest by Huayna Capac would mark the beginning of the end for the purely indigenous Cañari people in mountains of Andean Ecuador. The Inca had such a dominating system of economics, culture, and religion that their influence still persists in Ecuador, and throughout the Andes region, to this day.

Following Huayna Capac's death, a civil war for control of the Inca Empire ensued. This conflict resulted in one of the candidates for the throne, Atahualpa, marching his armies south from what is now Quito to Cuzco, Peru destroying any enemies in his path on his way to becoming Inca.⁵ It was this vast Inca Empire of Atahualpa that the Spaniards discovered when they landed at Tumbes on the northern coast of Peru.⁶ Motivated by an insatiable hunger for adventure, gold, and fame, the Spanish Conquistadors, led by Francisco Pizarro, arrived in South America in 1532.⁷ As MacQuarrie recounts, the journey from pioneers to conquerors for the Spanish occurred despite seemingly impossible odds:

September 1532, led by the conquistador Francisco Pizarro, 168 of them had made their way up into the Andes—sixty-two on horseback and 106 on foot—leaving a cluster of lateen-rigged ships moored in the deep blue waters of the Pacific Ocean, or the “Southern Sea.” The Spaniards had eventually climbed eight thousand feet and then had walked directly into the lion’s den—where the lord of the Inca Empire, Atahualpa, with an army of at least fifty thousand warriors, was waiting for them.⁸

Pizarro proceeded to arrange for a meeting with Atahualpa. During the

⁵ University of Cuenca, *Claves*, 10. Many of the indigenous people in Ecuador hated Atahualpa because he devastated much of their land on his march from Quito to Cuzco as Atahualpa had heard that some of those tribes supported his brother's faction in the Inca civil war. Eventually many of those Ecuadorian tribes became major allies of the Spaniards in their war against the Inca.

⁶ “Pre-Columbian Civilizations: Andean Civilization,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified June, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/pre-Columbian-civilizations/Andean-civilization#ref583723>.

⁷ Word had reached Spain before 1530 of a legendary city known as *El Dorado* that was said to be filled with unimaginable amounts of gold and treasure from a lost empire in South America. In fact, one conquistador reported that he had visited El Dorado himself in a city called Omagua. “El Dorado was only one of the many mythical regions of great riches—Cibola, Quivira, the City of the Caesars, and Otro Méjico being among the others. The search for these treasures led to the rapid exploration and conquest of much of the Americas by the Spaniards and other [countries] ... The story is often mentioned in literature, as in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Voltaire's *Candide*.” “El Dorado: Legendary Country,” last modified August 12, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Eldorado-legendary-country>.

⁸ MacQuarrie, *Last Days*, 17.

meeting, the Spaniards kidnapped Atahualpa and held him hostage. They subsequently forced him to be baptized and convert to Catholicism and asked for a ransom of what would today be millions of dollars in gold from the Inca Empire. After receiving the gold, the Conquistadors killed Atahualpa anyway and proceeded to subjugate the entire Inca Empire for decades.⁹

The particular subject of this dissertation is the mestizo Cuencanos. The culture of Cuenca, Ecuador is a result of the overarching history of the country—particularly from the Incan invasion, to the Spanish conquest, to the present. Cuenca—short for Santa Ana de Cuenca—is located at an altitude of 8,500 feet in the Andes mountains of south-central Ecuador. Among the longest mountain ranges in the world, the Andes stretch over five thousand five hundred miles—from northern Columbia to southern Chile—almost the entire length of western South America.

The surrounding villages of major towns in modern Ecuador, like Cuenca, are still home to many of the indigenous, Quichua speaking descendants of the Inca. However, over the centuries following the Spanish conquest of Latin America, the Spaniards began to take the indigenous women as wives and mistresses. Many of the wealthiest Spaniards lived in the cities, and to this day the major cities of Ecuador are the main population centers of mestizos—the descendants of a mix of Spanish and indigenous bloodlines. Despite the growing population of mestizo people in Cuenca after the Spanish conquest, many of the characteristics of Cuencanos remained consistent with their agricultural indigenous roots: “Siempre junto a la tierra, los cuencanos, que son criollos, indios, mestizos y unos pocos negros y mulatos, todos casi pobres, descubren la riqueza del cultivo, siembran trigo y caña dulce, frutales y hortalizas junto a las plantas de

⁹ M. David Sills, “A Comparative Study of the Three Major Religious Movements of the Highland Quichuas in Andean Ecuador from the Inca Conquest to the Present” (DMiss diss., Reformed Theological Seminary, 1997), 22.

la tierra y crían ganado y cerdos a la par que cuyes y conejos.”¹⁰ (Always together with the land, the Cuencans, who are Indians, mixed, and a few black and European, but almost all poor, discover the richness of cultivating, they sow wheat and sweet cane sugar, fruit trees, and vegetables together with the plants of the land and they raise cattle and pigs as well as guinea pigs and rabbits.)

To further understand the development of worldview among modern Cuencanos it is vital to examine the influence of Roman Catholicism. However, the Catholicism of Ecuador is not like traditional Roman Catholicism in other parts of the world. Rather, the traditional Cuencano faith is a result animistic syncretism that has dominated the religious landscape of the region for centuries.

The Rise of Catholicism and Catholic Missions in Ecuador

With the Spanish conquest of the Inca empire came the inextricable influence of Roman Catholicism. In fact, Roman Catholic missionaries sailed with the Conquistadors to establish their religion in the New World.¹¹ Today, over 85 percent of the population of Ecuador—and Latin America in general—claims Roman Catholicism as its religion.¹² The effects of Catholicism upon the culture of Ecuador are hard to overstate. At the same time, the Ecuadorians have never totally abandoned the indigenous traditions and religious animism of their Inca ancestors. This has led to a syncretism of religion and a significant challenge for all future missionaries to Ecuador that will be further explored in this work.

The conquest of what is now Latin America by the Spaniards was virtually indistinguishable from a conquest of the region by the Roman Catholic Church. In fact,

¹⁰ University of Cuenca, *Claves*, 18.

¹¹ Sills, “Three Major Religious Movements,” 8.

¹² Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation*, 7th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 310.

the Roman Catholic system known as *requirimiento* (requirement) demanded adherence to the Church over and above allegiance to Spain. As M. David Sills explains in his book, *Reaching and Teaching the Highland Quichuas*, to be in submission to Spain was to be in submission to the Roman Catholic Church:

The new State religion of Roman Catholicism was instrumental in bringing the conquest to fruition. The Roman Catholic Church helped with the systems that brought about the domination of the indigenous population. The *requirimiento* (requirement) was basically a demand from the pope requiring absolute surrender to himself, the Roman Catholic Church, the Spanish crown, and all laws of the new government. . . . The conquest of the land was intertwined with religion so as to be one and the same. The laws passed by the State made the Roman Catholic Church the only religion. The Councils of the Roman Catholic Church made the State the enforcer.¹³

The combination of religious and governmental subjugation from the Catholic Spaniards led to many forced “conversions” among the indigenous Ecuadorians. Many chose to be baptized into the Catholic Church to avoid poverty, ostracization, and even death. All the while, the natives simply applied the names of Catholic “gods” to the gods they already worshipped. This produced an animistic-Catholic syncretism that still exists to this day. Catholic churches were erected upon ancient Inca temples, sacred Inca high places (*huaca*) were destroyed and shrines to Mary took their place. The many temples dedicated to the worship of the Inca sun god *Inti* became Catholic chapels and churches for Roman Catholic religious practice.¹⁴

Throughout the exploration and establishment of new Spanish settlements in Ecuador, Catholic priest and missionaries were ubiquitous. In 1534 Juan Rodriguez led the first mass in the new colony. In 1541 the Dominican missionary Gaspar de Carvajal and the Mercedarian Gonzalo de Vera began exploring the Amazon. In 1546 the first

¹³ M. David Sills, *Reaching and Teaching the Highland Quichuas: Ministry in Animistic Oral Contexts* (Chicago: Reaching and Teaching Press, 2012), 43-44.

¹⁴ Sills, “Three Major Religious Movements,” 45.

diocese was founded in Quito by Bishop Garcia Diaz Arias.¹⁵

While many of these priests and bishops were simply extensions of the Spanish government subjugating the indigenous people and treating them very harshly, there were well-meaning Catholic missionaries who attempted to proselytize and educate the indigenous “converts.” The most famous among them was Bartolomé de las Casas, who often opposed the Spanish system of abuse and exploitation among the natives.¹⁶

Dominican and Jesuit missionaries continued flooding into Latin America during the centuries following the Spanish conquest. However, despite all of their efforts, an orthodox Roman Catholicism, like that found in Spain and Italy, was never fully established in Ecuador. Sills explains the roots and results of this mixing of religions:

The [indigenous Ecuadorians] were adept at survival. They knew that they had to appease their animistic deities to survive in the Andean environment, yet they were also forced to pay homage to the deities of their conquerors. This led to a mixing of the religions to produce a hybrid that was neither the old nor the new. . . . They still see spirits and demons in all of nature and must appease them with sacrifices and specific duties. Animistic religion continues to permeate all of life but has simply added a Catholic veneer.¹⁷

To this day the majority of professing Roman Catholics in Ecuador still adhere to a superstitious syncretism of Catholicism and ancient animism. This syncretism and fearful superstition is seen throughout various aspects of the culture.¹⁸ Whether it be baby shoes and rabbits’ feet hanging from the rearview mirror of a taxi for good luck, murals of Mary or Jesus painted on city buses to protect from accidents, or homes with shrines devoted to ancestor worship and spiritual protection for the family. Festivals celebrating Catholic holidays occur in downtown Cuenca parading Catholic priests surrounded by

¹⁵ See Alvin M. Goffin, *The Rise of Protestant Evangelism in Ecuador, 1895-1990* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1994). Chapter 1 of Goffin’s book provides an in-depth examination of the efforts and impacts of Catholic missionaries upon native Ecuadorian society.

¹⁶ Goffin, *Rise of Protestant Evangelism*, 43.

¹⁷ Sills, *Highland Quichuas*, 22, 88-89.

¹⁸ Sills, *Highland Quichuas*, 92.

biblical imagery all while featuring countless ancient animistic characteristics like shamans available to bless the people via their ancestors' pagan rituals.

The combination of syncretism and harsh rule of the Catholic controlled government that resulted in forced conversion to Roman Catholicism would prove to be a major hindrance for Christian missionary efforts in Ecuador up until this very day. In fact, many evangelicals, such as Richard Reichert, consider lands where Roman Catholicism made first contact before evangelicalism to be among the most difficult places to evangelize.¹⁹ The impact of Catholic syncretistic religion and nominal Catholicism have continued to impact Ecuador to this day. Results from my qualitative research detailed in chapter 4 of this work will show this to be the case.

Led by Simón Bolívar, a coalition of peoples throughout South America defeated the Spaniards to gain their independence in 1824. Quito, Ecuador is acknowledged as the place of the initial call for independence in 1809. Quito is still known as *La luz de América, el primer grito de la independencia* (The light of America, the first shout of independence).

The various armies who gained victory against the Spanish throughout Latin America formed a short lived “united South America,” known as the Confederation of Grand Columbia with Bolívar serving as president. Interestingly, Ecuador’s government was so bound up with the Roman Catholic religion that upon the dissolution of Grand Columbia in 1830 Bolívar wrote, “Venezuela will always be a country of the military,

¹⁹ Richard Reichert argues that the gospel may have actually first arrived in Ecuador through Scandinavian Christians who arrived in Latin America in the sixth century—he cites anecdotes of ancient flood narratives, baptisms, and Christian concepts like the immortality of the soul and resurrection of the dead among Central American Aztecs that existed long before the Conquistadors came ashore in the sixteenth century. However, Reichert notes that Roman Catholicism erased any still persisting notion of the gospel with words very critical of Romanism: “Under the rude rule of the Spanish conquerors the last glimmer of the gospel was extinguished. Any hopes of fanning that faint spark to life were brutally betrayed by the fraudulent version of the Christian faith foisted on the peoples of the region. The southern continent passed through an even darker night than what it had previously known. When it emerged at last, to the light, a deep spiritual scar creased the soul of its people.” Richard P. Reichert, *Daybreak Over Ecuador: The Dawning of Evangelical Missions* (Quito, Ecuador: Sunrise Press, 1999), 228-230.

Columbia a country of intellectuals, and Ecuador a convent.”²⁰ Bolivar’s sentiment regarding the ubiquitous religiosity of the Ecuadorians was quite apt. Scholars note that Roman Catholicism had almost complete control of the country to the point that its influence impacted virtually every area of life for the average citizen.²¹

Ecuador’s liberation from Spanish rule would allow for Protestant missionaries to begin entering the country. However, many who understand the history of religion in Ecuador from that day until now would be hard-pressed to disagree with Bolivar’s seemingly prophetic sentiment regarding the overwhelming and lasting impact of its traditional Catholic syncretistic religiosity up until the arrival of modern-day secularism.

Conclusion

Despite the incredible Protestant missionary efforts in Ecuador throughout the last century, the country is still less than ten percent evangelical Christian, by even the broadest definition of term, with at least six percent of the country still completely unreached.²² The dominant religion in Ecuador is still an animistic, syncretistic Catholicism as described earlier in this chapter.²³ Among the small percentage of Evangelical Christians there is much false teaching and syncretism as well. Operation world notes, “False teachings seemingly prosper as marginal sects and Catholic syncretism rapidly spread, usually at the expense of [orthodox] Catholics or evangelicals.”²⁴ As a result, the traditional religion of Ecuador continues to be an

²⁰ Goffin, *Rise of Protestant Evangelism*, 1.

²¹ Marie Fetzner Reyburn, “Applied Anthropology Among the Sierra Quichua of Ecuador,” *Practical Anthropology* 1, no. 2 (1953), 17.

²² For more information on the current state of evangelical Christianity in Ecuador see “Ecuador,” Operation World, accessed January 30, 2020, <https://www.operationworld.org/country/ecua/owtext.html> and “Mestizo Ecuadorian,” Joshua Project, accessed January 30, 2020, https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/11713/EC.

²³ Ecuador remains 86 percent Roman Catholic. Operation World, “Pray for Ecuador,” <https://www.operationworld.org/country/ecua/owtext.html>.

²⁴ Operation World, “Pray for Ecuador,”

enchanted, superstitious, fear-based Catholicism that the older generation of Cuencanos inherited from their ancestors dating back to the invasion of the Spanish Conquistadors. As previously noted, the proposed secularization of the younger generation of Cuencano mestizos is truly remarkable once one understands just how entrenched the animistic, porous religion of syncretistic Catholicism has been for over 400 years.

Therefore, there is much work left to do, especially in the area of preparing Ecuadorian church leaders to combat the encroachment of secularism with which this dissertation is concerned. As the city-dwelling mestizos are impacted by secularism, the effects will ripple out into the more rural areas of the country before long. This may make Christian outreach efforts even more challenging among people groups that are already resistant to the gospel due to all the factors previously discussed in this chapter.

It is my prayer that this dissertation will serve as a resource for the church in Ecuador as its leaders prepare for the onslaught of secularism in their own context. As the next chapter will show, secularism is already infecting the younger generation of Cuencano mestizos. Therefore, like a cancer that will spread if not dealt with early on, perhaps God will grant grace to Ecuadorian church leaders to recognize the severity of the problem before it metastasizes like it already has in so many places around the world.

<https://www.operationworld.org/country/ecua/owtext.html>.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODS AND FINDINGS

My thesis is that several key indicators of a significant increase in secularism are evident among the younger generation of Cuencano mestizos—between ages eighteen and thirty-five. The purpose of this chapter is to report my research methods and results in order to determine if the thesis of this dissertation is correct. It is important to note that all researchers must recognize limitations within the scope of their area of study. In the case of this dissertation, I was limited by my *etic* perspective of Cuencano mestizo culture.¹ In order to overcome this limitation I needed to determine the best research methodology that would allow me to better understand the *emic* perspective of the Cuencano mestizos. The process of determining the most fitting research methodology and the resulting findings to determine the veracity of my thesis is detailed in this chapter.

Research Methodology

The process of identifying the worldview of the mestizo Cuencanos is vital to determining if secularization is taking place among the younger generation. Anthropologist and missiologist Paul Hiebert notes how vital it is for Christian missionaries—who should strive to be skilled cultural observers in order to most effectively reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ—to recognize and understand the

¹ As previously noted in the introduction, cultural researchers born outside of the project's target people group are by nature approaching the research from an *etic*—outsider's—perspective with the goal of better understanding the *emic*—insider's—perspective of the individuals within the target people group. Ultimately, as Malinowski stated, the researcher's goal is to “grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of the world.” Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1967), 4.

worldviews of other cultures. This is vital in order to avoid miscommunication and misunderstandings that often simply stem from cultural ignorance and faulty presuppositions on the part of the missionary:

[T]wo of the greatest problems faced by missionaries entering new cultures are misunderstandings and premature judgments. These are particularly damaging because we are generally unaware of them. As individuals we have strong convictions about reality. Rarely do we stop to ask whether others see it as we do, since it seems so obvious that things are as we see them. But other people see the world differently. The assumptions they make about reality are different from ours. Consequently their worldview—the ways they look at the world—is different. How, then, can we uncover the misunderstandings and false judgments we make when we enter another culture? Obviously, we must study the other culture to understand it as those within it see it. This, in fact, should be our lifelong endeavor.²

How then does a researcher go about discovering the worldview of a specific people group? Various research methods and worldview identification tools are available to the cultural investigator, but the proper choice of research methods often determine the quality of results in the end. Therefore, in addition to the historical research of chapter 2, I utilized qualitative interviews to determine the veracity of my thesis among Cuencano mestizos. The process and findings of my qualitative research will be examined before devoting the remainder of this work to the missiological implications of these results.

I established qualitative interview questions in the form of a fixed questionnaire that granted the Cuencano mestizos the opportunity to share their own opinions and experiences about the supposed increase of secularism among the younger generation. Qualitative interviewing allows the researcher to craft specific questions that will assist in the process of better understanding the culture under study. In fact, qualitative interviewing is an excellent complimentary form of research to literary review because it builds upon an academic portrayal of a people group to help establish a more holistic representation of the subjects under study.

² Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 111.

Qualitative interviewing also reveals the emic perspective of the research subjects by helping the researcher to learn about things in which he or she did not participate—or could not participate, such as experiencing the emotions or experiences of the subject—as Herbert Rubin explains, “[E]very step of a qualitative interview brings new information and opens windows into the experiences of the people you meet. Qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate.”³

Qualitative interviewing is an invaluable form of qualitative research in cultural studies because the researcher is able to make up for the experiences that were unavailable through simple observation. Rubin describes the benefits of qualitative interviewing, writing, “Through what you hear and learn, you can extend your intellectual and emotional reach across time, class, race, sex, and geographical divisions.”⁴ Participant observation often lacks explanation and understanding on the part of the cultural researcher. Therefore, interviewing allows for the opportunity to fill in the gaps that participation and observation alone simply cannot explain.

In addition to the limitations I recognized regarding my research, I also had to delimit my project in certain ways. Primarily, I delimited the overall scope of this project. My qualitative research was conducted among only Cuencano mestizos ages 18-35 for the younger generation and my interviews were controlled to a group of thirty representatives of each the younger and older generations. The total number of interviewees was 62. The varied ages of respondents enabled me to understand the perspective of both generations regarding the supposed secularization of the younger generation.

³ Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2012), 1.

⁴ Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, 1.

The interviews that I conducted utilized qualitative research through the instrument of qualitative surveys in order to gather data for this project. Several cultural researchers, including Carol McKinney, propose that using a fixed questionnaire as an instrument during qualitative inquiries allows the researcher to collect data “systematically and efficiently.”⁵ The survey consisted of questions related to the primary cultural markers of secularization, which I developed through my review of literature. These markers included shifting opinions related to the three major areas of worldview formation: metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. I formed the questionnaire to bring out the individual’s worldview via diagnostic, qualitative questions related to these three areas, which in turn helped to provide evidence of a secularizing worldview among young Cuencano mestizos.⁶

More specifically, the open-ended questions delved into the following key indicators of secularization: (1) A decrease in traditional transcendent religious belief and worship service attendance as related to metaphysical convictions. (2) A shifting epistemology as evidenced by an increase in reliance on individual autonomy and trust in rationalism. (3) A decrease in reliance upon and belief in the importance of a traditional biblical nuclear family structure as evidencing a shifting practical ethic.

The interview questions consisted of what Fetterman refers to as “Grand Tour Questions” and “Open-ended” questions.⁷ I chose to use a combination of the two forms of questioning in order to get a better grasp on the overall worldview among mestizos in Cuenca. The survey questions served to “elicit a broad picture of the participants’ world

⁵ Carol McKinney, *Globe-trotting in Sandals: A Field Guide to Cultural Research* (Dallas: SIL International, 2000), 104.

⁶ See appendix 2 for a sampling of the qualitative research survey questions and responses that I utilized in completing this project.

⁷ Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step by Step*, 51-53.

and to map the cultural terrain.”⁸ The open-ended questions allowed the participants to further elaborate on the reasons they felt the younger generation was more or less traditionally religious and why that has become the case. I then was able to ask “follow up and probing questions” as the Rubins advise in order to “clarify and complete the answers, making them intelligible . . . in order to get the depth that is a hallmark of qualitative interviewing by pursuing themes that are discovered, elaborating the context of answers, and exploring the implications of what has been said.”⁹

Once I completed the questionnaire, with the goal of eliciting responses outlining views on the three key indicators of secularization, I began to speak with a random sample of both the older and younger generations.¹⁰ I conducted over thirty interviews with both age groups, finding interviewees in large gathering places such as malls, parks, and university campuses. I chose these particular venues to conduct the qualitative surveys because they each provided a unique cross-section of Cuencano mestizos that would, in turn, provide a representation of the society. For example, malls are often frequented by younger more culturally attuned persons. Parks are often visited by families with children and young men playing soccer. University campuses provided the opportunity to interview students who have been impacted by academia in Ecuador.

I interviewed thirty-one Cuencano mestizos in the older generation (age 36 and older). There were seventeen men and fourteen women with a combined average age of fifty. I interviewed thirty-one members of the younger generation (ages 18-35). There were sixteen women and fifteen men with an average age of twenty-five. I attempted to randomize the selection of participants as much as possible by simply walking up to

⁸ Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step by Step*, 51.

⁹ Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, 145-151.

¹⁰ It should be noted that I conducted my research during the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. Consequently, we were quarantined for many months in Ecuador and had to pause the research on various occasions. The total time of surveys and follow up interviews amounted to nearly a year.

individuals in various situations at each of my chosen venues. I spoke with families seated on park benches, with young men waiting to play soccer, with young ladies working at mall kiosks, and with university students studying between classes. I contacted several of the initial questionnaire participants for more elaborate follow up interviews in the weeks after the surveys were finalized.

After completing the qualitative interviews, I had the interviews transcribed and translated. I then compiled all of my findings into a spreadsheet in order to begin the process of coding the results. Analyzing qualitative data can be challenging because the quotes and insights from the interviews do not simply organize themselves into a coherent conclusion. Coding is the “instrumentation through which a researcher may turn raw qualitative data into a communicative and trustworthy ‘story.’”¹¹ The goal of organizing responses into manageable data for my analysis was to produce a matrix through which I could accurately decipher the qualitative data in such a way as to produce an accurate conclusion regarding my original thesis.¹²

I chose to develop a data matrix in which I assigned each answer a score of (0), (1), or (2) based upon the degree to which the response corresponded with a more secular response or a more traditionally religious response. A zero indicated a very secular response, such as a statement that the subject never attends religious worship services. A one indicated a mixed or more neutral answer, such as a desire to get married but to only have one or two children. A two designated a very traditionally religious response, such as stating that the Bible is one’s ultimate authority. After inputting all of the corresponding coded responses in the data matrix, I averaged the numerical responses to each question, first for the older age group and then for the younger group. This data averaging allowed

¹¹ Mai S. Linneberg and Steffen Korsgaard, “Coding Qualitative Data: A Synthesis Guiding the Novice,” *Qualitative Research Journal* 19, no. 3 (May 2019): 259. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/QRJ-12-2018-0012/full/html>

¹² Coding is a form of qualitative analysis that allows the researcher to analyze the data in such a way that “a final conclusions can be drawn and verified.” Linneberg and Korsgaard, “Coding,” 260.

me to form a more holistic overall understanding of the participants' answers in their entirety regarding each of the qualitative questions and categories of inquiry. The overall findings of my qualitative research will be detailed in the following section of this chapter.

Research Findings

Before serving as a missionary in Ecuador I was aware of the growing number of religious *nones* among Millennials (young adults born between 1981 and 1996) in America, as I noted in chapter 2. *Nones* are known to sociologists as those who reply, “None,” to the question, “What is your religious affiliation?” In fact, Millennials have become known as the least religious generation in American history. Over one-third of Millennials (thirty-six percent) identify themselves as having “no religious affiliation,” more than double the percentage (seventeen percent) of their parents’ generation, the Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964), who identify as *nones*.¹³

After arriving in Ecuador and having researched the statistical trends in the United States, I became very curious to discover if young Cuencano mestizos—who also identify themselves as Millennials or *la Generación del Milenio* in Spanish—were following the same path as their counterparts in North America. Through informal participant observation and historical inquiry, I became convinced that this rise in a lack of religious affiliation was, in fact, taking place in Cuenca as well. However, it was

¹³ All statistics are taken from the Pew Research Center, which specializes in observing and documenting religious trends in America. Survey after survey shows the rapidly increasing number of atheists among Americas youngest generation: “Fully 36% of the youngest members of the Millennial generation – those between 18 and 24 when the survey was conducted in 2014 – eschew an affiliation with organized religion. This youngest group was not eligible to be surveyed as adults during Pew Research’s initial Religious Landscape Study in 2007. But the older cohort of Millennials – those born between 1981 and 1989 – was surveyed that year, when they were ages 18-26. In 2007, 25% of this group identified as religious “nones.” Among this same cohort, now ages 25-33, the share of “nones” has increased 9 percentage points and now stands at 34%.” Michael Lipka, “Millenials Increasingly are Driving Growth of ‘Nones’,” Pew Research Center, last modified May 12, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/12/millennials-increasingly-are-driving-growth-of-nones/>.

through the qualitative interview process that my eyes were truly opened to the prevalence of atheism, agnosticism, and apatheism among the younger generation of mestizo Cuencanos. The remainder of this chapter will serve to chronicle the results of my ethnographic research among the mestizo Cuencanos in Ecuador.

Preliminary Observations

It became obvious to me through participant observation that the Millennials in Ecuador were much more like the Millennials in the United States than the older generations of Ecuadorians were similar to their counterparts in USA. For example, I observed that the clothing of the younger generation was very similar to the fashion styles of Millennials in the States. Even in the rural indigenous communities I would observe the older generation wearing their traditional Quichua clothing, while their children's clothing looked no different from a typical teenager or young adult in the United States.

The similarities among the younger generation of Ecuadorians and the younger generation in the West extended to their taste in movies, music, literature, and a deep desire to speak English. I observed that in many places where we traveled, the young people could speak at least a little English—even in the rural communities where Quichua was often the primary language and Spanish was the second language. These similarities are even more intensified among the young people within the city of Cuenca, where, besides an obvious difference in ethnicity, there is no apparent difference in the clothing styles of young mestizo adults in Cuenca as compared to Millennials in the United States (see Figure 1 [faces are blurred to anonymize participants]). Since I was ministering primarily to Cuencano mestizos, I decided to focus my research upon this particular people group.



Figure 4. Young Cuencano Mestizos in typical Western dress

I was able to conclude through informal, yet thorough participant observation that Western culture had not only greatly influenced Millennials Cuencanos in “pop culture” aspects imported from Hollywood, such as fashion, movies, and music. Rather, the influence extended to holistic worldview issues, such as a waning belief in God, which resulted in dramatically different views on marriage, family, work, government, and society. For instance, while speaking with college students at the state-sponsored University of Cuenca, I discovered on multiple occasions that many of the students with whom I conversed would openly admit to not believing in God. Given the rise of the *nones* in America, this may not seem surprising to the typical observer from America, but as noted in chapter 3 regarding the history of Ecuador, traditional Ecuadorian culture is religious at its core. Therefore, for anybody to admit to not believing in God is a radical departure from historic Cuencano culture. Moreover, I found that numerous young college students were not at all ashamed to admit to their atheism, despite strong

religious—typically Catholic—upbringings.

It should be noted that I did not often find a “militant” atheism among the young Cuencano mestizos I spoke with—although I would come across the occasional devoted communist who would admittedly defend an atheistic ideology. What I found more often than not was an apathetic attitude toward the question of the existence of God or the importance of religion. In one instance, I spoke to a young man at the university who was not at all militant or enthusiastic about his admitted atheism. Rather, he did not believe in God because he had simply never thought about it. His attitude was cavalier toward what many would deem to be the most important questions life has to offer. This seemed to be a common theme among the young Cuencanos I subsequently encountered throughout my qualitative interviews.

In an article presented to the Evangelical Missiological Society entitled “Apatheism: Engaging the Western Pantheon of Spiritual Indifference,” K. Robert Beshears describes the growing attitude of religious indifference in secularized Western society. The definition of apatheism that Beshears provided in his article seems to be exactly what I have observed among many young people in Cuenca:

In his 2003 article “Let it Be” in *The Atlantic Monthly*, journalist Jonathan Rauch, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, offered a brilliantly pithy definition of apatheism as “a disinclination to care all that much about one’s own religion, and an even stronger disinclination to care about other people’s [religion].”¹⁴

Not only did I observe this apatheism among many young Cuencanos, particularly college students, but the theme continually came up in the qualitative interviews I conducted as a reason for the decline in religiosity and worldview shift among the Millennials in Cuenca. It is to the discoveries of these qualitative interviews that consideration will now be given.

¹⁴ K. Robert Beshears, “Apatheism: Engaging the Western Pantheon of Spiritual Indifference,” (paper presented at the Evangelical Missiological Society, Dallas, October 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/M6FW51>).

Findings Via Qualitative Fixed Questionnaire

Upon starting the qualitative interview process, I expected to find my thesis—that several key indicators of an increasing secularism have become evident among the younger generation of Cuencano mestizo—validated based upon my findings through historical research and informal participant observation. What I did not anticipate was the overwhelming unanimity of opinion regarding the veracity of the thesis. For example, in interviews with over sixty Cuencano mestizos, not a single person answered “More” to the primary question: “In your opinion are people in the younger generation more or less religious than their parents’ generation?” Incredibly, every single person I interviewed agreed that Millennial mestizo Cuencanos are less religious than their parents’ generation. The striking increase in secular answers among the younger generation in each of the three key worldview categories is clearly evident according to my research (see Figure 5 below for a summary of my qualitative questionnaire findings).

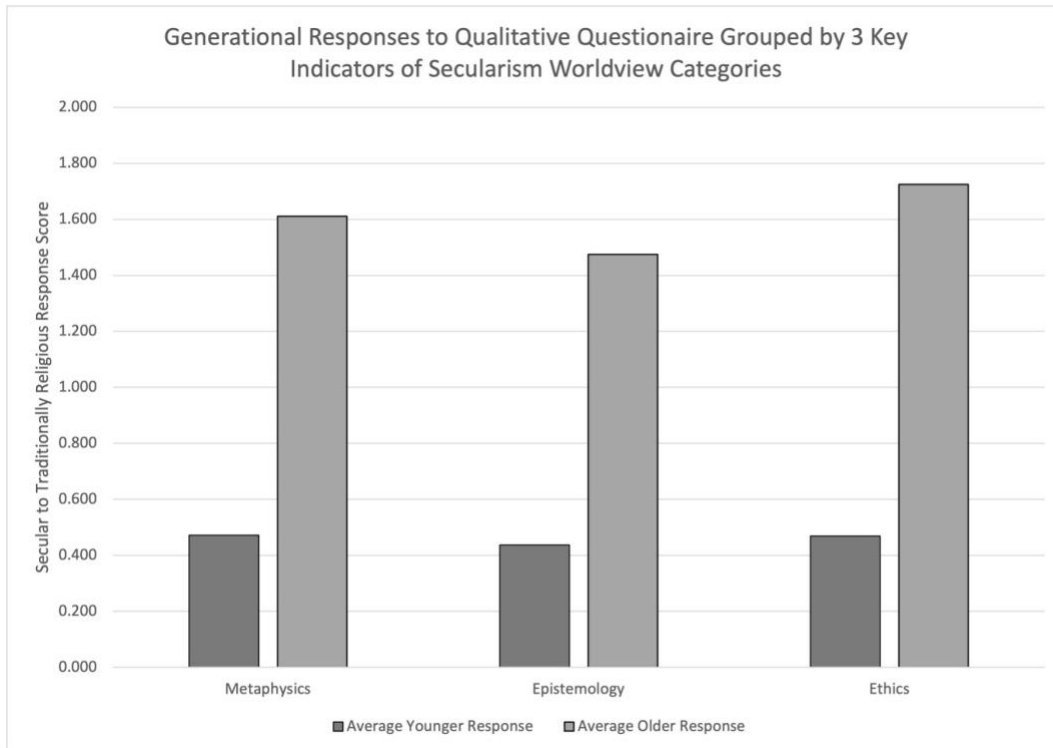


Figure 5. Generational responses grouped by 3 key worldview categories

The reasoning behind this decline in religiosity and change in religious worldview varied, as shall be shown in the section concerning my follow up interviews. However, it was the overwhelming opinion of older and younger Cuencanos—those who know their own culture better than anyone else—that the worldview of the younger generation has, in fact, changed significantly. I will now analyze the qualitative data according to the three previously mentioned worldview categories of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

Findings regarding shifting metaphysical beliefs. The questions for the first section of the qualitative survey consisted of open-ended inquiries designed to determine if the first marker of secularization was present among Cuencano mestizos, namely that a decrease in traditional transcendent religious belief and worship service attendance as related to metaphysical convictions was present. Questions were posed such as, “Do you believe there is a God, many gods or no God at all?” “Do you attend church or other religious gatherings? If so, where and how often?” “Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents? In what ways are you more or less religious than your parents? In what ways are other people of your generation more or less religious?” These questions allowed the participants to answer and elaborate on not only whether they thought a decline in traditional religiosity had transpired but also why they believed the decline to have occurred.

The opinion that traditional transcendent religiosity has diminished among young Cuencanos was pervasive among everyone I interviewed. The older generation averaged a 1.7 in response to the question, “Do you attend church or other religious gatherings?” with only three out of thirty respondents within the older generation stating they rarely if ever attend worship services. However, the younger generation averaged only 0.42 in response to the same question. Nineteen out of thirty-one young Cuencanos stated that they never attend religious services. A notable response came from a 30-year-

old female participant named Magaly who responded to the question, “Do you think that people of your generation attend church just as much as your parents did?” by stating, “No, because young people no longer care about religion. They believe they are their own authorities and are not interested in following God.”¹⁵ This reliance on oneself as the primary authority in life is a key aspect of secularism, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Even more striking was the fact that not a single young person thought that their generation was more religious than their parents’ generation. Every answer from the younger generation was a 0 in response to the question, “Do you think you and your generation is more or less religious than your parents’ generation.” Additionally, everyone from the older generation stated that the younger generation is less religious than their own. The overwhelming conformity of the answers was truly astounding.

The shifting opinions regarding metaphysical beliefs were evident in more concrete expressions of traditional religiosity, such as, “Do you think that our beliefs and actions in this life have consequences in the next life?” The older generation scored a 1.25 indicating a general consensus that our actions in this life affect our standing in the next, particularly in regard to going to Heaven or Hell. However, the younger generation only averaged a 0.38 in response to the same question. This data point indicates a vastly diminished metaphysical belief in the afterlife and the fact that how humans live in this life has an effect on them for eternity. A typical, telling answer to this question was given by 18-year-old Mateo Guillen who plainly declared, “No, because we cease to exist,” or 20-year-old Tatiana Vera who simply said, “I don’t think it matters.”¹⁶ Apathetic answers like this were common among the younger generation whereas a typical response from

¹⁵ The qualitative interviewees were chosen based upon the thoroughness of their initial responses to the fixed questionnaire and their willingness to further participate in follow up questions. I registered the interviews via voice recorder on my phone and then transcribed and translated them for this project. The average data coding scores to all questions and a sampling of the translated fixed questionnaires can be found in Appendix 2. Magaly’s response is found on page 187.

¹⁶ See appendix 2, 197 for Mateo’s response and 179 for Tatiana’s answer.

the older generation was like 54-year-old Susana Fernández who responded, “Yes, of course, because God observes our behavior on earth and will judge us accordingly.”¹⁷

Reasons given for this dramatic shift in metaphysical belief will be further examined later in this chapter. However, many of the members of the older generation placed the blame upon themselves for the lack of traditional religiosity among the younger generation. Silvia, a 67-year-old female Cuencana stated, “I believe that my generation did not educate their children in faith, that is why the younger generation no longer attends church because they were not well educated.”¹⁸ The older generation lamenting the increasing secularization of the younger generation was a common theme throughout my research.

Findings regarding epistemological commitments. The second section of inquiry within the fixed questionnaire sought to discover how the two generations thought through questions regarding human knowledge, truth, and epistemological authority. My historical inquiry into secularism discovered that a key indicator of increasing secularization is a shifting epistemology as evidenced by an increase in reliance on individual autonomy and trust in humanistic rationalism. I designed the questions in the second section to reveal whether or not the participants were relying more on divine revelation for truth and knowledge or whether they were exhibiting a more secular trust in themselves as the arbiters of truth and authority. A sample of these questions were “How do you determine whether something is true? How do you determine right from wrong?” and “Who or what is the ultimate authority in your life?”

The results of the qualitative questionnaire certainly affirmed an increased reliance upon individual autonomy and rationalism among the younger generation as

¹⁷ Appendix 2, 173.

¹⁸ Appendix 2, 164.

compared to the older generation of Cuencano mestizos. For example, among the older generation, the average response to the question, “Who or what is the ultimate authority in your life?” was a 1.3, indicating a very traditionally religious understanding of God or the Bible as one’s authority. Common answers among the older generations included very religious responses such as Irma, a 46-year-old female, stating, “The Word of God is my ultimate authority.”¹⁹ The contrast with the younger generation is clear. They averaged only 0.64 regarding the same question on epistemological authority. A typical response regarding one’s supreme authority came from Mateo who said, “I am the highest authority in my life.”²⁰ Several younger Cuencanos displayed seemingly no hesitation in declaring that no one has authority over their lives except they themselves. Interestingly, there were several respondents from the older generation who gave very secular responses, such as Guillermo Cisneros, 42, who remarked that he determines what is true, “Based on what I see or experience.”²¹

Responses like Guillermo’s regarding epistemological questions made the difference between young and old in this category the lowest variation at just 0.66. This score represented the closest of the three key indicators despite significantly higher scores among the older generation. Perhaps this indicates a knowledge of proper responses regarding metaphysical norms such as believing in God or going to church alongside an inability of the older generation to apply how their worldview actually operates in daily decisions. As previously noted, several within the older generation remarked that younger people are not as committed to traditional religion because the older generation did a poor job of discipling them in the faith. This could be evidence of the outworking of that lack of parental guidance.

¹⁹ Appendix 2, 181.

²⁰ Appendix 2, 197.

²¹ Appendix 2, 162.

The relativity of truth and subjectivity of morality was on full display among the younger generation. The responses to the question, “How do you and your generation determine whether something is right or wrong?” generated a score of only 0.18—the second lowest score of any question, behind only the 0 average response to “Do you think you and your generation are more or less religious than your parents’ generation?” A remarkably lower data point than the 1.4 average of the older generation who clearly view truth in a more absolute fashion. The typical subjective and relativistic approach to knowledge is evident in answers like Ana Lucia, 34, who responded that she and her generation determines right and wrong, “Depending on the experience that each individual has.”²² There were also several responses arguing that the younger generation commonly appeals solely to the immanent sphere to determine truth, such as Mayra Sanchez, 27, who responded, “My generation only believes what it sees.”²³

Many of the answers of the younger generation regarding epistemological discernment of truth relied upon investigation and “science” to determine veracity. Leon, 35, responded, “We must question everything. We must investigate all claims and study to know the truth,” or Jose, 26, who says that in order to determine if something is true, “Everything must be verified by science.” This clear trust in human rationalism to determine reality is a central underpinning of a secular worldview, regardless of whether the individual could fully articulate his reliance upon rationalism. Furthermore, responses like Tatiana’s to epistemological questions indicate an unflinching commitment to personal autonomy and subjective morality: “In what way do you think religion dictates good or bad behavior in the people in their lives?” I believe that I make my own religion, according to what I consider to be right or wrong.” Contrasting the many answers like this among older Cuencanos with traditionally religious responses—like Manuel, 50,

²² Appendix 2, 203.

²³ Appendix 2, 199.

“‘How do you know whether something is true?’ The Word of the Bible”; or Leonidas, 42, “According to the Word of God and through fasting and praying”—strikingly delineates the epistemological shift from reliance on revelation to self-autonomy.²⁴

The utter dependency upon and worship of self-autonomy is evident among the younger generation of Cuencano mestizos. This fact serves to illustrate the truth of Herberg who, as noted, concluded, “So long as he pursues this quest in self-sufficiency, relying on his own virtue, wisdom, or piety, it will not be God that he finds, but an idol—the self, or some aspect of the self, writ large, projected, objectified, and worshiped.”²⁵

Findings regarding ethical implications of worldview. My historical inquiry revealed that a primary practical outworking of increasing secularization is a decrease in reliance upon and belief in the importance of a traditional biblical nuclear family structure. As noted in chapter 2, secularists, beginning with Rosseau, argued that one must be totally free of entanglements in order to obtain a truly self-realized existence. Marriage and children are the primary “burdens” that limit modern secular man. Andrew Taggart frames the issue:

This ascetic conception of the good life leaves no room for marriage and parenthood. A long-term commitment to a woman and children opens one to enslavement. Family life is a constant disruption. Secularism requires a strict regimen [of self-focus]. You cannot sleep soundly when your child wails all night with a cough and fever. You cannot perfect yourself when you must always consider your wife’s needs. It is now good for man to be alone.²⁶

Understanding the secular opposition to marriage and children should produce little surprise when one of the primary practical indicators of an increasing secularism is a decline and delay in marriage, in addition to a decline in birth rate.

²⁴ Appendix 2, 175 for Manuel and 183 for Leonidas.

²⁵ Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (New York: Doubleday, 2012), 350.

²⁶ Andrew Taggart, “Secular Monks,” *First Things Journal* 20, no. 3 (March 2020), <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2020/03/secular-monks>.

Questions such as, “Do you think that marriage and family are important?” and “Are you married? If not and you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have, what would you choose?” revealed that the attitude regarding marriage and children among young Cuencano mestizos is very much in line with the rest of the secularizing Western world. While the older generation often came from parents married at an early age having had many children, the younger people I interviewed were almost never married and had little desire to get married. If they wanted children at all the answer as to how many was often one or two at most. For example, Guillermo, 42, when asked if he thinks that youth value marriage he responded, “In my time yes, now people see it as a contract and an economic burden.”²⁷ Mauro Ayanza, 56, added, “I do not think the younger generation values marriage and children. They have a lot of freedom and do not want to have any responsibilities.”²⁸

The overall average of the five questions for the category was 0.46 for the younger generation compared to 1.7 for the older generation—the largest gap of the three categories of key indicators of increasing secularism. Isabel, 35, reiterated this shifting idea of marriage among young people when asked if she thought the younger generation considers family and children as something important, saying, “I don’t think so, because young people want to enjoy and experience everything they see in media and on the internet. They no longer have the desire to marry, and if they do, they marry at a very adult age and no longer wish to have any children.” Many in the older generation agreed with this sentiment. Maci, 65, said, “I think that young people no longer value family or marriage. They no longer want to commit themselves and they are more liberal. I consider that it is due to the influence of technology and television.”²⁹

²⁷ Appendix 2, 162.

²⁸ Appendix 2, 168.

²⁹ Appendix 2, 185.

Even while many of the younger generation came from more traditionally large families, averaging a 1.3 when asked to describe their families growing up, their desire to emulate a similar family was simply absent. Only one of the 31 youth I interviewed wanted to be married younger than thirty or have more than two children. Several young people blatantly admitted that they view marriage as nothing more than an unnecessary social construct. Tatiana, 20, exemplified this attitude, stating, “I think family is important but not marriage. Marriage is just a social contract. I don’t think it’s necessary.”³⁰

It logically follows that since young people do not value marriage as a whole their view of non-traditional family structures, such as gay marriage, would be more secularized as well. That certainly proved to be the case. The younger generation averaged a very secular response score of .375 when asked whether they view any family structure as valid besides a heterosexual couple. Among the older generation the score was 1.5. Even as many older people gave answers similar to Mayra, 27, “I believe that God created man and woman to form families, it should not be otherwise,” a majority of the younger generation echoed statements like that of Adrian, 26, who said he “respects and accepts all family structures.”³¹

The practical outworking of a traditional biblical worldview regarding the importance of family to both the individual members and the society at large has been replaced in secular cultures by a radical self-concern and desire for detachment from as much responsibility as possible. The ethical significance of this detachment of sex from marriage and children is already having dire consequences in secular cultures all over the world. Birth-rates have plummeted, abortions are rampant, and divorce is common. The economic element of delaying marriage and having fewer children seems too good to

³⁰ Appendix 2, 179.

³¹ Appendix 2, 199.

pass up until people realize that they will have no one to rely on, except the government, when they are elderly and in need of long-term care. The fact that secular ethics are most exemplified in the shifting attitudes regarding marriage and family are both clear among young Cuencano mestizos.

Findings Via Follow-Up Qualitative Interviews

The opinion that traditional transcendental religiosity has diminished among young Cuencanos was pervasive among everyone I interviewed, however, the reasons given for this decline in religiosity varied. Follow-up interviews to the fixed questionnaire that I conducted with several respondents sought to allow the participants to elaborate on why this worldview shift was taking place. I discovered various reasons for the worldview change upon asking follow up and probing questions of the interviewees: “Why do you think this change in religious commitment has taken place? What factors have most influenced the decline of traditional religiosity among young people in Cuenca?” After conducting various interviews, I sought to develop “thick descriptions” to properly analyze and interpret the qualitative data.³² I have included many of those thick descriptions in this section of my research findings.

A sampling of the responses that followed displays a few common themes as reasons for the change in worldview—chief among them being the influence of Western philosophy and culture through media, especially the internet, as the following response from Tamar, a 28-year-old Cuencana, demonstrates: “Acculturation is a process immersed in global influences which propagate ideological diversity. The dissemination

³² “Thick descriptions,” though often attributed originally to anthropologist Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, was actually first coined by Gilbert Ryle—as Geertz himself notes. Ryle authored *Concept of the Mind* in 1949 in which “he discussed in great detail ‘the description of intellectual work’ and how ‘thick descriptions’ involve understanding and absorbing the context of the situation or behavior. It also involves ascribing present and future intentionality to the behavior.” Joseph G. Ponterotto, “Brief Note on the Origins, Evolution, and Meaning of the Qualitative Research Term ‘Thick Description,’” *The Qualitative Report* 11, no. 3 (September 2006): 538-549.

of technologies is a fundamental aspect of the ideological changes within our youth.” A 22-year-old man named Adrian echoed Tamar’s sentiments: “Technological development and global communication have now given everyone greater access to information than in previous generations. I think this has allowed other cultures and ideas to greatly influence young Cuencanos.”³³ Many of the younger people I interviewed seemed to lament the rise in dependence upon technology and its influence upon Cuencano culture while at the same time recounting their own struggles to properly discipline themselves to use social media, television etc. in moderation. It seems as if they understand the many negative impacts that technology is having upon themselves and their culture yet they are not sure how to mitigate those affects.

Follow-up questions with Vicente, 48, allowed an Ecuadorian voice from the older generation to elaborate on how the media has transported Western secular philosophies and values to Cuenca. Note that he mentions the internet as the primary reason that young Cuencanos are more secular now:

Yes, I believe that [young people] are less religious than their parents and this is primarily because of the means of communication that are available to them, particularly the internet. The world has been globalized. Therefore, young people are not listening only to their parents but also to many other voices. Therefore, they are not learning about religion in the traditional manner. Rather, they are learning about everything in a totally different way than anybody has in the past.³⁴

Vicente was convinced that the secularization of young Cuencanos has a direct correlation to the widespread access the younger generation now has to divergent points of view. I interpreted Vicente’s comments to be a lament upon the fact that Christian parents were not only failing to disciple their own children with the truths of the Christian faith, but those same parents were also allowing their children to be disciplined by a world

³³ All of the follow-up interviewee responses were gathered at typeform.com to keep track of everyone’s statements: “Secularism Interviews,” <https://admin.typeform.com/form/N9Enc1/results#responses>, last modified January 2021.

³⁴ “Secularism Interviews,” <https://admin.typeform.com/form/N9Enc1/results#responses>, last modified January 2021.

previously foreign to Cuencano culture.

The influence of technology—which is seemingly ubiquitous the world-over in the lives of young people—and its ability to facilitate the spread of secular ideologies was clearly a primary reason given for the decline in religiosity among young mestizo Cuencanos. While the purpose of this dissertation is not to pin down a reason for secularization among young Cuencano mestizos—rather simply establishing that secularization is in fact occurring is the telos—understanding the opinions of Ecuadorians as to why has served helpful as I consider how to best equip evangelical Christian leaders in the country to combat the encroachment of secularism in their midst. This will be further detailed in chapter 5.

The influence of secularized higher education in Cuenca. My experiences doing ministry on college campuses in Cuenca, particularly at the state-run University of Cuenca, highlighted the fact that the Cuencanos in college were very similar to college students in the United States—both in secular philosophy and social activities. However, the qualitative interviews seemed to suggest that the secularization of Millennial Cuencanos, while perhaps accelerated by time at the university, was actually happening regardless of whether the young person was college educated or not. As previously discussed, the apathy toward religion among young people was something that the interviewees pointed to among the educated and the non-educated mestizo Millennials. For example, a 22-year-old lady in Cuenca named Paola remarked that many young Cuencanos are not even thinking about the metaphysical consequences of their secularized philosophies. Rather, they simply want to be in control and have fun without the responsibilities that come along with religious commitment:

Young people now think in an individualistic manner more than anything. They do not think that they need anybody else to show them the way forward. They have a much more liberal worldview in which they absolutely determine how they should live their own lives and they don't want anybody to tell them otherwise or restrict them in any way. The whole secular world teaches that religion deprives us of a lot

of fun and that we are not objects to be controlled but rather we are totally free to do as we wish.³⁵

Comments like this from Paola certainly seem to echo my historical research regarding a key marker of secularization being that the epistemic default had shifted from a foundation for knowledge based in the objective truth of God to a relativistic individual epistemology where truth was based upon the individual's autonomous discovery. Within the Cuencano context, this shift away from a family and religious oriented morality to a self-autonomous determination of truth and ethics is truly remarkable. Cuenca is a very familial culture in which individualism is often frowned upon. Yet, secularism is seemingly changing mindset of young mestizos in such a dramatic way that they are willing to diverge from centuries of familial customs to begin resembling the individualism that is so often characteristic of Western Europe and the USA.

Vicente also pointed out that the secularization of education has had an impact on the recent changes in worldview among young people, though he also suggested it was not the primary factor. He was also amazed at how quickly these changes have taken place, in less than twenty years in his opinion:

The University of Cuenca is completely secular. There aren't any Christian universities in this city. Only Catholic and secular. There is no difference between the atheistic philosophies taught in the University of Cuenca and the universities in the USA. There is much libertinism from the very first day of classes. All these things have completely changed from what it was like only fifteen to twenty years ago.³⁶

Therefore, according to multiple interviewees the secularization of education has had an impact on the decline of religion among Millennial mestizos in Cuenca, but it was rarely listed as the primary driving force behind this secularization of worldview.

One surprising revelation that came about through the qualitative interview

³⁵ "Secularism Interviews," <https://admin.typeform.com/form/N9Enc1/results#responses>, last modified January 2021.

³⁶ "Secularism Interviews," <https://admin.typeform.com/form/N9Enc1/results#responses>, last modified January 2021.

process is that secularization in education was often attributed to the teachings of Marxist and communist philosophies at the state universities in Cuenca. These political philosophies are atheistic at their core, and secular professors in the universities are apparently encouraging their students to seriously consider them as viable alternatives to Western capitalism. Paola, a student at the university of Cuenca, described the dissemination of these atheistic political philosophies:

I have seen the philosophy of communism taught in many classes at my university. There are many teachers and students in the university who consider belief in God to be a weakness. Somebody says he believes in God and a lot of people in the university say, “He is weak.” People who do believe in God are ashamed to say so because of the overwhelming influence of these atheistic philosophies.³⁷

I have personally experienced militant communism on multiple occasions while sharing the gospel in public in Cuenca. Yet, I had not considered—and would not have discovered—the connection to the secularization of the university system had I not conducted qualitative interviews to gain a better understanding of the culture.

The effects of the increasing secularization upon the social fabric of Cuencano society. In a similar manner to all the respondents agreeing that traditional religion has declined among the young in Cuenca, the majority of respondents also affirmed the fact that this change in religious worldview has greatly affected the holistic worldviews of young people as well. Thus, their opinions have significantly changed regarding marriage, the family, work, leisure, and numerous other social aspects of society. Twenty-five year old Cuencana, Valeria, remarked that virtually every aspect of society has changed in the minds and actions of the younger generation: “Sex is very liberal now, family is not something fundamentally important to young people, work and money come first, church is only for ceremony, and society has been changed almost

³⁷ “Secularism Interviews,” <https://admin.typeform.com/form/N9Enc1/results#responses>, last modified January 2021.

completely.” Paola echoed a similar sentiment:

There is a lot of debauchery in many ways. For example, now people think that if they do not get married it is no problem because there is so much divorce so they just have sex with anybody they want without ever considering marriage. Even if they do not have a stable relationship they will still engage in sexual relationships as if it does not matter at all. Nobody sees the church as a place to find a wife or to learn about God. Most people have no love for the church or any desire to go to church at all.³⁸

One particular aspect of society that the decline in religion has affected most, according to many of the interviewees, is the diminishment of the value of marriage and family in the minds of secularized young Cuencanos. Rocio, a 19-year-old professing Christian, reiterated the negative effects of secularization upon family values in Cuenca, saying, “In many ways, such as the approval of feminism and gender ideology, the original model of the family and its importance has lost all value in our culture. There are many more divorces, young people do not think it is necessary to wait until marriage before having sex. I have seen the consequences of these attitudes within my church too.” Rita, a 49-year-old female, also lamented the change in worldview toward the importance of marriage and the family:

There are less marriages among young people, people do not think that commitment in front of God, then unfortunately many young people are living together without the commitment of marriage ... they are approving sexual immorality that in the eighties, for example, had never happened ... it began to change in the year two thousand and by the influence of the media our young people have received the consequences of this change.³⁹

Perhaps the most influential change that I noted during my qualitative interviews was the shifting ethic regarding marriage and family. As I spoke to older Cuencanos, they often recounted growing up in large families, marrying young, and wanting many children themselves. This seemed to be the norm for many generations in

³⁸ “Secularism Interviews,” <https://admin.typeform.com/form/N9Enc1/results#responses>, last modified January 2021.

³⁹ “Secularism Interviews,” <https://admin.typeform.com/form/N9Enc1/results#responses>, last modified January 2021.

the Cuencano context from what I gathered. Yet, as secularism has encroached upon young Cuencano mestizos, virtually every young person I interviewed saw little value in marriage or child-rearing. Rather, they wanted to focus on their careers, their individual lives, and their own happiness. It is truly remarkable that in one generation this shift from a very familial culture to a very individualistic mindset has seemingly occurred among Cuencanos. As a result, I expect this shift in worldview to have massive consequences for the culture going forward as the family deteriorates and children are no longer seen as beneficial.

The responses of the interviewees made it clear that they have all noticed an increase in individualism and a reduction in traditional morality among Millennials in Cuenca. Person after person noted the decrease in morality, the increase in materialism, and the lack of the fear of God in many young Cuencanos today. Overall, the majority of those I conducted in depth follow up interviews with provided a long list of consequences as a result of the secularization of the worldview of young mestizos in Cuenca.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to determine the veracity of my original thesis—namely that several key indicators of a significant increase in secularism are evident among the young mestizos of Cuenca, Ecuador. While I acknowledge my presuppositions as an evangelical Christian, most pertinently that the secularization of one's worldview is a negative occurrence that leads to adverse social consequences, by applying tried qualitative research methods such as fixed questionnaires and probing follow-up interviews, I attempted to avoid allowing my own worldview and etic perspective of Cuencano culture to affect the results of this research project.

The results of the investigation, while far from complete, appear to convincingly suggest that the Cuencanos themselves believe that a significant secularization of worldview has taken place among Millennial Cuencanos. In response to

the stated research questions that drove the direction of this project, it is evident that this change began to take place within the last two decades, most notably around the year two-thousand, and that this shift of religious worldview has affected many areas within the social fabric of Cuenca—including marriage, family life, work, and education, among other facets of life among young Cuencanos.

As a result of these qualitative research findings, Christian missionaries and pastors in Ecuador must be prepared to answer the challenges of a secular society and the trials it presents for Christians growing up in the rapidly shifting religious and cultural climate of Cuenca, Ecuador. These challenges will require an increased dedication to understanding Scripture, culture, and questions that those who reject the concept of God often have when confronted with the truths of the gospel. Evangelical Christian leaders need to be trained and equipped to teach their churches about the challenges of secularization, so that church members can obey the Word of God when he commands: “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ (Colossians 2:8).” As the empty promises of secularism are sure to leave many young Cuencanos seeking answers that they inevitably will not find in the nihilistic worldview of materialist naturalism, it is important to emphasize that there is hope in the gospel alone to provide the fulfilment that all men seek. Attention will now be given to the vital task of helping to equip the Cuencano pastors and churches for the battle at hand.

CHAPTER 5

EQUIPPING EVANGELICAL LEADERS TO COMBAT SECULARISM

In the previous chapters of this work, I have detailed the nature of secularism and its growing influence among young Ecuadorian Cuencano mestizos. This section will examine how to effectively prepare Cuencano Christian leaders and their congregations to combat the encroachment of secularism within their own churches, families, and cultural context. As noted in chapter four, the majority of older Cuencanos maintain traditional Catholic syncretistic religious beliefs and practices. Therefore, few Ecuadorian evangelical pastors—who are themselves often members of the older generation—have interacted with individuals who hold to secular worldviews. Most of the pastors I have spoken with are unfamiliar with the nature of secularism and its life-altering impact. For this reason, Ecuadorian pastors need proper training so that they are equipped to address the coming flood of secularism among the younger generation.

I will focus primarily on promoting effective missiological practices that champion pastoral preparation via theological education. To the best of my knowledge, there are no Cuencano evangelical leaders currently addressing the issue of secularism in their own context. Because of this, it is necessary that someone familiar with the significant worldview challenges posed by secularism to sound the alarm. Christian missionaries have a responsibility to not only bring the gospel where it has never been preached, but also to equip their brothers in Christ to stand firm in the faith against worldly philosophies and traditions of men. Therefore, in the first part of this chapter, I will examine effective missiological practices for preparing Cuencano Christian leaders to understand and combat secularism via a proposed pastoral training paradigm. These

leaders also need to teach the following generation to properly interpret and apply the Word of God. For this reason, I will describe and advocate for the implementation of the indigenous principle in order to equip Cuencanos Christians to develop lasting, self-propagating discipleship within their own culture context. In the second half of this chapter, I will identify three key areas in which Cuencano pastors need to be specifically prepared to adequately engage secularism from a biblical worldview via the God-ordained institutions of the church and the family with a focus on addressing the three key markers of secularization in the areas of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

Effective Missiological Practices for Training Indigenous Evangelical Leaders

Missiology is the academic discipline of studying missions—a term which is derived from the Latin verb *mitto*, meaning simply “to send.”¹ The field of missiology involves several varied areas of study such as theology, anthropology, and historiography. The primary focus of this section will be within the missiological field of pedagogy. Here is the primary question I will seek to address in the following pages: “What practices have proven most fruitful among missionaries seeking to train indigenous leaders who, in turn, are then able to train up other leaders in their own cultural contexts?”

There are many legitimate, Christ-honoring missiological methods which Christians who want to faithfully obey the Great Commission may practice in good conscience. For example, in *Transforming Missions*, David Bosch examines thirteen different theological and methodological approaches that missionaries have historically employed on the field. The book was designed to introduce students and missionaries to

¹ All the following terms related to missiology are pertinent to the topics of this chapter, “The term missions is another that is used in varying ways today. Some of the terms people use today— mission, missions, missionary, missional, and missiology— have a common root in the word *missio*, which derives from the Latin word *mitto*, meaning ‘to send.’” Zane Pratt, M. David Sills, and Jeff K. Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014), 3.

different paradigms of missiology while not seeking to advocate for a singular approach. Bosch sought to equip missionaries with the ability to develop biblically informed opinions regarding effective missiological methods for their particular ministry context. Bosch makes it clear that missiological methodology has varied widely over the centuries and will continue to for generations to come:

I am attempting to demonstrate the extent to which the understanding and practice of mission have changed during almost twenty centuries of Christian missionary history. In some instances the transformations were so profound and far-reaching that the historian has difficulty in recognizing any similarities between the different missionary models. My thesis is, furthermore, that this process of transformation has not yet come to an end (and will, in fact, never come to an end).²

To that end, it is important for this research project that an examination of effective practices for training Evangelical leaders is examined and employed in the Cuencano mestizo context. The primary methodological focus for this section will be a survey of the genesis and application of the “Indigenous Approach to Missions.”

The Indigenous Approach to Missions

The indigenous approach to missions argues that Christians who are native to their own people group must be the primary means for gospel proclamation and church multiplication within a given population.³ The indigenous approach stands in stark contrast to the colonialism and paternalism of many Western missions efforts among both Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, including their residual effects which remain until this day. This principle of raising up national believers to reach their own people for Christ is at the heart of the indigenous approach to missions.

² Bosch, David J., *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 315.

³ For a thorough overview of the indigenous approach to missions see Pratt, Sills, and Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions*, 123-126.

Philosophy and methodology. The term “indigenous” is originally a horticultural word that refers to plants native to a particular region.⁴ In the 19th century, missiologists began to use the word to refer to cultures who reproduce themselves and adapt their own cultural characteristics to Christianity within their unique ethno-linguistic context. Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson first coined the term “indigenous church.”⁵ They developed their strategies separately at first but would later unify their indigenous approach to missions through correspondence. Neither served as missionaries but both had studied Paul’s missionary strategy of planting churches in various cultures and appointing elders to then plant daughter churches in their own culture.⁶

Venn and Anderson were the first to advocate the “three-self approach,” which refers to the conviction that indigenous churches should be self-governed, self-supported, and self-propagating.⁷ They advocated *against* missionaries becoming pastors as they believed the daunting responsibilities of the pastorate would slow down healthy church growth and multiplication. Rather, they encouraged missionaries to raise up leaders within their congregations, teaching and discipling them in order to entrust the leadership of the church to national pastors.⁸ Roland Allen, an English missionary to China, also furthered the development and implementation of the indigenous approach to missions,

⁴ Pratt, Sills, and Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions*, 123.

⁵ Pratt, Sills, and Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions*, 123.

⁶ Pratt, Sills, and Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions*, 124.

⁷ For an excellent treatment of the importance of indigenization and pastoral training, see Anthony Lynn Steele’s dissertation entitled, “Implementing a Generally Accessible and Sustainable Training Model Among Indigenous Pastors in Mexico’s Oaxaca State.” Here Steele further explains the impact of Venn and Anderson as they advocated for indigenization, “Henry Venn, and Anglican clergyman with the Church Missionary Society, wrote various sermons and pamphlets on the subject of indigenization, including “Colonial Church Legislation” (1850) and “Retrospect and Prospect of the Operations of the Church Missionary Society” (1865). Rufus Anderson, an American Congregationalist pastor and missionary, stressed the need for a “competent native ministry” which would equip national churches to be independent of the control of Western missions agencies. Anderson wrote numerous articles in *The Missionary Herald*.” Anthony Lynn Steele, “Implementing a Generally Accessible and Sustainable Training Model Among Indigenous Pastors in Mexico’s Oaxaca State,” (DMiss diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 11.

⁸ Pratt, Sills, and Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions*, 125.

particularly through his writings. His most influential work, *Missionary Methods – St Paul’s or Ours?*, argued that the apostle Paul himself practiced indigenization and pastoral training via his disciples such as Timothy and Titus.⁹

John Nevius was also an important pioneer of indigenization. A Presbyterian missionary to China, Nevius further developed Venn and Anderson’s approach in his book *Planting and Development of Missionary Churches*. His strategy was largely dismissed among Protestant missionaries in China but after fruitful implementation in Korea, this strategy came to be known as the “Nevius Plan.”¹⁰ It included several key tenets. Nevius stressed the need for indigenous churches calling their own pastors and these pastors receiving intensive training on a yearly basis. He taught that Christians should live and work in neighborhoods to be self-supporting witnesses to neighbors and co-workers. Additionally, missionaries should only develop programs and institutions that the national churches desire and can continue to support after the missionaries leave the field. National churches should work toward calling and supporting their own pastors. Furthermore, any new church buildings should be built in native style with money and materials given by the local church members.¹¹

Nevius first advocated this plan in China as a reaction against heavily Westernized and subsidized churches controlled by missionaries. However, many of his fellow missionaries in China rejected his plan. Providentially, in 1890, he and his wife traveled to Korea to advise novice missionaries who grew to greatly appreciate his

⁹ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 103.

¹⁰ See Paul S. Cha’s article on the impact in Korea of Protestant missionaries, particularly Nevius, and the resulting extraordinary flourishing of Christianity in the country in comparison to much of the rest of Asia: Paul S. Cha, “Contested Relations. Protestant Missionaries and Korean Christians 1884-1907,” *The Journal of Korean Studies* (1979-) 17, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 5-37. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23622339>.

¹¹ John L Nevius, *The Planting and Development of Missionary Churches* (New York: Foreign Mission Library, 1899), 39-42.

indigenous approach. As a result, many historians now note that the strength of contemporary Korean Christianity is in large part due to the early implementation of the Nevius plan.¹² Writing on the unlikely development of Christianity's remarkable expansion in Korea, Paul S. Cha, an expert in Korean history, writes, "Viewed in the context of the East Asian region, Christianity in Korea is an anomaly. Whereas less than 1 percent and less than 2 percent of the populations of Japan and China, respectively, claim to be Christian, nearly one-third of the South Korean population professes to be adherents of this religions."¹³

Following Nevius, Melvin Hodges, a missiologist and missionary to Nicaragua, wrote *The Indigenous Church*. In his book, Hodges expressed the ideas of Venn, Anderson, Nevius, and Allen in contemporary contexts. He stressed how hard it is to transition from an institutionalized church to an indigenous church. He also emphasized the need for localized theological training of indigenous leaders, which in turn freed missionaries to plant other churches and educate other leaders.¹⁴

Keys to the indigenous approach. The indigenous approach to missions is so vital because it puts the responsibility for the church and her mission primarily within the hands of the body of believers on the field rather than outside missionaries. Hodges compares the indigenous principle to raising up children in the home:

A convincing test of effective parenting is what happens to children after they leave home and are no longer dependent on their parents' leadership. A similar litmus test takes place in missions—but in reverse. What happens when the missionaries leave? At times in our Fellowship's history when missionaries were forced by governments to leave certain countries, strong indigenous churches not only survived but also

¹² Cha, "Contested Relations," 8.

¹³ Cha, "Contested Relations," 5.

¹⁴ Hodges argued that the primary goal of missions was the establishment of New Testament churches which "did not depend on workers or funds from a foreign field but were self-sufficient as local units. . . . Here is the key to the problem: As missionaries, we have too often trained believers in dependency rather than responsibility." Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 351-352.

thrived.¹⁵

Before even arriving at their field of service, missionaries must already have a mindset to plant churches and to raise up leaders with the idea of preparing them to survive on their own. This means indigenous churches should be encouraged to pursue financial independence as soon as possible. The missionary must use reproducible means in establishing churches so that the congregation does not feel dependent on foreign support but rather feels as though they could plant a church in their own context using a similar method. Ultimately, the missionary is simply a guide who is helping to establish a pattern of New Testament Christianity that can be replicated and thrive for generations to come. Hodges summarizes this vital goal of indigenization:

This signifies that it must accept the responsibility of being a church. This responsibility includes the developing of its own spiritual resources for propagating the gospel to its own people. It means finding the financial and material resources necessary for maintaining and expanding the work. It requires that the church overseas develop to become responsible for its own decisions under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with the Word of God. These factors are innate in a truly New Testament church. The missionary's contribution is primarily that of founding and contributing to the development of this kind of church.¹⁶

In order to accomplish this purpose, priority must be given to training local leaders to become pastors who understand their responsibilities to continue the work of the ministry. Hodges devotes an entire chapter of his book to developing leaders. He notes, "The government and extension of the church in any land eventually must be left in the hands of national leaders. These men are Christ's own gift to His church (Ephesians 4:11–13). Without such men, the task of establishing an indigenous church is hopeless. Yet many missionaries fail precisely at this point."¹⁷ In our modern day, Paul Washer implements the indigenous principle almost exclusively in his missions organization, HeartCry. Washer explains the missiological advantages to employing

¹⁵ Hodges, *Indigenous Church*, 146.

¹⁶ Hodges, *Indigenous Church*, 2034, Kindle.

¹⁷ Hodges, *Indigenous Church*, 840.

indigenization as follows:

Although HeartCry recognizes the great importance of sending missionaries from the West to the unevangelized peoples throughout the world, we believe that we are led of the Lord to support indigenous or native missionaries so that they might evangelize their own peoples. We seek to work with indigenous congregations, elders, and missionaries of integrity and faith in the unreached world to help them evangelize and plant churches among their own people.”¹⁸

Washer clearly sees the biblical precedent of equipping national leaders in their own context as paramount to the success of replicating churches on the field. He continues, “The indigenous or native missionary strategy recognizes the worth and usefulness of this great body of native believers and seeks to provide the training and financial support necessary for them to reach their own peoples.”¹⁹ Believers on the field must be equipped to reach and teach their own people in culturally sensitive ways; as they do, they will be following a fruitful missions strategy that has been used throughout the history of the church.

This self-propagating aspect of the indigenous principle allows local churches to reach their communities and send out missionaries that are much better suited to reach their own people than foreign missionaries could ever be. For this reason, pastoral training is a primary obligation of the missionary task. The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention produced a resource to outline the core principles of Christian missions that they see as primary to the missionary task. Within this “Foundations” document, the IMB makes it clear that leadership development and pastoral training is vital to establishing healthy church and faithfully fulfilling the Great Commission:

Biblical leadership is essential to the well-being of every local church ... As we develop leaders in local churches, we prioritize training pastors/elders/overseers. Healthy churches require faithful, well-trained pastors, and we must have healthy

¹⁸ Paul Washer, “Indigenous Missions,” Heart Cry Missionary Society, accessed October 17, 2020, <https://heartcrymissionary.com/about/what-we-do/indigenous-missions/the-advantages/>.

¹⁹ Washer, “Indigenous Missions.”

churches led by such pastors to fulfill the Great Commission. (Acts 6:1-7, 13:1-3, 14:21-23, 20:17-35, Ephesians 4:11-16, Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-13, 4:11-16, 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9, James 5:13-20; 1 Peter 5:1-5) ... One of the measures of completion of the missionary task is the development of those who can train other leaders, and even systems for training those trainers, within the churches in a given people group or place. This includes everything from basic training for village pastors to high-level theologians and biblical scholars. When we exit, we must leave behind a self-sustaining system of theological and pastoral training.²⁰

The process of training up pastors who will then in turn equip others to lead will be the subject of the remainder of this chapter. Understanding and implementing this biblical mandate of self-propagating discipleship is a crucial element to equipping Cuencano church leaders to combat encroaching secularism in their midst. If Cuencano pastors are unable to rightly handle God's Word and then disciple others within their context to combat all worldly philosophies of men then secularism—along with other false teaching—will prevail against them now and for generations to come.

The Importance of Pastoral Training

“What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). The apostle Paul's divinely inspired command to his disciple Timothy reveals God's plan for believers to teach the truth of his Word to other believers within the context of the local church. This biblical principle of passing on God's truth to the next generation who will then pass it on to the next generation has led to two millennia of local church centered Christian theological education. Paul's exhortation to Timothy echoes Jesus in the Great Commission, when he exhorted his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey all that I have commanded” (Matthew 28:19a–20a).

Therefore, the Scriptures mandate that believers are to teach other believers the precious truths of the Word of God. More specifically, leaders within Christian churches are called to train and disciple other qualified leaders in order to spread the reach of the

²⁰ International Mission Board, “Foundations,” Last modified 2018, 94-98, <https://www.imb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/IMB-FOUNDATIONS-MAG-English-v1.2.pdf>.

gospel to the ends of the earth and to maintain the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. When rigorous theological training is not present, the result is likely not orthodoxy, but heterodoxy.

Sadly, Christians, both within the United States and abroad, have often failed to emphasize the biblical mandate to teach and train up leaders. The consistent biblical exhortation to raise up the next generation of elders is often outsourced to seminaries or universities rather than being a focal point of the life of the local church. Many seminaries and missions organizations understand this problem and are working to emphasize the great need for pastoral training—especially within the context of the local church. Albert Mohler, the President of one of the world’s largest Christian seminaries, laments this failure of churches and missionaries to focus on pastoral training, writing:

I emphatically believe that the best and most proper place for the education and preparation of pastors is in the local church. We should be ashamed that churches fail miserably in their responsibility to train future pastors. Established pastors should be ashamed if they are not pouring themselves into the lives of young men whom God has called into the teaching and leadership ministry of the church.²¹

The failure of biblical discipleship and pastoral training is especially striking on the mission field where it has created a vacuum in which all kinds of false teachings can spread—and they have. Whether it is the proliferation of the prosperity gospel, liberation theology, or cult teachings like Mormonism; false doctrine has infiltrated churches around the world because the shepherds of the flock have not been equipped to fend off the wolves. The need for theological education and pastoral training is abundantly evident. Therefore, if Cuencano pastors are going to be prepared to combat secularism in their culture, they need a plan that will not only educate them but prepare them to educate others.

²¹ Adrian Warnock, “Interview with Dr. Albert Mohler, Radio Host and Theologian,” *Patheos.com*, November 8, 2006, accessed August 13, 2021, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/adrianwarnock/2006/11/interview-dr-albert-mohler-raido-host-and-theologian>. Quoted in Andrew Thomas Hancock, “Pastoral Training Approaches in the Local Church: A Multi-Case Study,” (EdD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 13.

Theological education and pastoral preparation in the New Testament.

God has given the responsibility for fulfilling the Great Commission to local churches under the authority of Jesus Christ. As Andy Johnson points out, “His Word is clear—normally we are to pursue obedience, build up disciples, and plant other churches through the local church.”²² Andrew Hancock wrote an informative dissertation on the need for pastoral training within the context of the local church. He notes that many Christian organizations are beginning to see the folly of deemphasizing the discipleship of future leaders, writing:

The 9Marks ministry at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC, has devoted an entire issue of their 9Marks Journal to the subject of local churches fulfilling their responsibility to train pastors, entitled ‘Raising Up the Next Generation of Pastors.’ Mark Dever, pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist, exhorts church leaders with the following statement: ‘In short, raising up future pastors is done through faithfully pastoring and discipling your church . . . if you don’t start with faithful pastoring and discipling, neither internships or seminaries will amount to much.’ According to Dever, churches must take their responsibility to train pastors seriously as raising up leaders is part of the church’s Commission. Jonathan Leeman, editor of the 9Marks Journal, adds, ‘God primarily calls and equips men for the pastorate as pastors faithfully shepherd and disciple their own congregations.’ Local churches demonstrate seriousness about equipping their pastors when they faithfully shepherd their churches by intentionally investing in the next generation of ministers.²³

The local church is God’s chosen means through which he purposes to raise up disciples and reach the nations for Christ. The local church is called to delineate who is and is not a disciple via baptism and church membership (Acts 2:41). The local church is the vehicle for discipleship and maturation in Christ according to the New Testament (e.g., Hebrews 10:24–25). The local church is tasked with appointing and sending out missionaries (Acts 13:1-3), and then caring for those missionaries as they minister on the field (Phil 4:15-16; 3 John 1-8). As Johnson states, “Healthy, reproducing local churches

²² Andy Johnson, *Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global* (Wheaton: IL: Crossway, 2018), 26.

²³ Andrew Thomas Hancock, “Pastoral Training Approaches in the Local Church: A Multi-Case Study,” (EdD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 2-3.

are the aim and end of our missionary efforts.”²⁴ Therefore, it should be no surprise that theological education and pastoral training ought to be centered upon the foundation of the local church. Johnson memorably emphasizes the importance of the centrality of the local church in any theological education efforts:

Consequently, any humanly invented organizations that assist in missions must remember that they are the bridesmaids, not the bride. They are stagehands, not the star. That position and honor and responsibility has been given by Christ to his church, and only to his church. Organized cooperation among churches for the sake of missions is a wonderful thing, but those who organize that cooperation must remember that they are coming alongside—not supplanting—the local church. The local church is the engine of world missions.²⁵

The historical centrality of the local church in pastoral training. A brief survey of the history of theological education shows that formal education in seminaries did not exist throughout much of the history of the church. Rather, as described in the New Testament, most pastoral preparation was done within the confines of local churches. In his book, *The History of Theological Education*, Justo Gonzalez emphasizes the importance of studying the history of theological education. He notes that the methods of teaching biblical truths to the next generation have proven fruitful even though they have not always followed the paradigm of our modern-day seminaries:

The study of the history of theological education—particularly of theological education in the wider sense—is one of the best tools we can use for guidance into the future. Such study will help us see that much that we take for granted as necessary may not be so—reminding us, for instance, that for fifteen centuries the church subsisted, taught its theology, and at times flourished, without a single seminary.²⁶

Surveying the means by which the early church passed down the faith suggests that formal academic scholarship is not the original methodology employed by the earliest

²⁴ Johnson, *Missions*, 26.

²⁵ Johnson, *Missions*, 23. Johnson elaborates on this need for emphasizing the local church in missions, stating, “If we are to understand how to pursue the mission faithfully, the local church must be central to identifying, training, sending, and supporting. The mission has been given to Christ’s church for Christ’s glory.”

²⁶ Justo Gonzalez, *The History of Theological Education* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), 126.

Christian educators.

It is important to note for our purposes—namely, the examination of pastoral preparation and theological education—that the New Testament provides little distinguishable reference to formal education for those desiring to be ministers. The twelve disciples, who are the most recognizable recipients of ministerial training, evidently received all of their education by simply living life with Jesus and learning directly from his teaching and example. The master shared his life with his apprentices. That is the kind of training most consistent with Jewish rabbinical practice during the time of Christ.

The pastoral epistles certainly address the God-ordained qualifications that men need to serve as an elder. However, there is no command from Paul—other than our previously noted decree in 2 Timothy 2:2—as to exactly how elders ought to go about training future elders. Because of this, one may conclude that God, in his wisdom, decided to provide Christians with the command to theologically educate others, while at the same time staying silent on the exact method of teaching he desires. Perhaps this is why a historical survey of Christian biblical education reveals various methods throughout the centuries. Nonetheless, even amid the difference, there remains a consistent emphasis on the importance of this education.

While the exact form of pastoral preparation and theological education for church leaders may not be precisely outlined, it's clear that Paul deeply cared about the task. He sought not only to establish the gospel where it had not been preached (Rom 15:20), but he also went to great lengths to make sure that the leaders of the churches were well trained in order to fend off the attacks of the enemy who sought to steal the fruit of his labor.²⁷ Paul Bowers rightly notes,

²⁷ Benjamin L. Merkle, "The Need for Theological Education in Missions: Lessons Learned from the Church's Greatest Missionary." *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 94, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 50-61.

Paul's vision was not limited to initiatory efforts. If he wishes to go only where there is need for a first foundation to be laid, this does not mean that in such cases Paul is only concerned with putting in that foundation. If he will not build on another's foundation, this does not mean that he is disinterested in construction of what he himself has laid. Paul repeatedly displays commitment not only to founding but also to upbuilding, not only to begetting but also to rearing, not only to planting, but also to nurturing.²⁸

This method of passing down the faith connected early church leaders back to the apostles and ultimately to the teaching of Christ himself. As one generation of church leaders educates the next, an unbroken chain links our current generation to the generation of the biblical authors. It connects us to the Scriptures, such as Jude 3, "Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."

Understanding the great need for pastoral training and theological education all over the world should motivate believers—particularly American believers who have been blessed to receive theological education from renowned institutions such as The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary—to flood the mission field. These believers should utilize the tremendous gift of biblical training they have received in order to train others. Recognizing the remarkable history of theological education since the beginning of Christianity should serve as a stirring reminder of the importance of passing down the faith that has once and for all been delivered to the saints.

Methods of theological education. Having established the biblical mandate for pastoral preparation and theological education within the context of the local church, it is important to consider what methods of education will best serve Cuencano pastors in their fight against increasing secularism. As noted above, the most important aspect of

²⁸ Paul Bowers, "Fulfilling the Gospel: The Scope of the Pauline Mission," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30 (1987): 185-98. Bowers goes on to add, "Remarkably, in the data available to us, whenever members of the team are found dispatched by Paul on a tour they are engaged not in a new evangelistic thrust but in confirming the already existing churches."

theological education on the mission field is the mere fact that it is happening at all. The method matters less than the message. But when considering how to effectively equip Cuencano pastors to combat a false religion like secularism, consideration should be given to proven practices for equipping Christian pastors on the mission field in places similar to Cuenca.

Traditional Western models of formalized education are not always well suited to be employed on the mission field. Logical syllogisms, culturally isolated analogies, and Western literary citations are simply not the best way of teaching the truths of Scripture to people in historically oral cultures such as Ecuador. If leaders in Cuenca and elsewhere are going to be grounded in God’s Word, then they need culturally appropriate theological training.

My work with Reaching and Teaching International Ministries has helped me to understand the need for this contextualized education. Too often, imported models of education have perpetuated a disconnect between mind, spirit, and practice. For example, Hodges argues that traditional training has historically left four critical “gaps” in the raising up of leaders: “The gap between intellectual development and spiritual development . . . the gap between knowledge and practical ministry . . . the gap between the clergy and laity . . . [and] the gap in our concept of the role that training workers plays in the church’s development.”²⁹ In order to address these disconnects, I often teach a pastoral training curriculum that contains training for spiritual disciplines, theology, and practical issues pastors commonly face in ministry.³⁰

Effective pedagogy requires the education of every aspect of a human being.

²⁹ Hodges, *Indigenous Church*, 864. Hodges elaborates on these disconnects in traditional theological training, stating, “Too often we train the mind but fail to lead students into a full life in the Holy Spirit . . . They live far removed from the problems they will often meet in ministry . . . our training programs should aim to put the entire church on mission for God . . . some missions train only to fill vacancies rather than strengthening the church for generations to come.”

³⁰ Refer to Appendix 3 for an outline of a decentralized training module that Reaching and Teaching International Ministries uses in short-term modular pastoral training on the mission field.

For example, in an article by James K. Mwangi and Ben J. de Klerk, the authors use a “head, heart, hands” approach as a way of describing the training pastors should receive. They explain that *Bibliche Ausbildung am Ort* (Bible Training on Location in English, or BAO) is a model currently being used in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland to help train leaders and Christian workers in the context of the local church.³¹ By preparing each aspect of the pastor; mind, soul, and practical experience, Christian leaders are better equipped to face the myriad of unpredictable difficulties of local church ministries.

Utilizing decentralized theological education. Furthermore, this holistic theological training ought not simply rely on pastors being able to reach the site of the classes. Instead, decentralized education ought to be considered so that bi-vocational leaders and leaders with other challenges can attend. Hodges rightly emphasizes the need for decentralized training programs when he writes:

A decentralized training program goes to the districts instead of depending upon students to come to a central location. The nearer a training program is to the source of workers (local churches), the more effective it will be. A short course of Bible studies, taught at an area church, may be the best method for strengthening the churches of a district. These short annual courses may last from one week to one month. Deacons, lay workers, Sunday School teachers and others who desire to be involved in Christian service can gather from nearby churches for classes every day during this period. Food is provided by the churches and possibly requires a small amount paid by each student. In this way, students receive training in the locality where they work.³²

There is certainly a need for more centralized, formal education in many places throughout the world.³³ However, the vast majority of church leaders simply cannot

³¹ James K. Mwangi and Ben J. de Klerk, “An Integrated Competency-Based Training Model for Theological Training,” *HTS Theological Studies* 67, no. 2 (November 2011), <http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?pid=S0259>.

³² Hodges, *Indigenous Church*, 1025.

³³ The establishment of Christian universities across Europe served to set the stage for the Reformation as men like Martin Luther were able to devote their daily lives to the study of God’s Word. In fact, it is no overstatement to say that the world would not be what it is today without the centralized institutions founded by Christian men for the purpose of raising up pastors and church leaders. In his book, *History of the Study of Theology*, Charles Briggs writes, “The great work of the universities was the consecration of learning: and it is not easy to exaggerate the importance of that work upon the moral,

sacrifice years away from their homes and jobs to devote themselves to intense theological study. What's more, some who do attend seminaries in the United States do not return to their home church because of the opportunities they encounter.³⁴

In the New Testament, the most prominent example of theological education is found in the way Paul traveled to various cities in order to disciple and care for the churches he had planted and the elders he had helped to appoint (e.g., Acts 14:21–23, 20:20–28, 1 Timothy 5, and Titus 1). Benjamin Merkle makes a convincing case that bringing the seminary to the students via decentralized pastoral training was Paul's primary method of strengthening churches:

We would be mistaken, however, if we suppose that theological education on the mission field must be carried out precisely how it is in the West. As a missionary, Paul would visit various churches seeking to establish them in the gospel. Those who received training and instruction did not go to Paul. On the contrary, Paul went to them and trained them in their local setting where they could continue to work, raise their families, and lead the church.³⁵

Understanding the New Testament example and the practical needs for decentralized theological education should encourage missionaries to meet pastors where they are in order to train them well.

Many missionaries who have sought to adhere to the indigenous approach to missions have found great success via decentralized theological training. This includes Nevius. In his influential book *The Planting and Development of Missionary Churches*, he “advocated providing means by which national pastors could receive theological training without leaving their homes and neighborhoods, suggesting short intensive

intellectual and religious progress of Europe.” Charles Briggs, *History of the Study of Theology* (New York: Scribner's, 1914), 120.

³⁴ Sills, *Reaching and Teaching*, 152. Sills illustrates the dangers of centralized pastoral training in the Global South, writing, “when nationals from countries with crippling economies, rampant diseases, underdeveloped infrastructures, unstable governments, warring neighbors, or little promise for the future come to the USA, it is common that the advantages they find here overwhelm their desire to return home.”

³⁵ Merkle, *Theological Education in Missions*, 59.

courses.”³⁶ In other words, leadership training ought to be primarily done among the people in their own context.

For this reason, Reaching and Teaching has developed a methodology to deliver theological training to Christian leaders throughout the world via pastoral training modules. The basic approach is to establish weeklong modular training courses, but we do not just do them once. We host them every four months for three years. In these courses, students are trained in spiritual disciplines, theological studies, and practical pastoral concerns.³⁷

Ideally, the teaching ought to be done by missionaries who are familiar with the language and culture of their audience. As they teach, these missionaries should be trying to raise up nationals who will eventually take over the pastoral training within their own cultural context. The goal of the training should be reproducible content. Students should pass on what they learn to their local churches via discipling, preaching, and modeling. This methodology seeks to provide churches around the world with leaders who have done their best to present themselves “to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the Word of Truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Three Specific Ways for Pastors to Combat Encroaching Secularism

It is not sufficient simply to train Cuencano pastors in generalities regarding the proper application of biblical truth. These Christian leaders must understand how to specifically apply the Word of God in order to equip the saints of their churches to stand firm against the principalities and powers of the age. In order to train Cuencano Christian pastors to lead their congregations against the upcoming onslaught of secularism, I will

³⁶ Pratt, Sills, and Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions*, 125.

³⁷ See appendix 3 for an example of a Reaching and Teaching decentralized training module teaching outline.

detail three areas of primary importance in which pastors must be diligent: the regular practice of expository preaching; preparing parents to consistently engage in family discipleship; and cultural engagement by employing apologetic arguments which display an understanding the philosophical problems with secularism compared to the consistency of the Christian worldview. I have chosen these three areas of ministerial concentration because I believe they most closely combat the three key markers of secularization that were previously established in this work. If Cuencano pastors are equipped to lead in these areas of ministry, their congregations will be prepared to face not only secularism, but any “fiery arrow of the evil one” (Eph 6:16).

God has ordained the church and the family as foundational, complimentary institutions that ought to impact the surrounding culture with the gospel when they are functioning together correctly. In 1 Tim 3:1-13, Paul is outlining the qualifications of elders and deacons within the church of God. Many of the qualifications for leading and serving in the church are intimately related to family responsibilities: the pastor is to be faithful to his wife (v. 2), manage his own family well (v. 4a, reiterated in v. 5), and see that his children obey him (v. 4b). Similarly, a deacon must be faithful to his wife and manage his household and children well (v. 12). The church and the family are tasked by God to be the primary means through which the gospel is spread and Christians are disciplined. When these institutions are faithful to their God ordained callings, the surrounding culture is impacted for God’s glory. Therefore, the following section will examine how the church, the family, and the culture ought to be engaged by well-equipped pastors to combat encroaching secularism.

Utilizing the three sections of the aforementioned pastoral training modules, pastors may be trained via modular courses to understand the importance of these three areas of ministerial foci to combat secularism in their churches, in their families, and in

their culture.³⁸ Cuencano pastors need to be specifically taught to establish a consistent routine of expository preaching in their local churches in order to establish the authority of the Word of God over and against the metaphysical claims of the secular worldview which insists that the transcendent is to be ignored. Additionally, pastors must equip the parents within their church to disciple their children in biblical worldview thinking in order to strengthen Christian families for generations to come. Secularists believe that children ought to be taught that human reason is the ultimate epistemic basis for discovering reality. Christian parents must faithfully disciple their children to understand that true knowledge only comes from knowing God (Prov 2:6). In order to combat secular ethics, which teach that morality is relative and subjective, pastors must teach their congregations to utilize proper biblical apologetics, specifically regarding the ability to discern and demonstrate the baselessness of what the world “falsely teaches as knowledge” (1 Tim 6:20). The remainder of this chapter will detail how Cuencano pastors may specifically combat the metaphysical, epistemic, and ethical aspects of secularism from a biblical worldview.

Combatting Secularism within the Institution of the Local Church via Expository Preaching

Expository preaching is “The communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to the hearers.”³⁹ Regrettably, virtually every time that I have heard a Cuencano evangelical pastor preach a sermon, the biblical text is employed to

³⁸ See appendix 3 for an example of a decentralized pastoral training module that would be used to incorporate these three vital aspects of combating secularism or any other worldly philosophy that challenges the truth of the Christian worldview.

³⁹ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 21.

supplement what the pastor wants to say rather than the text informing what the pastor ought to say. Eisegesis of the text, rather than exegesis, is the norm. As a result, the congregation is often presented with the thoughts of the pastor rather than the authoritative utterance of God Himself. In order to properly combat the encroachment of secularism, Cuencano pastors must be taught how to systematically exposit the entirety of God's Word so that their congregations are imbued with a comprehensive knowledge of the Bible which, in turn, informs and transforms all aspects of the believer's life.

As demonstrated in previous chapters of this dissertation, secularism promotes a metaphysical worldview that ignores or downright denies the existence of any transcendent deity. This foundational aspect of the secular worldview sets the stage for an epistemology that is based solely upon the individual to rightly interpret reality because there is no metaphysical authority to objectively determine truth. Understanding this essential aspect of secularism ought to lead Christian pastors to an even greater commitment to proclaiming the Word of God as the overarching standard of truth and authority.

R. Albert Mohler argues that all Christian pastors must view expository preaching as the primary means of apologetics in a secular world, writing, "The task of preaching must be understood as an apologetic calling. Apologetics—the task of setting forth the truth claims of Christianity and arguing for the unique truthfulness of the Christian faith—must inform every preacher's understanding of his task in a postmodern age."⁴⁰ Christian preaching must establish God as the ultimate authority and Lord of all the earth. As a result, any teaching that is contrary to the revealed Word of God must be called out as error and must be corrected by the inerrant teachings of the Bible. Churches throughout Cuenca must be filled with believers who have been taught to think through

⁴⁰ R. Albert Mohler, *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Post-Modern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 123-124.

all aspects of reality biblically and—as a result—will then boldly proclaim the truth of the gospel in their communities. All proper Christian discipleship begins with the authoritative proclamation of God’s Word from God’s under-shepherd within the context of the local church. Mohler states the urgent need for convictional expository preaching in a secular culture thusly, “What is needed is a generation of bold and courageous preacher-apologists for the twenty-first century—men who will be witnesses to the whole world of the power of the gospel and who will proclaim the whole counsel of God.”⁴¹ Proclaiming the whole counsel of God ought to be the central task of every Christian minister.

The centrality of preaching in the local church. The primary difference between the two offices of the local church—elders and deacons—is that elders must be able to teach (1 Tim 3:2). It is a non-negotiable aspect of being a shepherd of the flock of God. He must be able to feed the sheep with the Word of Life. To be a pastor is to be a teacher and preacher of God’s word. In his book *Church Elders*, Jeremy Rinne explains that the Bible unifies the concept of pastor and teacher, “The words *pastor* and *teacher* in 1 Timothy 3:11 go together. In the Greek, one definite article governs both nouns, signaling that the two nouns modify one another. So, ‘pastor and teacher’ does not refer to two roles but to one, that of a ‘pastor-teacher.’”⁴² The pastor of God’s church is principally tasked with giving God’s people God’s word.

This life-giving teaching primarily takes place during the regular gathering of the saints in which they sit under the preaching of God’s Word. There is no greater teaching opportunity than the one given to pastors when they stand before the gathered assembly of God to proclaim, “Thus says the Lord.” The Bible is full of examples of

⁴¹ Mohler, *He is Not Silent*, 131.

⁴² Jeramie Rinne, *Church Elders: How to Shepherd God’s People Like Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 46.

prophets and preachers proclaiming the truth of God before a gathered assembly. However, there may be no more notable text than Nehemiah 8. Ezra, the scribe of Israel, stands on a raised platform before the people of Israel to declare to them the word of God. Notably, as the text states, Ezra not only reads the words aloud, but he proceeds to “give the meaning so that the people understood what was being read” (Neh 8:8). As a result, all the people gathered as one shouted, “Amen! Amen! Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground” (Neh 8:6). Preaching led to worship and the proclamation of God’s Word among those who did not know God. The people understood “they should proclaim this word and spread it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem” (Neh 8:15).

In the New Testament, Paul reiterates the priority of expositional preaching when he tells his disciple Timothy that his primary charge as a Christian leader is to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim 4:2). He gives further instruction that complements these commands: “Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you ... Practice these things; be committed to them” (1 Tim 4:13–15). There is a clear emphasis throughout the pastoral epistles on the centrality of preaching for the health of the local church.

The proclamation of God’s Word is essential to the worship of the saints in both the Old and New Testaments, and it remains the focal point of the gathered assembly to this day. Unfortunately, too many congregations focus on other aspects of worship. However, as the authors of *Encountering God through Expository Preaching*, make clear, “Preaching is central, irreducible, and nonnegotiable to the Bible’s mission of authentic worship that pleases God. John Stott’s simple declaration states the issue boldly, ‘Preaching is indispensable to Christianity.’ More specifically, preaching is

indispensable to Christian worship—and not only indispensable, but central.”⁴³

The most effective and beneficial method for consistently feeding God’s people with God’s Word is expository preaching. Preaching occurs when a holy man of God opens the word of God and says to the people of God, “Come and experience God with me in this text.”⁴⁴ According to Mohler—who, as the President of a seminary, has been charged with training pastors and preachers—expository preaching isn’t simply one method of preaching among many but is in fact the only faithful form of biblical preaching. He writes, “I am convinced that we add to the confusion by discussing expository preaching as merely one *kind* of preaching—or even the *best* kind. When we fall into that pattern, we do serious injury to the scriptural vision of preaching. Let’s be clear. According to the Bible, exposition is preaching. And preaching is exposition.”⁴⁵ The reason that expository preaching—that is the systematic, verse-by-verse exposition of each book of the Bible—is so effective in forming God’s people is because only the Word of God that can change the heart of men.⁴⁶ David Prince expands on this definition, stating, “Expository preaching is preaching that takes a particular text of Scripture as its subject, proclaiming the truth of that text in light of its historical, epochal, and Christocentric, kingdom-focused canonical contexts, thereby exposing the meaning of the human and divine authors for the purpose of gospel-centered application.”⁴⁷

As Brian Payne, a Professor of Preaching at Boyce College, states, “The Word

⁴³ Jim Orrick, Ryan Fullerton, and Brian Payne, *Encountering God through Expository Preaching* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 233.

⁴⁴ Orrick, Fullerton, and Payne, *Expository Preaching*, xv.

⁴⁵ Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 50.

⁴⁶ Graeme Goldsworthy helps us to understand the basis of for this definition, writing, “The basic etymological definition of expository is, ‘to expose the meaning of the text.’” Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 119.

⁴⁷ David Edward Prince, “The Necessity of a Christocentric Kingdom-focused Model of Expository Preaching,” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 2.

of God is God's active, authoritative energy in the world. When the Word of God is preached, God himself is active. And when God the Lord is actively working through his Word, he comes with his authority, power, and presence."⁴⁸ If a pastor wants to lead his congregation to encounter God and to see their lives changed via God's presence, then the best thing he could do for them is to systematically preach through every verse of God's Word during the regularly scheduled gathering of the saints.

Expository preaching not only strengthens the saints within the local church, it also encourages future leaders to see the power of the proclamation of the Word of God. Paul disciplined Timothy to focus on the centrality of preaching in his ministry, and as we have discussed, he then commanded Timothy to teach other faithful men to do the same for generations to come (2 Tim 2:2). It is not enough for a pastor to be concerned about the flock of God in front of him on a given Lord's Day. Rather, the faithful man of God must be concerned for the faithful proclamation of God's truth for generations to come. Rinne challenges pastors to hold this mindset with a few convicting questions: "Will you leave behind skilled teachers to carry on the work? Have you taken steps to train others? Part of teaching the church is training future pastor-teachers."⁴⁹ This discipleship process with an emphasis on training and encouraging others to preach and teach well is vital to raising up future generations of pastors and leaders.

Consistently preaching God's word not only helps the flock understand the truth of God, but it also warns them about the dangers of false teaching. The New Testament is full of admonitions to be on guard for "false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt 7:15). Furthermore, Paul commands elders not only to hold fast to what they were taught but also to "refute those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9). Rinne writes about the importance of pastors being on

⁴⁸ Orrick, Fullerton, and Payne, *Expository Preaching*, 21.

⁴⁹ Rinne, *Church Elders*, 55.

guard to protect the sheep:

Familiarize yourself with the particular beliefs, philosophies, and religions that are active in your community. Be aware of teachings that contradict the gospel and biblical truth. What about the “isms”? Do attitudes of secularism, individualism, rationalism, or relativism mold people’s thinking where you live? Local people coming to your church will import these alternative beliefs and operate in the church on the basis of these “isms” without even realizing it. Be sure to call out these worldviews in your teaching and conversations.⁵⁰

Pastors must be aware of threats to their congregations in order to be on guard with the time comes to defend the flock.

In Cuenca, Ecuador, pastors must be made aware of encroaching secularism, and they must be equipped to combat it. As Rinne concludes, “Perhaps the most important thing elders can do to guard against counterfeit teaching is to know genuine biblical truth.”⁵¹ Consistent expository preaching allows the flock of God to rightfully divide the word of truth so that when heresies like secularism pose a danger, true saints will recognize a counterfeit gospel. Consequently, the church of God will then be equipped to engage the culture by confronting error and preaching the truth of God’s gospel for the salvation of the lost and the flourishing of their churches and communities.

Regardless of the challenge of the age, church history has repeatedly shown us that the antidote to every worldly philosophy is the pure, immutable word of God. Mohler writes that the best way to combat increasing secularism is to continue preaching the same gospel that has endured for two-thousand years: “Where you find faithful churches, you find people committed to the Bible—the infallible, inspired, inerrant word of God . . . when churches open the door to an errant text that is culturally constrained and outdated, those churches are already on the way to a departure from Christian truth.”⁵² Mohler goes on to say that no revolution, not even the secular revolution, can overtake the saints of

⁵⁰ Rinne, *Church Elders*, 52.

⁵¹ Rinne, *Church Elders*, 54.

⁵² R. Albert Mohler, *The Gathering Storm: Secularism, Culture, and the Church* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2020), 193.

God who stand firm on the Word of God: “If we take our stand upon the revelation of God, no revolution can confuse us. If we take our stand in any other authority, every revolution will engulf us.”⁵³

Whether in the United States, Ecuador, or anywhere else in the world, God is building his church and the very gates of hell cannot stand against it. When pastors are trained to see the gathering of the saints as the prime opportunity for edifying them via substantive Bible preaching, then those churches will naturally be strengthened to stand against any false teaching that may come their way. To that end, Cuencano pastors must be taught that the weekly gathering of God’s people must include worship, praise, fellowship, and prayer. However, the primary purpose of that weekly gathering is the “edification of God’s people through the faithful teaching of his word. In other words, it is God-centered and designed for the spiritual formation of God’s people.”⁵⁴ May it not be said that pastors relied on pragmatism to combat secularism because man thought he knew better than the plan of God to protect his people from Satan’s devices.

Miguel Nuñez is one of the most influential Christian pastors and authors in Latin America. In his book, *Una Iglesia Conforme al Corazón de Dios* (A Church Conformed to the Heart of God), he identifies the greatest need in Latin American churches: more faithful Bible preaching from the pulpit. Just as I have argued throughout this section, the primary means by which Cuencano pastors must be equipped to stand firm against secularism—or any other worldly philosophy that may arise—is through a complete reliance on the word of God to edify the people of God. Nuñez echoes this statement, writing, “La función profética del anciano o pastor es vital para la salud de la iglesia; para su crecimiento y su santificación. La fortaleza de una iglesia es directamente

⁵³ Mohler, *Gathering Storm*, 196.

⁵⁴ Brad J. Waggoner, *The Shape of Faith to Come: Spiritual Formation and the Future of Discipleship* (Nashville: B&H, 2008), 309.

proporcional a la Fortaleza de su pulpito; no de acuerdo a los estándares humanos, sino a la complacencia de Dios con la enseñanza que el rebaño recibe.”⁵⁵ (The prophetic role of the elder or pastor is vital to the health of the church, for its growth and sanctification. The strength of a church is directly proportional to the strength of its pulpit—not according to human standards, but to the satisfaction of God with the teaching the flock receives.)

Expository preaching uniquely honors all Scripture as God’s Word, nourishes the congregation on the whole counsel of God, and benefits the preacher because he is forced to consistently encounter God according to God’s own terms.⁵⁶ Therefore, it is vital for Cuencano pastors to be trained to faithfully exposit the Bible for the edification of their churches in order to fully equip the saints to stand firm in the truth of God and to engage their secularizing culture with the gospel.

Combatting Secularism within the Institution of the Home via Parental Discipleship

Secularism is an all-encompassing philosophy that seeks to affect every area of life. If Christian parents are not committed to combating secularism, then they can be certain that its effects will not stop at the front door to their homes. Mohler urges Christians to understand this impending threat to the Christian family when he writes, “Secularization cannot and will not tolerate the biblical worldview on any matter or issue. Indeed, the secular storm not only threatens issues of public policy like religious liberty,

⁵⁵ Miguel Nuñez, *Una Iglesia Conforme al Corazón de Dios* (Grand Rapids: Portavoz, 2011), 279.

⁵⁶ For an excellent treatment of the necessity of expository preaching for the formation of healthy churches, see David Prince, “The Necessity of a Christocentric Kingdom-Focused Model of Expository Preaching.” Prince expounds upon his thesis that the connection between expositional preaching and the health of the local church is inextricable, stating, “This dissertation considers any move away from expository preaching or any approach to expository preaching that does not seek to preach Christ from all of the Scripture to be unfaithful to the preaching task and unhealthy for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Prince, “Christocentric,” 8.

abortion access, and marital laws, but also levies a full broadside into private homes.”⁵⁷ To that end, Cuencano pastors—along with all other pastors facing the encroachment of secularism—must be trained in the area of family discipleship and Christian worldview formation within the home.

As children age, they naturally seek to establish an identity as they discover the world around them. As human beings created in the image of God, children possess a deep desire to understand who they are and how they ought to interpret and interact with reality. Secularism tells human beings that they ought to look inward to find their purpose and meaning. Secular culture and media are constantly catechizing children to practice self-authentication ala Rousseau and Descartes of long ago. Rather than looking inward for meaning and purpose, Christian parents must disciple their children to look toward the Lord who “in whom we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

Furthermore, parents must always be reminded that they are raising little worshippers. Secular epistemology will encourage children to worship themselves and to know themselves above all in order to find fulfillment. Christian parents must consistently remember that “what rules a child’s heart will control the child’s behavior.”⁵⁸ Therefore, discipling children to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength” (Matt 22:37) must be a priority in a secular culture that encourages self-autonomy at all costs. In the end, the capacity to worship “is meant to drive children to God.”⁵⁹ If Cuencano Christian pastors are not committed to teaching parents in their congregation how to disciple their children, then the heart that was meant to lead them to worship God will be redirected to self worship in an increasingly secular culture.

⁵⁷ Mohler, *Gathering Storm*, 74.

⁵⁸ Paul Tripp, *Parenting*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 149.

⁵⁹ Tripp, *Parenting*, 156.

The centrality of God’s Word in home discipleship. Even as pastors are called by God to form their congregations into Christ-likeness via the proclamation of the Word of God, Christian parents are called to do the same within the home. Just as expository preaching shapes and forms God’s church, parental discipleship based upon the systematic study and implementation of biblical teaching forms the foundation of the Christian family. In his book *Expository Parenting*, Josh Niemi writes a strikingly powerful admonition to Christian parents to trust the power of the Bible to shape the hearts of their children,

Do you want to lead your children to saving faith? Preach the Word! And the Law of Moses in Exodus will thunder down on their natural self-righteousness. Do you want to instill in your young ones a strong work ethic? Preach the Word! And King Solomon’s wisdom in Proverbs will address their sluggish tendencies. Do you want to cultivate harmony among your children? Preach the Word! And the incarnational humility of Christ in the book of Philippians will provide the template. Do you want to prepare your son to love his future wife? Preach the Word! And the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians will plumb the depths of Christ’s sacrificial love for His bride, the church. Do you want to equip your kids with principles of discernment? Preach the Word! And Jude’s characterization of spiritual impostors will prepare their minds and sober their spirits. Do you want to comfort your daughter when her faith is under attack? Preach the Word! And the spiritual balm of the Apostle Peter’s first letter will provide the divine comfort. Do you want to explain to your children the pitfalls of a post-modern worldview? Preach the Word! And the writer of Judges will describe the ensuing moral chaos when every man does what seems right in his own eyes. Do you want to inspire your children to evangelize their peers? Preach the Word! And Luke’s historical precision in the book of Acts will motivate their feet to spread the good news. Although we are incapable, in our own power, to change the hearts and minds of our children, God has given us His authoritative, trustworthy, effective, clear, and sufficient Word.⁶⁰

In the same way that Cuencano pastors must be taught to equip their churches to fight the encroachment of secularism, they must be taught to emphasize the need for Christian worldview formation within the homes of the families in their congregations.

As outlined in the previous chapter, multiple qualitative interview responses made it clear that many Cuencanos believe that the older generation failed to sufficiently

⁶⁰ Josh Niemi, *Expository Parenting: Teaching the Full Counsel of God and Allowing Scripture to do its Work in a Child’s Heart* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2017), 303.

disciple their children in the faith. For example, Susana, a 54-year-old female stated, “I believe that my generation did not educate their children well. They allowed others to teach them. That is why the younger generation no longer attends church because they were not well educated in Christianity.”⁶¹

Pastors must be taught that a major part of their calling is equipping parents to fulfill their God-given duty to raise up their children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). Christian parents too often treat the church like they treat the doctor or the dentist. When their child has a health problem, they go to the doctor. When they have an issue with their teeth, they go to the dentist. But spiritual issues do not work like that. Parents should not seek to simply outsource them to the religious “experts.” In his book *Family Driven Faith*, Voddie Baucham emphasizes the dire straits of the spiritual lives of many young people in Western Christian homes:

[E]ven basic practices like regular Bible reading and personal prayer seem clearly associated with stronger and deeper faith commitment among youth. We suspect that youth educators and ministers will not get far with youth in other words, unless regular and intentional religious practices become an important part of their larger faith formation. . . . We simply cannot fail to give our children the basic tools they need and expect the “professionals” to get the job done for us.⁶²

Baucham encourages families to establish regular routines of spiritual formation within their homes that reflect the same essentials of spiritual formation within the local church at large. This includes regular Bible reading and explanation—exposition—primarily led by the head of the household, ideally the father. Furthermore, catechism questions that facilitate memorization of the great doctrines of the faith can help establish a biblical family culture. A book like *Training Hearts and Teaching Minds*, a daily devotional based on the Westminster Shorter Catechism, is but one example of numerous resources available to families. Thankfully, these are often translated into

⁶¹ See appendix 2, 173.

⁶² Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Driven Faith: Doing What it Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 1633, Kindle.

Spanish. Reading classical Christian literature together as a family can also engage the minds of children as they seek answers to difficult questions posed to them in a secular culture.⁶³

Discipleship within the Christian home does not only take place during designated times of family worship and Bible study. Consider the famous command from Deuteronomy 6: “These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deut 6:6–7). Similarly, Christian parents must seek to make much out of mundane daily tasks in teaching their children the truths of Scripture. Referring to this passage, Baucham writes,

Moses makes it clear that multigenerational faithfulness is an all-day, everyday process. We must teach our children at all times. Moreover, we are always to teach according to the commandments of God. This may sound simple, but I assure you it is profound. If this is true, then the Bible must govern the method and manner I employ in training and discipling my children. I cannot simply use cultural, secular humanist methods and expect to reap biblical results.⁶⁴

Pastors must be taught to disciple parents to disciple their children. Parents must see this as an “all of life” calling, not simply something that happens during a five-minute prayer before bedtime.⁶⁵ Intentionally approaching each day as an opportunity to further invest in the next generation of one’s family is vital to standing up against the all-encompassing onslaught of secularism.

⁶³ Baucham notes that all children are naturally inquisitive. Christian parents must understand that even the simplest questions can be tremendous discipleship opportunities. Baucham recounts an example of a normal family discussion at the breakfast table and how he quickly realized what a wonderful privilege it is for Christian parents to be able to ask and answer theological questions that their children so often have, “All kids wonder about theology. What child hasn’t asked questions like “Who made God?” or “If Jesus is God, how can He be the Son of God?” These are theological questions, and one of the greatest things we can do as parents is provide opportunities for those questions to be asked and answered.” Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 1664.

⁶⁴ Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 1755.

⁶⁵ For an excellent in-depth analysis of effective practices of parental discipleship in the Christian home, see W. Ryan Steenburg, “Effective Practices for Training Parents in Family Discipleship: A Mixed Methods Study,” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011).

Education grounded in the knowledge of God. Some Christian parents are under the mistaken belief that Western secular education is neutral regarding religion. A brief examination of the history of secularization within Western education will show just how dangerous it is for Christians to subject their children to the secular Western educational system while neglecting to properly disciple their children from a Christian worldview.

Modern western culture often seeks to separate religious knowledge, philosophical knowledge, and scientific knowledge into wholly separate silos. But in reality, one cannot separate the knowledge of God from a correct understanding of all of reality, including the physical world. In his book *Perspectives on the Word of God*, John Frame contends that all forms of knowledge are rooted in the knowledge of God: “I attempted to develop a Christian epistemology, or theory of human knowledge, based on the Bible. This project was based on the conviction that our God, through his Word, desires to rule all aspects of human life—not only our worship and evangelism . . . but simply everything: ‘Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).’”⁶⁶ Education that is rightly founded upon the rock of God’s Word not only brings about correct knowledge of God and his creation, but it also glorifies the Creator in the process.

Perhaps the most influential figure in the Protestant Reformation, John Calvin, was convinced that education was among the greatest means through which individuals and societies at large could come to understand the glory of God in all things. For example, Calvin was adamant that no one can know oneself without first knowing God. In fact, Calvin begins his magnum opus, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, with this statement, “Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom,

⁶⁶ John Frame, *Perspectives on the Word of God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 2.

consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. . . . For, in the first place, no man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts towards the God in whom he lives and moves.”⁶⁷ Calvin rarely veers of this foundation throughout the rest the book. Furthermore, Calvin claims that the telos of education must be rooted in the knowledge of God if it is to be considered true education. As Jacob Hoogstra emphasizes in his summation of Calvin’s educational telos, “The true aim of education is to lead the child to the Christian life . . . the glory of God is the final aim in man’s life, and this is also the final aim in man’s education.”⁶⁸ Therefore, it is hard to overestimate the impact that education will have on a child’s worldview development. Cuencano pastors must understand this vital fact and seek to rightly guide parents in placing a priority upon grounding their children’s education upon the Word of God.

Isaac Newton, among the most influential scientific and philosophical thinkers of all time, understood that he could glorify God through his search for knowledge. In fact, it was Newton’s pursuit of a deeper knowledge of God that led him to study nature. Newton did not separate scientific discovery from philosophical and religious scholarship. In everything he discovered about the nature of the universe, Newton saw the hand of God at work: “This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent Being. . . . This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all; and on account of his dominion he is wont to be called ‘Lord God.’”⁶⁹ Newton’s understanding of scientific scholarship illustrates that the true nature of knowledge is based upon a right knowledge of God. Newton further affirms that it is folly to seek to divide scientific

⁶⁷ John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 21-22.

⁶⁸ Jacob T. Hoogstra, ed., *John Calvin: Contemporary Prophet* (Grand Rapids: Baker: 1959), 216.

⁶⁹ Isaac Newton, *Philosophy of Nature: Selections from his Writings* (New York: Hafner, 1953), 42.

knowledge of physical reality from the foundational knowledge of the Creator of this physical reality. Christian parents must understand this: their children's education is much more than simply teaching them facts and figures. Education ought to be a holistic discovery of God's world to God's glory.

The emerging global impact of Western secular education.

Homeschooling—parent-led, home-based education—is the fastest growing form of education in the United States. There are over two million homeschooled students in the United States, and those numbers are growing by up to 8 percent per annum over the past few years, and over 75 percent since 1999.⁷⁰ Why are so many parents removing their children from the Western public school system? One of the key reasons that researchers continue to find is the fact that parents want to teach a particular set of values, beliefs, and worldviews to their children that simply is not being taught according to the exclusively secular philosophy of public education.⁷¹ In particular, many Christian parents refuse to acquiesce to their children being inundated in a godless worldview that saturates every subject from social studies to science.

In his book *Humanizing the School*, Ryland Cray affirms that the secular curriculum advocated in public schools throughout the Western world is ultimately rooted in pluralistic value judgments which run contrary to asserting a particular worldview, such as Christianity. He writes:

Curricular choice is rooted in philosophy, in value judgments. Sometimes philosophical judgments dictate choice. . . . The complexity of circumstances in which American educational choices are made tends toward a certain eclecticism in educational philosophy. . . . The American school functions in a culturally plural context. Many values are held, even as absolutes, by groups and subgroups within a

⁷⁰ Brian D. Ray, "Research Facts on Homeschooling," National Home Education Research Institute, last modified March 23, 2016, <https://www.nheri.org/ResearchFacts.pdf>.

⁷¹ Ray, "Research Facts."

culture. However, the consensus in which American political and educational institutions function is not a matter of absolutes.⁷²

If one were to critically think through Crary's statement, one would understand that the philosophy of public education is that no one single (religious) worldview can be emphasized—therefore none of them will be affirmed. As a result, a secular humanistic naturalism fills the vacuum as the sole basis of education in the “pluralistic” West. Pastors must help members of their congregation to be aware of what their children are being taught, while also emphasizing the fact that God will hold the parent accountable for their children's' spiritual formation.

While homeschooling itself may be a new frontier among most Cuencano Mestizos—although it is legal and has gained interest due to the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020—the principle that parents must understand the effects of Western secularized education still rings true.⁷³ The fact that education is affecting the worldview of the younger generation of Cuencano Mestizos was mentioned multiple times in my quantitative research.⁷⁴ Particular concern was expressed regarding the impact universities were having upon students—especially in regard to atheistic paradigms such as Marxism being advocated throughout the college curriculum. Therefore, Christian parents must be taught that they are primarily responsible for the discipleship of their

⁷² Ryland Wesley Crary, *Humanizing the School: Curriculum Development and Theory* (New York: Knopf, 1969), 41-42.

⁷³ Homeschooling is legal in Ecuador. However, the option is often restricted to certain circumstances, such as living in a rural area in which it would be difficult to travel to a public or private institution. The Ecuadorian Constitution gives parents the freedom to “choose for their children an education in accordance with their principles, beliefs and pedagogical choices” “Article 29,” Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, accessed September 6, 2021, <https://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Ecuador/english08.html>.

Few families have chosen to homeschool for various reasons, but many families were forced to begin educating their children in their homes during the pandemic. As a result, the possibility of continuing “educación en casa” has become a more popular alternative among some Ecuadorian households as evidenced by groups of nearly 1500 people inquiring about homeschool options on Facebook. See “Home Schooling in Ecuador,” accessed September 6, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/HomeSchoolingEcuador/>.

⁷⁴ See qualitative research responses in appendix 2, particularly Silvia's comment on page 161, “I believe that my generation did not educate their children in faith, that is why the younger generation no longer attends church because they were not well educated.”

children in the faith regardless of what particular form of education they choose for their children.

Children will be disciplined by the Word or by the world. The consequences of one's worldview affects every area of life. When an entire institution—in this case the institution of Western Education—deliberately decides to adopt a naturalistic, nihilistic, and secular worldview, the devastating consequences previously examined will inevitably follow. As noted in chapter 2, contrary to the claims of Dewey's philosophical pragmatism, without the Christian worldview—without a philosophy that allows for the examination of the most meaningful questions in life—education will become the opposite of utilitarian. It will become utterly impractical in its very essence.

Scholars, such as Mohler, who have warned of the dangers of increasing secularism, consistently assert that the most important issues are foundational worldview matters that ultimately affect every area of life:

Christians must realize that the more enduring contest is ... between rival worldviews. A clash of worldviews reveals all the fault lines of a society, from education and economics, to arts and entertainment. Eventually, everything is at stake. Over time, every culture conforms in general terms to one worldview, not to more than one. One morality, one fundamental picture of the world, one vision of humanity prevails. One central challenge for Christians is to maintain hope and joy and full faith when the culture appears to be hardening against us.⁷⁵

Cuencano pastors must be convinced that the current generation needs to be disciplined to stand firm against secularism. They also need to be taught that faithfulness to the gospel must last for generations to come. In order to accomplish this task, pastors must equip the saints in their congregations to biblically disciple their children in order to preserve the health of the church and to reach the culture with the gospel of Christ.

Christian parents must not give their God-given obligation to disciple their own children over to anyone else. Mohler provides Christian parents with a sober

⁷⁵ Mohler, *Gathering Storm*, 190.

warning regarding the ends of secularism: “The forces of modern ‘progress’ mount an offensive even against the family unit because the future disciples of the new worldview are our children. For an increasingly hostile secular culture to claim total dominance, it must eradicate any semblance or scent of a pre-modern or biblical worldview in the upbringing of the future generation.”⁷⁶ To put it starkly, will Christian parents allow their children to be disciplined by the word or by the world? This question must be posed to Cuencano mestizo parents just as much as it should be posed to those in America in the throes of secularized education. Secularism will not be defeated by Cuencano Christians without an understanding of the massive implications that their children’s education and discipleship will have upon the outcome of this battle.

Combatting Secularism within the Culture via Apologetics

Apologetics, as previously stated, is putting forth the truth claims of Christianity and arguing for the unique truthfulness of the Christian faith.⁷⁷ It is important to note that contending for the faith take place not only as an intellectual exercise but as a battle within the confines of the human heart. Cuencano pastors, as well as any Christian leader seeking to combat secularization within the churches and cultures, must understand that human beings are not purely rational creatures. Rather, they often decide what they think is true based on what they *want* to be true according to their feelings and desires. In his book *Desiring the Kingdom*, James K.A. Smith argues that acknowledging that humans are often driven by what they love should not diminish worldview thinking. Instead, it should ground the Christian’s understanding of the connection between thought and desire. Smith writes,

We need a non-reductionistic understanding of human persons as embodied agents

⁷⁶ Mohler, *Gathering Storm*, 74.

⁷⁷ Mohler, *He is Not Silent*, 123.

of desire or love. This Augustinian model of human persons resists the rationalism and quasi-rationalism of the earlier models by shifting the center of gravity of human identity, as it were, down from the heady regions of mind closer to the central regions of our bodies, in particular, our *kardia*—our gut or heart.⁷⁸

When pastors rightly understand the consequences that “hollow and empty philosophies, based up the traditions of men” (Col 2:8) have on the overall well-being of those who hold them, these pastors will have gained a mighty weapon in the fight against secularism.

Just like every other inconsistent, non-biblical worldview, secularism inevitably leaves its adherent empty and unfulfilled. It is important to alert pastors about this for two reasons. First, secularism does not correspond to reality and therefore cannot meet the needs of human beings made in the image of God. Second, only the gospel provides the hope necessary to navigate this fallen world. As I conclude this chapter, I will explore these two vital truths in order to help pastors have confidence that secularism will fail in the end while the gospel will never falter.

Secularism does not correspond to reality. Secularism does not directly equate to naturalistic materialism—the believe that all of existence is only made up of the material elements of the physical universe.⁷⁹ However, secularism is based upon the philosophical notions of naturalism that allow for a dismissal of all transcendent truth claims. The English naturalist Julian Huxley illustrates this commitment of philosophical naturalism when he writes, “In the evolutionary scheme of thought there is no longer either need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created, it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body.”⁸⁰ It is important for Christians to understand that naturalism as a

⁷⁸ James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 746.

⁷⁹ Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 76.

⁸⁰ Cited in John Lennox, *God’s Undertaker* (Oxford: Lion Books, 2009), 9.

philosophical category is completely lacking a foundation that corresponds to what we know of reality. Therefore, it is self-contradictory.

There are several ways one could explore the self-contradictory nature of naturalism, but I want to focus on one main problem—the lack of a precondition for intelligibility. Simply stated, if naturalism is true, then it logically follows that human beings could never attain certain knowledge about anything in reality. Most secularists take for granted that they can trust their reason, their senses, and their evaluation of reality based upon those faculties. However, an important question must be posed to those who are committed to secular naturalism. Jason Lisle explains this tension in his book *The Ultimate Proof of Creation*:

We must eventually ask the empiricist how he knows that “all knowledge is gained through observation.” Clearly this is not something that the empiricist has observed (since knowledge cannot be “seen.”) So then how could anyone possibly know that empiricism itself is true, if all things are indeed known by observation? If empiricism is proved in some way other than through observation, then it refutes itself. If the empiricist’s ultimate standard did happen to be true, the empiricist could never actually know that it is true; he could never prove it. And if a person’s ultimate standard is uncertain, then all his other beliefs (which are based on that standard) are called into question. Empiricism destroys the possibility of actually knowing anything.⁸¹

Secularists claim there is no transcendental truth. But based upon their own worldview, such a claim is simply unknowable. More troublesome for the secularist is the fact that they are relying on their own intellect to determine the truth of reality, despite the fact that their own worldview teaches them that humans are simply the result of random atoms smashing together over billions of years. One ought to learn how to challenge a secularist according to examine the faulty foundations of his own worldview with questions such as: Why would anybody trust an ape to determine the highest truths of existence? You claim that human beings are simply evolved apes so why do human beings trust themselves—apes that are simply further along in the evolutionary process—

⁸¹ Jason Lisle, *The Ultimate Proof of Creation: Resolving the Origins Debate* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009). 514.

to have the rational capabilities to rightly interpret all of existence? Secular naturalism is an internally inconsistent worldview.

The philosophical failure of the secular worldview. The three primary markers of secularization that I identified in chapter 2 and showed to be occurring in chapter 4 are related to the three primary questions all worldviews must answer regarding God, knowledge, and ethics. As Johnson points out, these three questions are inseparably linked,

How we answer any one of the three ultimate questions of life (God, knowledge, and ethics) will consequently influence how we will answer the other two. Vern Poythress, professor of New Testament interpretation at Westminster Theological Seminary, concludes: “In many respects they presuppose one another. Though we may temporarily focus on only one subdivision within philosophy [metaphysics, epistemology, or ethics], the others lurk in the background.” Because every worldview, at its basic level, consists of the answers we give to (1.) the God question, (2.) the knowledge question, and (3.) the ethics question, these three questions are both intrinsically and inextricably interwoven together.⁸²

The secular worldview is not only inconsistent in its epistemology as previously stated. It also fails to logically support any ethical absolutes. If the secular naturalistic worldview is true, then man cannot be held accountable for any ethical actions because man is nothing more than a fleshly machine being directed by random cosmic forces. The famous atheist Bertrand Russell clearly believed this to be the case:

It is evident that a man with a propensity to crime must be stopped, but so must a man who has hydrophobia and wants to bite people, although nobody considers him morally responsible. A man who is suffering from a plague has to be imprisoned until he is cured, although nobody thinks him wicked. The same thing should be done with a man who suffers from a propensity to commit forgery; but there should be no more idea of guilt in the one case than in the other.⁸³

Most secular materialists are not as consistent as Russell. They would argue that Hitler’s crimes are worse than a child stealing a pack of gum. However, if there is no ultimate

⁸² Jeffrey D Johnson, *The Absurdity of Unbelief: A Worldview Apologetic of the Christian Faith* (Conway, AR: Free Grace Press, 2016), 1534.

⁸³ Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian* (New York: Touchstone, 1967), 41.

standard of morality based upon the immutable character of God, then it truly is simply human opinion that any action is a socially good or bad.

Additionally, placing the intellect as god has caused secularism to place the individual as god. As a result, secular culture seeks to find meaning and purpose by looking within oneself. Charles Taylor noted this inevitable conclusion when he wrote, “Our dependence on God has been supplanted by the lust for self-identification. For we no longer need to deny ourselves and bring our lives into conformity to God’s will to find fulfillment. We are now encouraged to find our purpose in being ourselves—whatever that may look like.”⁸⁴ Because of this idolatry of the self, secular culture inescapably leads its adherents to despair. The Bible clearly teaches that man was created to worship and to find his joy in God. However, because of his sinfulness, he traded the worship of the Creator for the creation. Romans 1 remarkably describes the consequences of self-worship:

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Romans 1:21–25)

This sinful decision to worship the creature, namely the self, has predictably led to a lack of hope and meaning everywhere secularism has reared its head. Johnson summarizes the desperate situation of secular man,

Slavery to the vanity of our own selfishness is the high cost of being liberated from God. According to Muggeridge, Barzun, and Lasch, we now live in the age of despair, but it is the world of our own making. We have traded hope for despondency, life for death, meaning for emptiness, truth for nihilism, love for selfishness, and God for a bowl of Esau’s soup. But the exchange cost us everything.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 483.

⁸⁵ Johnson, *Absurdity of Unbelief*, 2804, Kindle.

Pastors have a responsibility to disciple their congregations in such a way that they are “always prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15). In a secularizing society, Christians must be taught how to contrast the hope of the gospel with the philosophical failures of the secular worldview. This section has shown that secularism is internally inconsistent in its metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. Christians ought to be equipped to engage in apologetic discussions in which they are able to show the folly of secularism by clearly stating how the secularists rejection of Christianity leads to insurmountable philosophical problems. Specifically, according to the secular worldview, the secularist is unable to consistently interpret reality, trust his own reason, or maintain ethical standards.⁸⁶ In summary, everything that matters to rightly interacting with the world—metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics—has no logical foundation if the secular worldview is true. Cuencano Christian pastors need to understand this folly of the secular worldview in order to properly prepare their congregation to resist its influence and in order to be prepared to engage a secularizing culture around them.

Recognizing the desperate consequences of secularism should give pastors in both Cuenca and around the world the confidence that they have in the gospel the remedy for the ills of secularism. Christianity offers a consistent, holistic worldview that gives meaning to life and eternity. Christian leaders must be taught that secularism is a philosophically inconsistent worldview that leads to despair and emptiness. Therefore, as rampant as secularism may seem at the present moment, it cannot satisfy and will not endure. In summary, everything that matters to rightly interacting with the world has no logical foundation if the secular worldview is true.

⁸⁶ Daniel Akande, *The Folly of Unbelief: Philosophical Illustrations of the Futility of Unbelieving Thought*, (Conway, AR: Free Grace Press, 2021), 14.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to show that Cuencano pastors need to be trained via a missiological paradigm that empowers them to take responsibility for reproducing the biblical training they receive among others in their community for generations to come. Furthermore, I detailed three specific ways that Cuencano pastor should be prepared to combat secularism via the God-ordained institutions of the church and the family. Namely, pastors need to be encouraged to rely on the power and authority of the systematic exposition of God's Word above all else to transform their congregations and equip them to engage a secular culture that rarely considers the divine. They also must train Christian parents to raise up godly children who know the truth of God's word contrary to the self-authoritative epistemology of secular culture. Finally, God's people must not be afraid of worldly philosophies like secularism. Rather, they must be trained to understand these philosophies' shortcomings and to offer secular culture the hope that is found in the gospel alone.

Francis Schaeffer is among the most brilliant apologists and theologians of the twentieth century. He was convinced that Christians must not retreat from culture but rather they ought to be committed to living like Christ in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation so that the light of Christ may shine all the brighter in the darkness. Schaeffer reminds us that the Christian faith is not a quick fix to problems like secularism, yet it is sure to win the day in the end:

Christianity is not a modern success story. It is to be preached with love and tears into the teeth of men, preached without compromise, without regard to the world's concept of success. If there seem to be no results, remember that Jeremiah did not see the results in his day. They came later. If there seem to be no results, it does not change God's imperative. It is simply up to you and to me to go on, go on, go on, whether we see the results or whether we do not. Go on.⁸⁷

May God raise up courageous, faithful, persevering Christians in Cuenca and to the ends of the earth. May he raise up Christians willing to stand up to the schemes of

⁸⁷ Francis Schaeffer, *Death in the City* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002 [1969]), 94-95.

Satan. May he raise up men and women who are committed to pressing on toward the Kingdom—willing to “go on” no matter the cost.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The thesis of this dissertation is that several key indicators of a significant increase in secularism are evident among the younger generation of Ecuadorian Cuencano mestizos. Utilizing a review of relevant literature in chapter 2, I sought to answer the first of three overarching research questions in order to verify my thesis—What is secularism and how has it impacted cultures throughout history? I defined the essence of secularism as connoting a shift in the default conditions of a culture’s values and beliefs—from a world in which the consideration of God is a given, to one in which even the existence of the divine is doubted and challenged. In order to examine the development of secularism throughout the history of Western culture, I conducted an historical survey in order to identify three key markers of secularization related to three primary areas of worldview development—namely metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. I proposed that there are historically three key indicators of secularization among Western cultures—(1) A decrease in traditional transcendent religious belief and worship service attendance as related to metaphysical convictions. (2) A shifting epistemology as evidenced by an increase in reliance on individual autonomy and trust in rationalism. (3) A decrease in reliance upon and belief in the importance of a traditional biblical nuclear family structure as evidencing a shifting practical ethic.

Subsequently, in chapter 3, I surveyed the history of major cultural and religious movements within Cuenca, Ecuador. I purposed to provide a baseline of traditional Cuencano religious thought and practice upon which I could compare modern culture and religious commitments in order to answer the second research question of this dissertation—What worldview shift, if any, has occurred among young Cuencano

mestizos in comparison to their parents? In chapter 4, I utilized research methods such as fixed questionnaires and qualitative interviewing among Cuencano mestizos of both the younger and older generation. I then organized the responses into manageable data in the form of a data-coded spread sheet in order to produce a matrix through which I could accurately decipher the qualitative data in such a way as to produce an accurate conclusion regarding my research question. As a result, I determined that the Cuencano mestizos themselves believe that a significant secularization of worldview has taken place among Millennial Cuencanos.

The secularization of worldview among young Ecuadorian Cuencano mestizos has led to variety of changes in virtually every area of life for them. Their desire to marry has decreased significantly or been relinquished completely in some cases. Even if they do express a desire to be married (often much later in life) they want few, if any, children. Their education and their careers have become the focal points of their lives. Above all, they look to themselves as individuals to determine truth, meaning and morality. These modern convictions are in sharp contrast to the priorities of previous generations of Cuencano mestizos. Carl Trueman observes that this striking generational difference is a consistent trait among secularized cultures:

The break with the past that modernity represents is decisive, for it cuts us off from any agreed-on transcendent metaphysical order by which our culture might justify itself. With no higher order to which we might look in order to understand human existence teleologically, we both are isolated from the past, where ends transcending the individual were assumed, and are left free floating in the present.¹

The practical effects upon the everyday lives of increasing secularized young people are also common occurrences among increasingly secularized societies. A seemingly all-encompassing obsession with individual autonomy is perhaps the principal hallmark of a secular people. One's identity is no longer rooted in external aspects of

¹ Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 6.

family or culture, rather, for the secular-self identity is always found by looking inward. Meaning, purpose, morality, and reality itself are interpreted on a person by person basis while at the same time being greatly influence by the social imaginary of the culture at large. As I explored in chapter 2, Trueman explains how the historical secularization of religion, philosophy, and worldview have produced our current moment:

Here of great importance are both the emergence of a picture of the world as lacking intrinsic meaning and authority and the notion that what meaning it possesses must therefore first be put there by us as creative human agents. While it might seem far fetched to connect, say, Descartes’s grounding of certainty in his consciousness of his own doubting to the claims of a contemporary transgender activist that sex and gender are separable, in fact both represent a psychological approach to reality.²

In chapter 5, I set out to answer the final research question, “How should evangelical Christian leaders be effectively trained and equipped to combat secularism with biblical truth?” Having noted the significant cultural changes that increasing secularism entails, I purposed to provide an effective missiological framework for equipping Cuencano pastors to combat the encroachment of secularism in their midst. I argued for the implementation of the indigenous approach to missions with aim to equip indigenous churches with qualified leaders capable of navigating the treacherous waters of ungodly philosophies within their own cultural contexts.

I proposed three specific areas in which pastors could focus their efforts to combat secularism within the institutions of the church, the family and the culture—(1) Consistent expository preaching within the context of the local church, (2) Discipling believers to establish and promote biblical worldview formation within their homes, and (3) Practicing apologetic engagement in the culture with an emphasis on recognition of the bereft nature of secularism and the contrasting glory and hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I chose to emphasize these three areas of Christian ministry because they most directly combat the three key markers of secularism, specifically in regard to

² Trueman, *Modern Self*, 70.

metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. I concluded the chapter by noting that Cuencano Christians must not only be concerned with combatting secularism in this generation, rather, in the spirit of 2 Timothy 2:2, they must seek to prepare believers to combat ungodly philosophies for generations to come.

Final Considerations

I am convinced that my research throughout this dissertation has provided a resounding “Yes!” to the question of my original thesis as to whether key indicators of increasing secularization are present among young Ecuadorian Cuencano mestizos. However, I am not glad to report an affirmation of my thesis. Rather, I am all the more burdened to see churches throughout Cuenca equipped to stand firm against the rising tides of secularism. Thankfully, my hope is not dependent upon the efforts of mere mortal men. Rather, I have complete confidence in the eternal God who has promised, “I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18). Secularism will suffer the same fate that all “philosophies and empty deceits according to the traditions of men” (Col 2:8), have suffered for the last two-thousand years—utter failure to halt God’s plan to redeem a people for himself from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

God uses means to accomplish his purposes. John Calvin reminds us that the primary means God employs to strengthen, encourage, and equip his people is the local church:

We have shown that Christ becomes ours through faith in his gospel, so that we share in the salvation and eternal joy secured by him. Our ignorance, laziness, and vanity are such that we need a great deal of help to bring us to living faith. We also need to grow in that faith. So God has made sure we have enough encouragement by entrusting his gospel to the church. He has appointed pastors and teachers to build up his people (Eph 4:11).³

While believers may be absolutely certain that God will triumph over every scheme of his

³ John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 232.

enemies, including secularism, it is important to recount the means through which God has promised to secure that victory—namely via the proclamation of the gospel through the witness of the local church. For this reason, I have sought to detail the threat that secularism poses to Cuencano society while also noting that the antidote is faithful, healthy churches led by pastors who are equipped to “rightly divide the Word of Truth” (2 Tim 2:15).

It is to this end that I have written this dissertation—that Cuencano pastors may recognize the threat of secularism, be prepared to combat it, and then equip the saints within their congregations to continue the work of the ministry for generations to come. May God be glorified and may Christ be exalted from the heights of the Andes mountains to the ends of the earth.

APPENDIX 1

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTATION

I utilized qualitative research through the instrument of qualitative surveys in order to gather data for this dissertation. The survey consisted of questions related to the primary cultural markers of secularization, which I developed through my review of literature. Examples of the fixed questionnaire that I utilized in completing my research is provided in appendix 2. Having determined the primary cultural indicators of secularization, I formed open-ended questions based upon these key indicators of secularism that allowed the participants to explain how and why they felt the younger is more or less secular, and why they believe this has become the case.

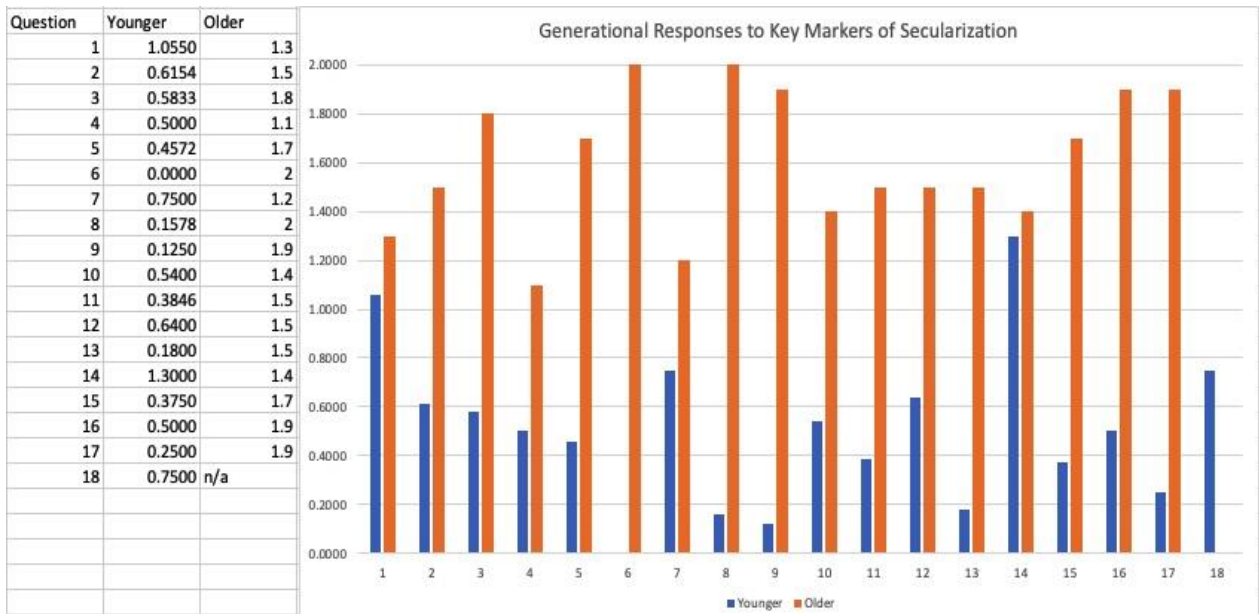
Following the initial completion of the qualitative questionnaire, I later reached out to participants who were willing to provide their contact information in order to ask “follow up and probing questions.”¹ The surveys included two primary sample groups of random Cuencano mestizos: ages eighteen to thirty-five, and ages thirty-six and above, each with sample sizes of at thirty-one participants. I found survey participants in a variety of venues including large gathering places such as malls, parks, and college campuses.

¹ This particular form of qualitative inquiry serves to “clarify and complete the answers, making them intelligible ... in order to get the depth that is a hallmark of qualitative inquiry by pursuing themes that are discovered, elaborating the context of answers, and exploring the implications of what has been said.” Rubin and Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing*, 145-151.

APPENDIX 2
 SAMPLING OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH SURVEY
 RESPONSES

I developed qualitative interview questions in the form of a fixed questionnaire that provided Cuencano mestizos the opportunity to share their own opinions and experiences about the supposed increase of secularism among the younger generation. In total, sixty-two people participated in the surveys. In this Appendix, I have provided both a graph containing the average response scores to all qualitative interview questions—based on the aforementioned data coding scale with 0 being the most secular score and 2 being the most traditionally religious score—and a representative sampling of particularly informative questionnaire responses from both the younger and older generations.

Figure 6. Generational Responses to All Qualitative Research Questions



Adult Male

Guillermo Cisneros, 42

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God.

2.- How do you think we could know God?

Helping others and being good people.

3.-Do you think knowing God matters?

Totally, because without God we are nobody.

4.- Do you attend any church, and how often?

I go to the cathedral every Saturday.

5.- Do you think the church does something for its members?

I think that the church does very little, it could do much more for people in need.

6.- Do you think your generation is more or less religious than the younger generation?

I think I am more religious because they live without much knowledge.

7.- In what way would you say that the generation of your age is more or less religious than the younger generation?

They don't seem to care about religion.

8.-Do you have the same religion as your parents?

They taught me the same religion.

9. Do you have a family; did you baptize and confirm them?

Yes, to everyone.

10.- In what way do you think religion dictates good or bad behavior in people's life?

I think those notions are dictated by the priests who, being human, also make mistakes.

11.-How do you determine that something is true?

Based on what I can see or have experienced.

12.-Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

God

13.-Do you think that our beliefs or how we live on earth have consequences when we die?

Of course

14.-Could you describe your family, and what your relationship is like.

We have a good relationship and we all agree on our religion.

15.-Do you consider correct or incorrect the new family structures made up of two men or two women?

It is not up to me to judge because it is up to each person.

16.-Do you consider that these new family structures benefit society?

I could not comment on it.

17.-Do you think that the youth in your time valued marriage?

In my time yes, now people see it as a contract or economic benefit.

Adult Female

Silvia, 67

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God.

2.- How do you think we could know God?

Having faith.

3.- Do you think that knowing God matters?

Yes because he must be the most important thing in our lives.

4.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I believe that we cease to exist.

5.- Do you think that the way we live on earth has consequences when we die?

No, I believe that our bad actions have their consequences while we are alive, when we die nothing happens anymore.

6.- Do you attend any church, and how often?

I attend Catholic Church every 15 days.

7.- Do you think that the people of the younger generation attend church as much as yours?

I believe that my generation did not educate their children in faith, that is why the younger generation no longer attends church because they were not well educated.

8.-Do you consider that the younger generation is more or less religious than your generation?

Young people are less religious because their parents no longer educate their children as before. They have too much freedom, and they are being very influenced by technology.

9.- Could you describe the structure of your family?

I have a mother and four brothers, I am single.

10.-Do you consider that the new family structures are valid?

No, I think they should not exist, it is unnatural.

11.-Do you think that the younger generation considers the family and marriage as something important?

I think not, because young people no longer want to have responsibilities, they want to be free.

12.-If you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have?

I wish I had married at 30 and had two children.

Adult Male
Jorge Molina, 70

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God.

2.- How do you think we could know God?

We are part of God; we already know him.

3.- Do you think that knowing God matters?

Of course, it matters, because we need him.

4.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

We turn to dust, our physical life ends.

5.-Do you attend any church?

I go to the Catholic church;

6.-Do you think that the people of the younger generation attend church as much as yours?

I couldn't tell if many young people go to church.

7.-Do you think you are more or less religious than the younger generation?

I think I am more religious because I understand religion better.

8.- In what way would you say that the generation of your age is more or less religious than that of your parents?

We have more information and knowledge.

9.- Do you have the same religion as your parents?

They taught me the same religion.

10. Do you have a family; did you baptize and confirm them?

Yes, to all of them, following the Catholic religion.

11.- In what way do you think religion dictates good or bad behavior in people's lives?

I believe that religion does not save anyone, it is up to people to distinguish between good and bad.

12.-How do you determine that something is true?

I don't think we can assert anything.

13.-Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

God.

14.-Do you think that our beliefs or how we live on earth have consequences when we die?

Of course, we are not all good or bad, it depends on our actions.

15.-Could you describe your family, and what your relationship is like.

We have a regular relationship; each one makes his life.

16.-Do you consider correct or incorrect the new family structures made by two men or two women?

I think I cannot judge them because it is up to each person.

17.-Do you consider that these new family structures benefit society?

I believe that each person fulfills his function in society and contributes with something.

Adult Male

Mauro Ayanza, 56

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God .

2.- How do you think we could know God?

We can know God through prayer and faith.

3.- Do you think it is important to know God?

Yes, I believe that it is necessary to know God.

4.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I believe that we cease to exist.

5.- Do you attend any church, and how often?

I attend Catholic Church once a week.

6.- Do you think that the people of the younger generation are more or less religious than yours?

I think young people are more interested in the material aspect than in the spiritual, they get carried away by consumerism.

7.- How do you know that something is true or not?

I think it depends on our education.

8.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

God.

9.- Do you think that the way we live on earth has consequences when we die?

I don't know, I couldn't answer that question.

10 Could you describe your family?

I have a wife and two children.

11.-Do you consider that the new family structures are valid?

Definitely not, it is unnatural.

12.-Do you think that the younger generation considers the family and marriage as something important?

I think not, young people have a lot of freedom and do not want to have responsibilities.

Adult Male

Carlos, 52

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God.

2.- How do you think we could know God?

We can't see him, but he always takes care of us.

3.- Do you think that knowing God matters?

Yes, it is important, because he gave us life.

5.-What do you think the church does for its members?

I believe that the church allows us to pray for our family.

6- When someone tells you something, how do you know if it is true or not?

I believe that everyone has their own way of thinking and should stick with it.

7.-You could describe your family, and what your relationship is like.

We get along well, sometimes there are problems between siblings but it's normal.

8.- Do you believe that the current generation believes that marriage and family are just as important as the generation of their parents?

No, they only care at first when the relationship is beautiful, as time passes, they separate due to minimal conflicts.

9.-You believe that the generation of your age values marriage as did the generation of your parents.

No, there is no longer respect or consideration for the couple, divorce is very common.

Adult Male
Nelson Argudo, 63

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God.

2.- How do you think we could know God?

Seeing everything that exists.

3.-Do you think it is important to know God matters?

Yes, because when we meet him, we know ourselves.

4.-What do you think happens when we die?

We migrate, we are embodied.

5.-Do you think that people of your generation attend a church as often as their parents?

I think so, because they follow their example.

6.- Do you think the church does something for its members?

The church spiritually communicates the works of God.

7.- In what way would you say that the younger generation is more or less religious than that of yours?

It depends on the guidance they received from their parents.

8.- Do you have the same religion as your parents?

No, because I think differently. I think religion is not guiding us in the right way because they are based more on the material than on the spiritual aspect.

9.-In what way do you think religion dictates good or bad behavior in people's life?

I believe that religion no longer helps, we must seek the good for ourselves.

10.- How do you determine that something is true?

Knowing and understanding what they are telling us.

11.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

God.

12.-Do you think that our beliefs or how we live on earth have consequences when we die?

Yes, of course, God sent his commandments, which we must follow to reach God.

13.-You could describe your family, and what your relationship is like.

In my family, everyone has gone their own way.

14.-Do you consider correct or incorrect the new forms or structures of the family made up of two men or two women?

It is not for me to judge or discriminate against anyone, because it is up to each person and they must answer to God.

15.-Do you think that the younger generation values marriage as did your generation?

They should, because family is the basic unit of society.

Adult Female

Susana Fernández, 54

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God .

2.- How do you think we could know God?

I think that we are always with him, we should only observe his miracles.

3.- Do you think that knowing God matters?

Of course, he must be the most important thing in our lives.

4.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I believe that God allows our arrival in paradise.

5.- Do you attend any church, and how often?

I attend Catholic Church once a week.

6.- Do you think that the people of the younger generation attend church as much as yours?

I believe that my generation did not take charge of educating their children in the faith, that is why the young generation no longer attends church because they were not educated well.

7.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

God

8.- How do you and your generation determine that something is right or wrong?

Our conscience dictates what is good and what is bad.

9.- Do you think that the way we live on earth has consequences when we die?

Yes, of course, because God watches our behavior on earth, and He will judge us for it.

10.- Could you describe the structure of your family?

I have been married for 33 years, and we have 3 children.

11.-Do you consider that the new family structures are valid?

I believe that we must respect the decisions of each person, but take into account that they are things that do not please God.

12.-Do you consider that the younger generation considers the family and marriage as something important?

I think not, because they have had a bad example, they are no longer being educated in the faith and they are very influenced by technology.

Adult Male

Manuel Aucai, 50

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God .

2.- How do you think we could know God?

I believe that to know God, we must read his word.

3.- Do you think it is important to know God?

Yes, it is important to follow their word.

4.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I believe that we cease to exist.

5.- Do you attend any church, and how often?

I attend Catholic Church once a week.

6.- Do you think that the people of the younger generation attend church as much as yours?

I think that young people are no longer interested in religion, they are also confused by technology.

7.- How do you know that something is true or not?

According to the word of the bible.

8.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

God.

9.- Do you think that the way we live on earth has consequences when we die?

I don't know, I couldn't answer that question.

10.-Do you consider that the new family structures are valid?

No, I think they are not valid because they go against the word of God.

11.-Do you think that the younger generation considers the family and marriage as something important?

I think no, young people are no longer interested in getting married, they are confused by the bad actions of the churches and their members.

Adult Male

Rodrigo, 59

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God.

2.- How do you think we could know God?

It manifests himself in everything that exists and in what we feel, we just have to observe.

3.-Do you think knowing God matters?

Yes, it is important, but I do not believe or participate in any religion.

4.- What do you think happens when we die?

I believe that life ends there, I do not believe in life after death.

4.- Do you attend any church, and how often?

I was baptized in the Catholic Church, but I do not attend any church and if I go it is just for a social commitment.

5.-Do you think that people of the younger generation attend a church as often as yours did?

I think people of my generation, at least 80%, attend church regularly because of their beliefs. Younger people no.

6.- Do you think the church does something for its members?

I believe that church is a business, and what if they do something, is just for the benefit of the people who run it.

7.- Do you think you are more or less religious than the younger generation?

I think I am more religious, my way of being religious is being a good person, but I do not cling to a religion.

8.-In what way would you say that the younger generation is more or less religious than yours?

I think they are less religious, since we are talking about a generation that was very attached to their beliefs, many customs typical of religion have been lost, I think this happens because of education.

9.-In what way do you think religion dictates good or bad behavior in the people in your life?

I believe that religion does not dictate good and evil in a correct way, things should not be imposed by force.

10.- How do you determine that something is true?

I believe in what I see.

11.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

Myself.

12.-Could you describe your family, and what your relationship is like?

We are a normal family; we have a good relationship.

13.- Do you consider that the new family structures benefit society at all?

It depends on whether they are good people or not, and their education.

14.-Do you think that the current generation values family and marriage like their parents' generation?

I think the value and respect for the family has been lost.

Young Female

Tatiana Vera. 20

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God .

2.- How do you think we could know God?

I think it depends on our belief

3.- Do you think that knowing God matters?

I think so, because we must be accountable to him later.

4.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I think we reincarnate on earth in other people or animals.

5.- Do you attend any church, and how often?

I attended Christian church out of obligation, but I no longer do.

6.- Do you think that people of your generation attend church just like their parents did?

No, people no longer go because they no longer believe in God.

7.- Do you think the church does something for its members?

I don't think they do anything, I don't like churches.

8.- Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents?

I think I am less religious than my parents, my parents are very Catholic.

9.- In what way would you say that the generation of your age is more or less religious than that of your parents?

My generation is more focused on technology and they get confused by the existence of various religions.

10.- In what way do you think religion dictates good or evil in the behavior of the people in their lives?

I believe that I make my own religion, according to what I consider to be right or wrong.

11.- Do you think that the way we live on earth has consequences when we die?

I don't think it matters.

12.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

The word of God.

13.- How do you and your generation determine that something is right or wrong?

I only believe in what I see, my generation does not believe in something until they see it.

14.- Could you describe your family?

I have a very large family, and they are the most important thing.

15.-Do you consider that the new family structures are valid?

Yes, as long as there is love and they give their children a good education, they are totally valid.

16.- Do you think that marriage and family are important?

I think family is important, marriage is just a social contract, I don't think it's necessary.

17.-Do you consider that your generation considers family and marriage as something important?

No, because in the past marriage was very important, and now young people believe that if something happens we should separate.

Adult Female

Irma, 46

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God .

2.- Do you think that knowing God matters?

I think the most important thing is to believe in him.

3.- Do you attend any church, and how often?

I attend Catholic Church once a week.

4.- Do you think that the people of the younger generation attend church as much as yours?

I think it depends on the education they receive from their parents.

5.-Do you consider that the younger generation is more or less religious than your generation?

Young people are less religious due to their education and access to technology, in schools they are taught to doubt God and stop believing.

6.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

The Word of God is my ultimate authority.

7.- Do you think that the way we live on earth has consequences when we die?

Yes, I believe that if we are good we go to heaven and if we are bad we go to hell.

8.- Could you describe the structure of your family?

I got married at 18 and have 3 children.

9.-Do you consider that the new family structures are valid?

I think they are not valid, they go against the word of God.

10.-Do you think that the younger generation considers the family and marriage as something important?

I think not, because young people think differently, they want to enjoy their life and do not want to have responsibilities, young people want to study more and dedicate themselves to their jobs.

Adult Male

Leonidas, 42

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God .

2.- How do you think we could know God?

Praying and fasting.

3.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

If we were good we will go to paradise.

4.- Do you attend any church, and how often?

Yes, to the apostolic church, 4 times a week.

5.- Do you think that people of the younger generation attend church just like their parents did?

No, people attend less, they need spiritual guides and relatives.

6.- In what way would you say that the younger generation is more or less religious than yours?

The younger generation is less religious due to technology.

7.- How do you and your generation determine that something is right or wrong?

According to the word of God, and through prayer and fasting.

8.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

Jesus is the highest authority in my life.

9.- Could you describe your family?

I have a large family, we are all believers, my son is a pastor.

10.-Do you consider that the new family structures are valid?

No, that is abominable, it should not exist.

11.- Do you think that marriage and family are important?

Very much, the word says, first God the family and the rest will come by itself.

12.-Do you consider that the younger generation considers the family and marriage as something important?

No, because they do not pray or have the necessary guidance to understand that the family is the most important thing.

Adult Female

Maci Bravo, 65

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God .

2.- How do you think we could know God?

We can know God by reading the bible and going to church.

3.- Do you think that knowing God matters?

Of course he is, because he is the owner of our lives.

4.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I think we reincarnate on earth in other people or animals.

5.- Do you attend any church, and how often?

I attend Catholic Church every Sunday.

6.- Do you think that the people of the younger generation attend church just like their parents did?

No, because there are many sects that confuse young people.

7.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

The word of God. The Bible

8.- How do you and your generation determine that something is right or wrong?

Reading the bible, and being guided.

9.- Could you describe your family?

I am a widow and have 6 children.

10.-Do you consider that the new family structures are valid?

They are not valid, I do not agree because it is not in the word of God, they live in sin.

11.- Do you think that marriage and family are important?

I think that young people no longer value family or marriage. They no longer want to commit themselves and they are more liberal. I consider that it is due to the influence of technology and television.

12.-Do you consider that young people consider family and marriage as something important?

No, because they do not value the word of God.

Young Female

Jessica, 21

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is a God.

2.- How do you think we can know God?

It depends on each person and their feelings.

3.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I think that what happens depends on the actions of people during their life, I think that those who were good go to heaven and the bad ones stay in purgatory.

4.- Do you attend any church,

I attend the Catholic Church once a month.

5.- Do you think that people of your generation attend a church as often as their parents?

Young people no longer attend church.

6.- What do you think the church does for its members?

I believe that churches carry out social work and help those most in need.

7.- Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents?

I am less religious.

8.- In what way would you say that the generation of your age is more or less religious than that of your parents?

Our parents had different customs, young people no longer pray, we are interested in other things such as social networks.

9.-I would like your children to be baptized and confirmed in the same religion.

Yes I would like them to have my same religion.

10.- In what way do you think religion dictates good or evil in the behavior of the people in their lives?

I believe that the churches set an example in every way, if they do something good like helping the poor, their followers follow suit.

11.- How do you determine that something is true?

I think that to know if something is true we must analyze it.

12.-Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

God

13.- Do you think that our beliefs or how we live on earth have consequences when we die?

Yes.

14.-You could describe your family, and what your relationship is like.

We have a good relationship based on communication.

15.- Do you consider correct or incorrect the new family structures made up of two men or two women?

I do not consider that it is something correct, I think that it is something negative for society.

16.- Do you think that marriage and family are important?

Yes, for me it is the most important thing.

17.-If you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have?

I would like to get married when I finish college, and I would have two children.

18.- Do you think that people of your generation value marriage and family more or less than your parents' generation?

I think it depends on each person, but I think it is not like before.

Young Female

Irene Solis, 29

1.-Do you attend any church, where, and how often?

I have been to my parish church, but just a few times.

2.-Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents and in what way?

I think I'm much less religious, because I don't go to church like my parents do.

3.-In what way do you think the people of your generation are more or less religious than the generation of your parents?

Society is changing, it depends on what they teach us from childhood.

4.-In what way do you think religion dictates good or bad behavior in the people's life?

I believe that religion has nothing to do with our choice between good and evil.

5.- How do you determine that something is correct or incorrect?

I think it depends on the education our parents gave us; we know internally when something is wrong and it is up to us to choose.

6.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

My parents

7.- What does family mean to you?

My family means everything for me, it is the basis of each person.

8.- Would you say that there are other valid family structures?

I think that sexuality has nothing to do with people's desire to start a family, as long as they are happy and good people, they are totally valid.

9.-If you could choose, when would you marry and how many children would you have?

I think I would get married at 35 and have a maximum of 3 children.

10.- Do you think that people of your generation value marriage and children more or less than their parents' generation?

I think they value both in the same way.

Young Female

Magaly, 30

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God .

2.- How do you think we could know God?

We must follow his word, God left us commandments that we must follow to please him.

3.- Do you think that knowing God matters?

Very important, because without God we are nothing, and we would live with a feeling of emptiness.

4.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I think we went into a deep sleep and woke up in paradise, God's promised land.

5.- Do you attend any church, and how often?

I attended Catholic Church, but I no longer do.

6.- Do you think that people of your generation attend church just like their parents did?

No, because people no longer care about religion, they believe that they are their own authority and they are not interested in following God.

7.- Do you think the church does something for its members?

I think it depends on the church, there are churches that really want to teach the word of God by example, but there are others that do not.

8.- Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents?

I think I am more religious because I have the opportunity to study and learn.

9.- In what way would you say that the generation of your age is more or less religious than that of your parents?

My generation is less religious, because we choose to live our own lives without the guidance of anyone.

10.- In what way do you think religion dictates good or evil in the behavior of the people in their lives?

I believe that religion allows us to choose between good and evil by transmitting the word of God to us.

11.- How do you and your generation determine that something is right or wrong?

Following the word of the bible, what the bible says is correct.

12.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

The word of God.

13.-Do you think that the way we live on earth has consequences when we die?

Yes, because God in his word dictates good and evil to us, and those who have done wrong will receive their punishment.

14.- How do you define the word family?

God is the foundation that unites the family.

15.-Do you consider that the new family structures are valid?

I consider that the new generations have their own ideas, I think they are valid despite not pleasing God.

16.-Do you think marriage and family are important?

Yes, because God in his word says that the family is the most important thing.

17.-Do you consider that your generation considers family and marriage as something important?

No, because they no longer respect marriage and families, my generation no longer has the desire to start a family.

18.-If you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have?

I would marry for 30 years and have two children.

Young Male

Jhon Rivas Bravo, 23

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is no god.

2.- How do you think we can know God?

Reading the bible and going to church.

3.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I think some go to heaven and some go to hell.

4.- Do you attend any church,

I attend Catholic Church once a week.

5.- Do you think that people of your generation attend a church as often as their parents?

I believe that neither my generation nor my parents' generation attend church as much as in the past because the church has disappointed us with their actions.

6.- What do you think the church does for its members?

I think they help the poor, they do charity.

7.- Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents?

I am less religious, because I don't like going to church.

8.- In what way would you say that the generation of your age is more or less religious than that of your parents?

I think we are less religious because we have heard about the bad actions of the priests and that makes us reject religion.

9.-I would like your children to be baptized and confirmed in the same religion.

Yes, I would like them to follow the Catholic religion.

10.- In what way do you think religion dictates good or evil in the behavior of the people in their lives?

I believe the churches determine right and wrong at the word of the Lord.

11.- How do you determine that something is true?

Doing research.

12.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

God.

13.- Do you think that our beliefs or how we live on earth have consequences when we die?

Yes, everything we do has consequences later.

14.-You could describe your family, and what your relationship is like.

We are a small family, we have a good relationship, we are very close.

15.- Do you consider correct or incorrect the new family structures made up of two men or two women?

Yes, I consider that they are valid, each person has the right to do what they feel is good for them, I believe that they have a positive impact on society, they can give home to orphaned or abandoned children.

16.- Do you think that marriage and family are important?

Yes, they are the most important.

17.-If you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have?

I would like to get married at 28 years old, and I would have two children.

18.-Do you think that people of your generation value marriage and family more or less than your parents' generation?

I think we value it in the same way.

Young Male

David, 24

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is no god.

2.- How do you think we can know God?

I believe that before trying to know God, people must try to be better.

3.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I think we cease to exist.

4.- Do you attend any church,

He attended the Catholic Church as a child out of obligation.

5.- Do you think that people of your generation attend a church as often as their parents?

Young people no longer attend church.

6.- What do you think the church does for its members?

I don't think they do anything.

7.- Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents?

I am less religious, they are very religious.

8.- In what way would you say that the generation of your age is more or less religious than that of your parents?

Our parents had different customs, they were very attached to the church and its beliefs, I believe in nature and animals.

9.-I would like your children to be baptized and confirmed in the same religion.

No, I would allow them to choose when they are old enough.

10.- In what way do you think religion dictates good or evil in the behavior of the people in their lives?

I believe that churches set an example for both good and bad.

11.- How do you determine that something is true?

I think we should always investigate.

Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

I am my own authority.

12.- Do you think that our beliefs or how we live on earth have consequences when we die?

No .

13.-You could describe your family, and what your relationship is like.

We are a small family, we have a good relationship.

14.- Do you consider correct or incorrect the new family structures made up of two men or two women?

Yes, I consider that they are valid and we must respect them, they should not be discriminated against.

15.- Do you think that marriage and family are important?

Yes, for me family is important but not marriage.

16.-If you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have?

I would like to get married when I finish college, and I would have two children.

17.- Do you think that people of your generation value marriage and family more or less than your parents' generation?

I think we value them in the same way, it depends on each person.

Young Male
Mateo Guillen, 18

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

I believe that there is no God .

2.- Do you think it is important to believe in God?

I think it depends on each person and their need to support a belief.

4.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

We decompose, we cease to exist.

5.- Do you attend a church, do you think that people of your generation attend a church as often as their parents?

I don't go to any church and I think young people do it less and less.

6.- What do you think the church does for its members?

I believe that the church provides emotional support and educates its members.

7.- Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents?

I am less religious.

8.- In what way would you say that the generation of your age is more or less religious than that of your parents?

I think my generation is less religious due to our ability to access information and education.

9.- In what way do you think religion dictates good or bad behavior in the people in their lives?

I believe that religion has imposed rules that have been good and allow the distinction between what is good and bad.

10.- How do you determine that something is true?

I think we can say that something is true when it has been proven.

11.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

I am the highest authority in my life.

12.- Do you think that our beliefs or how we live on earth have consequences when we die?

No, because we cease to exist.

13.-You could describe your family, and what your relationship is like.

We get along well, I have two families, my mom's family and my dad's family.

14.- Do you consider correct or incorrect the new family structures made up of two men or two women?

Yes, because they are bonds that seek love for others regardless of gender.

15.- Do you consider that these new family structures benefit society at all?

I think they do not harm anything, I am even glad that they are happy.

16.- Do you think that marriage and family are important?

I believe that marriage is not important or necessary, the family is the most important because they provide you with emotional support.

17.-If you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have?

I would like to get married when I am financially and emotionally stable, and I would have two children.

18.-Do you think that people of your generation value marriage and family more or less than your parents' generation?

I think we no longer value marriage because we don't consider it necessary, but I think the value of family has not waned.

Young Female
Mayra Sánchez, 27

1.- Do you attend any church?

I attend Catholic Church every 15 days.

2.-Do you think that people of your generation attend a church as often as their parents?

No, because young people no longer believe in God.

3- Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents?

I think I am less religious because I do not keep the customs of my parents, they used to pray constantly and I do not.

4.- In what way would you say that the generation of your age is more or less religious than that of your parents?

Young people are no longer interested in religion and believe that they do not need God, so they no longer believe in him, and many even scoff.

5.- In what way do you think religion dictates good or bad behavior in the people in their lives?

I believe that each person makes their own decisions.

6.- How do you and your generation determine that something is right or wrong?

I think my generation believes in what it sees.

7.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

God

8.- How do you define the word family?

I think it is the most important thing, although coexistence is difficult.

9.-Do you consider that the new family structures are valid?

Definitely not, I believe that God created men and women destined to form families, it should not be different.

10.-If you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have?

I am already married and have a son.

11.- How do you determine that something is true?

I think it depends on our education and knowledge.

12.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

God.

13.- Do you think that our beliefs or how we live on earth have consequences when we die?

Yes.

14.-You could describe your family, and what your relationship is like.

I live with my husband and son. Family is very important to me.

15.- Do you think that marriage and family are important?

I think that marriage is important and family can look many different ways.

16.-If you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have?

I would get married again.

17.- Do you think that people of your generation value marriage and family more or less than your parents' generation?

I think we no longer value marriage because we see that it often does not work, couples separate due to any situation.

Young Female

Alejandra, 29

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is only one God.

2.- How do you think we could know God?

I believe that we can know him spiritually, praying, it is not necessary to go to church.

3.- Do you think that knowing God matters?

I think so, we should talk to him.

4.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I think we turned to dust.

5.- Do you attend any church, and how often?

I attend Catholic Church once a month.

6.- Do you think that people of your generation attend church as often as their parents?

No, people don't go anymore because they don't care anymore.

7.- In what way would you say that the generation of your age is more or less religious than that of your parents?

Youth is different, they no longer need religion.

9.- Do you think that the way we live on earth has consequences when we die?

Yes, because if we believe in God we must follow his word.

10.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

God.

11.- How do you and your generation determine that something is true, correct or incorrect?

I believe that everyone has their way of thinking according to their education.

12.- Could you describe your family?

We are 10 brothers, I have a big family.

13.-Do you consider that the new family structures are valid?

No, I think it goes against the word of God.

14.-Do you consider that your generation considers family and marriage as something important?

The youth are not interested in getting married, they do not care about the family, before our parents educated us in a better way, our parents had greater authority.

15.-If you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have?

I would marry at 33 and have two children at the most.

Young Female

Jessica Espinoza, 26

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is no God.

2.-Do you think that people of your generation attend a church as often as your parents?

No, religion is fading.

3.- What do you think the church does for its members?

I think the church does nothing, they can give relief to people who seek comfort, but do not see works.

4.- Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents?

I am less religious.

5.- In what way do you think religion dictates good or bad behavior in the people in their lives?

In moral facts.

6.- How do you determine that something is true?

Everything must be proven by science.

7.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

My mother.

8.- Do you think that our beliefs or how we live on earth have consequences when we die?

No, our bad actions have consequences while we are alive.

9.-You could describe your family, and what your relationship is like.

I have several brothers, we have a good relationship.

10.- Do you consider correct or incorrect the new family structures made up of two men or two women?

Yes, I respect and accept.

11.- Do you think that marriage and family are important?

Yes, both are important because they provide stability and security.

12.-If you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have?

I would not like to get married, and I would have three children.

13.- Do you think that people of your generation value marriage and family more or less than your parents' generation?

I think we no longer value marriage, it is a social commitment, we no longer take it seriously.

Young Female

Tania Delgado, 21

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is a God.

2.- How do you think we can know God?

We can know God through the bible.

3.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I think we rest.

4.- Do you attend any church,

I attend the Catholic Church once a week.

5.- Do you think that people of your generation attend a church as often as their parents?

Young people no longer attend church.

6.- Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents?

I am less religious.

7.- In what way would you say that the generation of your age is more or less religious than that of your parents?

I think my generation is less religious, nobody reads the bible or goes to church anymore.

8.-I would like your children to be baptized and confirmed in the same religion.

No, it would allow them to decide when they are adults.

9.- In what way do you think religion dictates good or bad behavior in the people in their lives?

Based on the bible.

10.- How do you determine that something is true?

I believe in what I see.

11.- Do you think that our beliefs or how we live on earth have consequences when we die?

Yes.

12.-You could describe your family, and what your relationship is like.

I have 8 brothers, we have a good relationship.

13.- Do you consider correct or incorrect the new family structures made up of two men or two women?

I do not consider that they are acceptable, they do not provide a good image to society.

14.- Do you think that marriage and family are important?

I believe that family is based on marriage, therefore both are important

15.-If you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have?

I would like to get married at 30, and would have two children.

16.-Do you think that people of your generation value marriage and family more or less than your parents' generation?

I think we no longer value marriage because no one wants to get married and prefers their freedom.

Young Female

Ana Lucía, 34

1.- Do you attend any church,

I attended a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses once a week.

2.-Do you think that people of your generation attend a church as often as their parents?

No, because if young people attend now, it is only because of their parents' obligation. I think technology has taken us away from everything.

3- Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents?

I think I am less religious because my parents tried to teach us the right things through religion, and we no longer do that.

4.- In what way do you think religion dictates good or bad behavior in the people in their lives?

I believe that each religion has changed my life, because I know that I must be God fearing, and I must do things well, and be a good person.

5.- How do you and your generation determine that something is right or wrong?

I think it depends on the experience that each one has.

6.- Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

God and my conscience.

7.- Do you think that your generation is morally little or very different from the generation of your parents?

I think it is very different, in the past people were more respectful and cordial, currently children no longer respect their parents and that is why values have been lost.

8.- How do you define the word family?

I believe that the family is the community that allows and supports you to grow in every way.

9.-Do you consider that the new family structures are valid?

I consider that it is not correct, it does not make sense to me that families like this exist.

10. Do you consider it correct that your generation has these different family structures?

I think not, currently it is socially accepted and supported by certain groups, but it should not be that way.

11.-Do you think that people of your generation value marriage and family more or less than your parents' generation?

I think we value them less because there are more divorces.

Young Male

Paul, 26

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is a God.

2.- How do you think we can know God?

Through religion.

3.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I think we reincarnate.

4.- Do you attend any church?

I attend Catholic Church but only on holidays.

5.- Do you think that people of your generation attend a church as often as their parents?

Young people no longer attend church.

6.- What do you think the church does for its members?

It changes the way people think and their behavior, it makes us value family more.

7.- Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents?

I am less religious.

8.- In what way would you say that the generation of your age is more or less religious than that of your parents?

I think my generation is less religious.

9.-You could describe your family, and what your relationship is like.

We have a good relationship.

10.- Do you consider correct or incorrect the new family structures made up of two men or two women?

I think they are correct because we are all free to make our own decisions, I think they do not affect society at all.

11.- Do you think that people of your generation value marriage and family more or less than your parents' generation?

I think it depends on each person.

12.-If you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have?

I would like to get married at 30 and would have two children.

Young Male

Nelson, 21

1.- Do you believe that there is one God, several gods or there is no God?

There is a God.

2.- How do you think we can know God?

It depends on each person and their feelings.

3.- What do you think happens to us when we die?

I think that what happens depends on the actions of people during their life, I think that those who were good go to heaven and the bad ones stay in purgatory.

4.- Do you attend any church,

I attend the Catholic Church once a month.

5.- Do you think that people of your generation attend a church as often as their parents?

Young people no longer attend church.

6.- What do you think the church does for its members?

I believe that churches carry out social work and help those most in need.

7.- Do you think you are more or less religious than your parents?

I am less religious.

8.- In what way would you say that the generation of your age is more or less religious than that of your parents?

Our parents had different customs, young people no longer pray, we are interested in other things such as social networks.

9.-I would like your children to be baptized and confirmed in the same religion.

Yes I would like them to have my same religion.

10.- In what way do you think religion dictates good or evil in the behavior of the people in their lives?

I believe that the churches set an example in every way, if they do something good like helping the poor, their followers follow suit.

11.- How do you determine that something is true?

I think that to know if something is true we must analyze it.

12.-Who or what is the supreme authority in your life?

God

13.- Do you think that our beliefs or how we live on earth have consequences when we die?

Yes.

14.-You could describe your family, and what your relationship is like.

We have a good relationship based on communication.

15.- Do you consider correct or incorrect the new family structures made up of two men or two women?

I do not consider that it is something correct, I think that it is something negative for society.

16.- Do you think that marriage and family are important?

Yes, for me it is the most important thing.

17.-If you could choose at what age you would marry and how many children would you have?

I would like to get married when I finish college, and I would have two children.

18.- Do you think that people of your generation value marriage and family more or less than your parents' generation?

I think it depends on each person, but I think it is not like before.

APPENDIX 3

DECENTRALIZED THEOLOGICAL TRAINING MODULE

Module 1 Teaching Outline:

Spiritual Discipline: *Bible Intake*

Main Subject: *Old Testament Survey*

Practice of Ministry: *Call to Ministry*

How to use the Spiritual Disciplines material:

Usually, our modules are scheduled for Monday through Friday. Each day begins with a “devotional” portion that speaks more specifically to the heart and seeks to encourage the students. The Spiritual Disciplines component is broken into five sections, which gives the teacher(s) a section for each day for an ideal 5-day schedule. Each devotion should take between 30-45 minutes. Time for speaking through an interpreter needs to be considered when applicable.

The material is designed to help the teacher to prepare a devotional for each day by asking the teacher various reflection questions. The basic principles presented, the Scriptures referenced, and the teacher’s responses to the reflection questions, are to make up the content of what the teacher delivers for each devotion. The idea is that the teacher lead devotional times that flow from his personal walk with Christ, his practice of these disciplines, and that the teaching would reflect his own personal meditation on the Word.

This material is adapted from Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Teachers are encouraged to read the full chapters on each discipline in Whitney for a fuller understanding of the aim and practice of the spiritual disciplines. It is important to caution students against the legalistic practice of any discipline, but rather to pursue godliness by God’s grace in His Spirit.

Every SD portion begins with an overview of the Spiritual Disciplines, in general. The purpose of this is to keep in mind God’s purpose in our practice of these disciplines, which is holiness. The remaining sections are:

Day 1: Biblical Basis for the Discipline—The teacher establishes that the discipline is clearly practiced in the Bible and how it is helpful for us.

Day 2: Biblical Examples for the Discipline—The teacher demonstrates how people in the Bible practiced this discipline and why it matters that we imitate their examples.

Day 3: Personal Testimony—The teacher, along with appropriate Bible passages, gives personal testimony about how he has practiced this discipline and how it has impacted them.

Day 4: Historical Example—The teacher reflects on the life of a Christian figure from church history who modeled that particular discipline well.

Day 5: The Practice of the Discipline—The teacher gives practical suggestions about how to begin or improve the practice of that particular discipline.

The Spiritual Discipline of Bible Intake

Section 1: Biblical Basis for this Discipline

Overview of Spiritual Disciplines

Donald Whitney defines spiritual disciples as “the God-given means we are to use in the Spirit-filled pursuit of Godliness.” Pursuing spiritual disciplines without personal trust in Christ, and relying upon the Spirit’s power, does not produce godliness; it produces hypocrisy. Discipline is at the heart of discipleship because a major evidence of the Spirit-controlled life is self-control. Evidence of a sin-controlled life is being without self-control. Paul tells Timothy, “Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness...” (1 Timothy 4:7).

So, the goal of the Spiritual Disciplines is godliness or Christ-likeness.

1. Christ-likeness is God’s ultimate purpose for every believer—ESV Romans 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...
2. If God’s plan for us is to be like Christ, we must look at Christ’s life and see how He lived. And no one was more spiritually disciplined than Jesus. Yet what God wants for us is for us to grow in knowing and loving Him more and more.

The Spiritual Disciplines are God’s way of putting ourselves into the pathways of His grace so that we would grow to be more like Christ.

Connecting to Bible Intake

Remember that the purpose of the spiritual disciplines is godliness. God has given us the spiritual disciplines as means of growing to be more like Jesus. One way that we do this is through the daily intake of Scripture.

Biblical Foundation

Reflect on the following passages and how they relate to the importance of the discipline of Bible intake.

- *2 Timothy 3:16-17*
 - Paul says in this passage that the Scriptures are useful for “...training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”
 - How does the Bible equip believers for every good work?
- *Matthew 4*
 - How does Jesus respond to each of Satan’s temptations? Why is this important? (See Deuteronomy 8:1-3)
 - What does Jesus’ responses to Satan’s temptations say about His own discipline of Bible intake?
- *Psalms 119:1-16; 41-42; 50*
 - How does the attitude of the psalmist illustrate the importance of God’s Word for our lives?
- *2 Peter 1:3-9*
 - How does regular Bible intake help us to grow in these qualities?
- If your growth in godliness were measured by the quality of your bible intake, how healthy would you say you are?
- What is one thing you can do to improve your intake of God’s Word?

Main Subject: Old Testament

Location (Dates)

(This outline suggests some key points for each section which may be used, expanded upon, or not used per the discretion of the teacher and as time allows.)

Day 1

30 minutes–1 hour – Devotion—(SD Bible Intake Section B. 1. and 2. HHH)
(Teacher)

1 – 1 ½ hours—Overview of the Bible and the Old Testament (Teacher)

- Bible = 1 book, 1 author—God, 1 story—Redemption
- OT/NT brief outline – creation, fall, judgment (flood), patriarchs, Exodus, conquest of land, kingdom, divided kingdom, prophets, exile/return, 400 year inter-biblical period, gospels, Acts, epistles, Revelation.
- OT referred to as the Law and Prophets in NT.
- OT was the only scriptures in NT times. Peter preached from OT and spoke of Christ fulfilling the OT on Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)—sufficient to save.

- Jesus spoke to disciples on road to Emmaus: “Beginning with Moses and the Prophets, Jesus showed them all things about Him.”
- Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT promises, covenants, law, and prophets
- Three OT offices: Priest, King, Prophet—fulfilled in Jesus Christ
- Covenants: Edenic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic—fulfilled in Jesus Christ
- Recurring themes in the Bible: Sovereignty, Law, Grace, Responsibility, Christ. Occur in practically every book of the OT.

Genesis

1 – 1 ½ hours—Creation- Genesis 1-2 (Teacher)

- Genesis is the beginning of: creation, life, man & woman, marriage, family, sin, death, judgment, government, nations, languages. It does not tell us of the beginning of God, however, because He is eternal
- Implications of “In the beginning, God.” Starts with God, not man.
- God is eternal. Our view of God is too small. “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” ~ A. W. Tozer
- God with Moses at burning bush, “I am Who I am.”
- God: self-sufficient, all-powerful, worthy of worship
- Why did God create? For His glory.
- Gen. 1:1 – God-centered view of all things
- “The earth was without form and void.”
- Creation days:
 - Days 1,2,3—Giving form to creation
 - Days 4,5,6—Filling the void
- Man created in God’s image.
- Man to fill the earth—first version of the Great Commission
- God’s opinion of creation: Days 1-5—“It was good.” Day 6—“It was very good.”
- Why did God rest? Not because He was tired, but because He was finished. (Cf. Jesus in Hebrews 10:12)
- Chapter 2—Is it another creation? No, it is a restating of the creation story with further detail. Common Hebrew literary device.
- Only one commandment: “Do not eat of the tree in the midst of the garden.” Choice to obey is not a result of the fall.
- Work was given to man. Work is not the result of sin. Work is a form of worship.
- Only one thing not good, however—“It is not good for the man to be alone.”
- Animals given to man to name.—However, no suitable companion found among them.
- Woman taken from man’s side: not from his head to dominate him, not from his feet to be stepped upon, but from his side to walk, work, serve, and worship with him.
- “Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh”—the one flesh relationship in marriage. Sexual intimacy is not a result of the fall, but predates it.
- Summary—Not a result of the fall: work, choice to obey, sexual intimacy in marriage.

1 – 1 ½ hours—The Fall- Genesis 3-11 (Teacher)

- Satan embodies the serpent to tempt Eve. Satan and fallen angels seek to be embodied throughout Bible.—co-opting God’s creation for his evil purposes. (e.g., serpent, swine, Judas, antichrists)
- Casting doubt on God’s Word: “Did God actually say?”
- Casting doubt on God’s promises/sin’s consequences: “You will not surely die.”
- Casting doubt on God’s goodness: “For God knows . . .”
- Eve saw that the tree was (compared with 1 Jn 2:16; temptation of Jesus, Mt. 4:1-11):
 - “good for food” “desires of the flesh” “command these stones to become loaves”
 - “a delight to the eyes” “desires of the eyes” “showed him all the kingdoms of the world”
 - “to be desired to make one wise” “pride of life” “throw yourself down”
- Eve tempted to sin, Adam ate willingly
- Their eyes were opened, they understood more (wiser?), but were ashamed.—“They knew that they were naked.”—Exposed.
- God still came to have fellowship with them, as apparently was His custom. **God himself is the first missionary.** Leaving his place to go and preach to sinners in another land.
- He called to the man, “Where are you?”—not because God didn’t know, but because Adam needed to know.
- “I heard the sound of you . . . and I hid myself.”
- Curses:
 - Serpent—crawl on belly, enmity with mankind
 - Woman—pain in childbirth, desire for husband’s position/authority
 - Man—difficulty and frustration in work/subduing the earth.
 - Man and woman exiled from the presence of the “Tree of Life.” Horrible to live eternally with the consequences of sin—that is hell. **Exile** is key concept in OT.
 - Introduction of **Edenic Covenant**—unconditional.
- Proto-evangelium—“first gospel”
 - “Seed” of the woman—“Seed” is a singular word that can have a collective meaning. “Seed” is a key word in OT.—“Seed of woman,” “Seed of Abraham,” “Seed of David.”—fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
 - Temporary wound to “Seed of woman,” permanent, deadly wound to “seed of serpent.”
 - **God himself is the first preacher of the Gospel.**
 - Eve apparently expected this “Seed” to be born in her lifetime—see how she named her sons.
 - God made them tunics of animal skins. First sacrifice of blood. **God himself is the first priest.**
- Cain and Abel
 - Two sacrifices:
 - Fruit of the ground
 - Firstborn of the flock

- Two responses:
 - The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering
 - For Cain and his offering He had no regard.
- God had already shown that shedding of blood is necessary for the covering of sin. (Heb. 9:22)
- Cain murders Abel. God requires an accounting. “The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.”
- Cain exiled, but protected.
- Man begins to grow in number, skill, importance, power, and wickedness (see Lamech)
- Birth of Seth—first in the line of the Seed of the woman. “People began to call upon the name of the Lord.”
- Adam’s descendants through the line of Seth.—chapter 5.
- Noah instructed to build an ark in his 500th year. Note God’s mercy in that all in the line of Seth are dead prior to the flood. Methuselah and Noah’s father, Lamech die the year of the flood.
- Salvation of animals and mankind.
- Cover ark with “pitch.” Hebrew words for “pitch” and “atonement” or “covering” have same root.
- Flood (judgment) would not begin until all inside
- God closed the door.
- All life destroyed
- God’s promise to never destroy the earth by water again. Rainbow. **Noahic Covenant**—unconditional.
- Tower of Babel
 - Disobedience to command to fill the earth
 - Attempt at one-world government
 - Unity of language, purpose, location, “nothing they propose to do will be impossible for them.”
- God confuses languages, scatters the people. Reversal of this action on the Day of Pentecost with the preaching of the gospel.

1 – 1 ½ hours—The Patriarchs- Abraham and Isaac- Genesis 12-27 (Teacher)

- Abram’s Call/God’s covenant—**Abrahamic Covenant**—unconditional:
- Components of covenant (12:1-3):
 - Land
 - Nations
 - Blessing
- Separation of Lot and Abram
- Rescue of Lot
- Blessing by Melchizedek (cf. Heb. 7)
- Re-confirmation of Covenant (15)—including promise of descendency—“Seed”
- Abram “believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness.” Justification always received by faith.
- God prophesies the Egyptian sojourn.
- Abram and Sarai attempt to fulfill the promise through Hagar.

- Covenant of Circumcision.
- Promise of Isaac’s birth.
- The visit from the LORD at Mamre:
 - Confirmation of birth of Isaac
 - Announcement of judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah
 - Intercession of Abraham
- Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah/Rescue of Lot
 - Escape
 - Death of Lot’s wife
 - Birth of Lot’s sons by his daughters—beginning of Moabites and Ammonites
- Isaac’s birth and Hagar’s and Ishmael’s exile.
- Sacrifice of Isaac
 - Abraham’s obedience
 - “I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.”
 - Wood laid on Isaac.
 - “Where is the lamb for a burnt offering? . . . God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.”
 - Abraham’s hand stayed from slaying Isaac.
- A bride for Isaac—Rebekah.
- Birth of Esau and Jacob—“Jacob” means “supplanter” or “deceiver.”
- Sale of birthright for a bit of red stew.
- Re-affirmation of Abrahamic Covenant with Isaac (land, descendants “seed,” nations, blessing).
- Jacob steals the blessing from Esau.

1 – 1 ½ hours—The Patriarchs II- Jacob through Joseph- Genesis 28-50 (Tony Steele)

- Jacob sent by Rebekah to Laban’s house.
- Jacob’s dream at Bethel—Abrahamic Covenant reaffirmed to Jacob (land, descendants “seed,” nations, blessing). The ladder is Jesus (cf. John 1:51).
- Jacob marries Leah and then Rachel and receives concubines, Zilpah and Bilhah.
- Jacob’s children born of these women. Heads of 12 tribes.
- Jacob prospered by God with much livestock.
- Jacob flees Laban and prepares to meet Esau.
- Jacob wrestles with the LORD. Name changed to Israel—“he who strives with God.”
- Jacob’s name change and Abrahamic Covenant reaffirmed at Bethel: (descendancy “seed,” land, nations, blessing).
- Joseph’s dreams of superiority and authority over his family.
- Joseph sold into slavery.
- Joseph in the house of Potiphar. Seduction of Potiphar’s wife.
- Joseph in king’s prison.
- Through setbacks Joseph is advanced according to God’s plan..
- Joseph: interpreter of dreams:
 - Cup-bearer

- Baker
- Pharaoh
- Jacob exalted over land of Egypt for management of years of plenty and famine.
- Jacob's family saved from famine by Joseph's intervention.
- Family of Israel move to Egypt in fulfillment of the prophecy of God to Abraham (Gen. 15:13).
- Blessing of sons of Israel—Judah to be the line of the Messiah.
- Joseph's death and instruction concerning his bones.
- First five words of Genesis—"In the beginning God created." Last five words of Genesis—"in a coffin in Egypt." These provide appropriate parentheses to this book that describes God's creation and the consequences of man's sin.

Practical Ministry: The Call to Ministry

Section 1: Biblical Basis for Ministerial Calling

30 mins.-1 hour—PM wrap-up, Q&A (Teacher(s))

1. Practice of Ministry: God's Call to Ministry

1. *We want to help students to think through their call to ministry.*
 1. At the very beginning of this pastoral training program.
 2. At the end of each day of the first module of study.
2. *A call to ministry is hard to describe to someone who does not have one.*
 1. It is intangible, an inner urge and longing, and a fire shut up in the bones; but it is more than mere ambition, choice, or human desire.
 2. Puritan pastor Matthew Henry spoke of the call as having both inward and outward components.
 1. The inner aspect is that sense of shoulds and oughts that is so hard to describe to another.
 1. For those students who genuinely have a call to ministry, they will resonate with the explanation of it and appreciate the biblical admonitions and guidelines.
 1. Jeremiah spoke of a time when he was silent regarding the burden and message of the Lord.
 1. When he was not declaring the message of the Lord, it became a fire shut up in his bones.
 2. Those who are called to ministry, but are not yet involved in ministry, describe this sensation as the inner impulse they could not silence and the reason they are in ministry.

2. The Baptist pastor Charles Spurgeon would try to dissuade men from entering the ministry when they expressed their calling to him.
 1. He later explained that if he could talk them out of their calling, then the Lord had not called them to it.
 2. God's calling is essential for making it through the hard times that inevitably come into the ministry of every pastor.
2. The external aspect of a call to ministry is seen by those around the one called.
 1. An obvious gifting for ministry, passion for souls, sacrificial service to God and others, and God's anointing for ministry is like a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden.
 2. A desire to serve in ministry that is not affirmed by believers closest to the candidate should serve as a warning flag.
3. *Biblical Examples*
 1. Some go to where He sent them:
 1. Abraham
 2. Jonah
 3. Paul
 2. Some to a special duty that would require the rest of their lives:
 1. Moses
 2. David
 3. Mary
 4. The disciples
 3. Some who had done both were called to special tasks:
 1. Moses
 2. Jonah
3. Virtually every called person in the Bible

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ABSTRACT

THE ENCROACHMENT OF SECULARISM AMONG YOUNG ECUADORIAN CUENCANO MESTIZOS

James Howard Winfrey, PhD
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. John M. Klaassen

In this dissertation I purpose to identify key indicators of contemporary secularization discovered through literary resources documenting the rise of secularism in Western culture from the Middle Ages to the present day. After identifying these key cultural markers of secularization, I demonstrate that these characteristics are present among the younger generation of Ecuadorian Cuencano mestizos between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. Furthermore, I research the effects that increasing secularization is having upon the lives of younger Cuencanos in comparison to their parents' generation. These findings are then utilized to propose a missiological paradigm to effectively equip Cuencano Christian leaders to combat the increase in secularism from a biblical worldview within the institutions of the church, the family, and the culture.

VITA

James Howard Winfrey

EDUCATION

BA, Boyce College, 2008

MDiv, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014

ThM, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020

PUBLICATIONS

“The Beauty of the Lord: Theology as Aesthetics”

Books at a Glance, Introduction (2019)

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Adjunct Faculty, Boyce College, Louisville, Kentucky, 2019-

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Mission Service Corp Missionary, North American Mission Board, Cleveland, Ohio, 2008-2010

Associate Pastor, Heritage Baptist Church, Lexington, Kentucky, 2010-2014

Associate Pastor, Simpsonville Baptist Church, Simpsonville, Kentucky 2014-2015

Interim Pastor, Christiansburg Baptist Church, Christiansburg, Kentucky, 2015-2016

Missionary, Reaching and Teaching International Ministries, Cuenca, Ecuador, 2015-2020

Regional Mobilizer, Reaching and Teaching International Ministries, Louisville, Kentucky 2020-