Persuasive Communication

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Professor

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Assignment

**Source One:** Clarke, J. W. (2002). The Decline of the Mainline Protestant Church and Planning Strategically for Renewal. Canada: Providence Theological Seminary Dissertation.

**Comment 1:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “Mainline denominations have faced serious decline for some years due to a privatized faith, which has replaced the shared faith of an earlier time; and due to the loss of a sense of purpose.”

**Essential Element:** Student-selected Keyword search terms for Essay

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This has a little of both. My original thesis addresses Mainline denominational decline by explaining that they have lost their gospel. However, this thesis states that it has privatized faith and lost its purpose. It is additive because I can address purpose and gospel as similar. However, it is variant in that it describes faith as privatized.

**Contextualization:**

This source asks the questions: Is the mainline church building community? Has faith become so privatized that it is not building a community. This community aspect of faith is a powerful resource and essential for the gospel.

**Comment 2:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “When an institution feels threatened, its energies flow into self-preservation. Many churches find themselves caught in this dilemma. When threatened by outside or, in some cases, inside forces, churches will often retreat from their spiritual direction and

take up a position of managerial maintenance.”

**Essential Element:** Developing Persuasive argument

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is certainly additive. It starts to develop part of the problem about the mainline church. The mainline church is resilient because it is reacting on a threatened basis. It is self-preserving. It is attempting to find solutions.

**Contextualization: What is the solution? It is very well known that is not a one size fits all answer to the question of mainline denominational decline. However, one area that needs to be considered is how the mainline church has worked so hard to push for social reforms and even the social gospel, it hasn’t fully understood its social separation.**

**Source Two:** Dawn, M. (1995). Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down. Grand Rapids: WM Eerdmans.

**Comment 3:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “Some ‘worship wars’ rage most nastily in (liturgical) church bodies. I call them ‘worship wars’ because discussions about how to conduct our primary services split into two fiercely polarized sides on such issues as ‘traditional’ versus ‘contemporary’ forms of worship.”

**Essential Element: Student-selected keyword search term for essay**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** Within church work there is an idea of a “golden ticket” or magic fix all. For many, it is the worship style. My thesis reveals that worship style is a distraction to true worship. Therefore, this source is additive because it reveals that it isn’t as simple as fixing the style of worship.

**Contextualization:** Sadly, the worship wars have been going on for quite some time. In fact, for a while many people said that the only growing churches are contemporary churches. Liturgical churches held to their worship standards and many thought this was the reason for the decline. It is not.

**Comment 4:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**: “In this image age in which ‘feeling is believing,’ rather than ‘thinking is believing’ or ‘being convinced by logical argument is believing.’ We don’t ask enough questions or the right kind of questions about the foundations of what we are doing.”

**Essential Element: Oral Defense of scholarly writing**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This is certainly an additive quote. It starts to build a defense by explaining that we are not asking the right questions. Instead, churches do the same thing over and over again without asking the right questions.

**Contextualization:** There is a cliché in Christian work that states, “We have always done it that way.” The question is why are we doing it that way. Sadly, many churches have moved to a more emotional model of Christianity but didn’t ask the questions about the fall out of such a movement. Instead, we have embraced this movement and not asked the appropriate questions.

**Source Three:** Fazzino, L. L. (2014). Leaving the church behind: applying a deconversion perspective to evangelical exit narratives. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 249-266.

**Comment 5:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**The macro-structural social conditions that construct and perpetuate the spiritual marketplace in the United States are important and have been understood primarily from a rationalist perspective that focuses on logical thought at the expense of non-rational factors like emotions.”

**Essential Element: Developing Persuasive Argument**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is additive. It adds to the research because it does reveal the shift away from logical thought within religion to a more emotional based thought.

**Contextualization:** Churches are moving toward pressing the emotional spectrum of faith. But, logical thinkers are rejecting this. Instead, it is causing Christianity to be limited to empty faith. So, churches are moving toward emotional based Christianity, but at what cost.

**Comment 4:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “A recent addition to terminology describing religious mobility is 'deconversion' which is conceptualized as a particular exit characterized by disaffiliations without re-affiliation. Unlike denomination

switching, deconversion occurs when individuals reject their beliefs, cease

participation, and have no foreseeable plans to re-convert. However, is this

not a form of conversion?

**Essential Element: Oral Defense of scholarly writing**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This is certainly an additive quote. This is discussing the social and psychological process of people leaving the church.

**Contextualization:** The church needs to understand how it is ostracizing people. Sadly, people are leaving but no one is studying why. No one is asking why. This study begins to ask those questions. This study gives insight into the social aspects of deconversion.

**Source Four:** Flatt, K. N., Haskell, D. M., & Burgoyne, S. (2018). Secularization and Attribution: How Mainline Protestant Clergy and Congregants Explain Church Growth and Decline. *Sociology of Religion*, 78-107.

**Comment 6:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**Growing church congregants read
the Bible and prayed more often than declining church congregants. Growing church clergy likewise read the Bible more often than declining church clergy; although they also reported praying more frequently this difference was not statistically significant. In terms of their beliefs, growing church congregants and clergy in the study were more theologically conservative than declining church congregants and clergy

**Essential Element: Student-selected Key search terms for essay**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is additive. It provides qualitative data about why churches are declining or growing.

**Contextualization:** Churches are in decline. This study starts asking pastors and congregants why.

**Comment 7:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “Most congregants cited the pressures of modem life—competition from other Sunday activities, busyness, affluence, and the like—as reasons for declining church membership and

attendance.

**Essential Element: Oral Defense of scholarly writing**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This is additive. One of my arguments is that the church has lost its influence. This is just one example of the church losing its influence. There are other Sunday activities.

**Contextualization:** The church has lost its influence. This started with blue laws, but now there are more options available. Why has the church become less attractive? Why is the church losing its influence. These are valuable questions that deserve further research.

**Source Four:** Flatt, K. N., Haskell, D. M., & Burgoyne, S. (2018). Secularization and Attribution: How Mainline Protestant Clergy and Congregants Explain Church Growth and Decline. *Sociology of Religion*, 78-107.

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**Essential Element: Student-selected Key search terms for essay**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is additive. It provides qualitative data about why churches are declining or growing.

**Contextualization:** Churches are in decline. This study starts asking pastors and congregants why.

**Comment 7:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “As can be seen in Tables 1 and 2, most congregants cited the pressures of modem life—competition from other Sunday activities, busyness, affluence, and the like—as reasons for declining church membership and

attendance.”

**Essential Element: Oral Defense of scholarly writing**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This is additive. One of my arguments is that the church has lost its influence. This is just one example of the church losing its influence. There are other Sunday activities.

**Contextualization:** The church has lost its influence. This started with blue laws, but now there are more options available. Why has the church become less attractive? Why is the church losing its influence. These are valuable questions that deserve further research.

**Source Five:** Kronen, J., & Reitan, E. H. (2022). Annihilation or salvation?: A philosophical case for preferring universalism to annihilationism. *Religious Studies*, 138-161.

**Comment 8:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**for every version of the doctrine of eternal hell (or ‘hellism, there is a version of the doctrine of universal salvation (‘universalism’) that, granted traditional Christian teachings, is more philosophically defensible.”

**Essential Element: Student-selected Key search terms for essay**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is variant. I am arguing that universalism is part of the “lost gospel” that mainline protestant churches have lost.

**Contextualization:** Mainline denominational churches are trying to expand their audience. They are moving away from condemnation and trying to show love in every aspect of what they do. Therefore, they try to remove aspects of hell and damnation.

**Comment 9:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “Benevolent love, in contrast, is the love that does not wait on worth. If complacent love respects value, benevolent love bestows it – giving what is good for a recipient to them regardless of what they deserve.”

**Essential Element: Student-selected word search terms for essay**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This is variant. This article makes the plea that God’s love is benevolent and doesn’t wait on humanity to “accept” or become holy, through whatever means, even if that mean is Jesus.

**Contextualization: The church is trying to be nice. It is trying to make everyone happy. Voddie Baucham has mentioned in several of his videos, that the 11th commandment is “You shall be nice” (citation needed). However, can wrath and judgment be a part of love? Is it nice to not tell about standards?**

**Source Six:** Møller, J. (2019). Bringing the Church Back In: Ecclesiastical Influences on the Rise of Europe. *Politics and Religion*, 213-226.

**Comment 8:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**The Church was the main locale in which the development of representation, consent, and early bureaucratic institutions took place, and it contributed to creating, integrating, and maintaining the European multistate system. This note demonstrates that current scholarship has failed to factor in ecclesiastical influences and it shows how these gaps can be filled by a more careful reading of prior historical scholarship.”

**Essential Element: Student-selected Key search terms for essay**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is variant. I am arguing that the church ha lost its influence. However, Møller argues that the church is back on the rise, when one considers the history of all that is involved.

**Contextualization:** Møller is not arguing that churches in England have influence now. However, he explains how the remnant of its prior influence still exists today.

**Comment 9**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “I have quoted at length to hammer home a simple point: political and economic developments as well as state-building in Europe before 1500 A.D. cannot be understood without reference to ecclesiastical infrastmcture and the religious teaching of the church.”

**Essential Element: Student-selected word search terms for essay**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This is variant. It argues that the world needs to understand the history and influence of the church over history. This influence continues to exist.

**Contextualization:** The church is resilient. It has lasted for many years. It is trying to continue in various ways. However, it still leans on its old influence. It still relies on its old ways.

**Source seven:** Onyeukaziri, J. N. (2024). Artificial Intelligence and an Anthropological Ethics of Work: Implications on the Social Teaching of the Church. *Religions*, 1-11.

**Comment 10:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**The Church, for the believers, is the community of the people of God established by Christ Jesus in this world, living under the inspiration, power, and fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Being in the world, the members of the Church, like every human being, are rational and social beings; thus, they interact and engage within the cultural, social, and economic realities of the societies and nations where they exist.”

**Essential Element: Persuasive writing techniques**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is additive. It sets the foundation of what the church is. It is a community of human beings. These human beings are both rational and social.

**Contextualization:** The church is moving away from the rational and social aspects of humanity and moving toward the emotional.

**Comment 11**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**The social and moral teachings of the Church, like every other social and moral discourse, are intrinsically connected. The intrinsic connection of the social and moral teachings of the Church is grounded in the fact that both concern the human person; that is to say, both are discussed with a personalistic and anthropological intent.”

**Essential Element: Developing Persuasive Argument**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This is additive. It adds to my argument that the church needs to address the social concerns of a human person.

**Contextualization:** There are social problems within the world that the church, extending God’s kingdom, can address. This would increase its influence.

**Source eight:** Perrin, R. D., Kennedy, P., & Miller, D. E. (1997). Examining the Sources of Conservative Church Growth: Where Are the New Evangelical Movements Getting their Numbers? *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,*, 71-80.

**Comment 12:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**They estimated that approximately 70% of
membership additions are reaffiliates (i.e., switchers who were already Christians when they joined the church), 20% are offspring, and 10% are proselytes.”

**Essential Element: Persuasive writing techniques**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This quote is additive. I am arguing that the church is losing its influence. Conservative churches continue to claim that they are growing, but this study reveals that it isn’t gaining new people. Its growth is largely member swaps.

**Contextualization:** The church is losing its influence. It is ignoring social problems, in an attempt to try to be nice, and isn’t making a lasting impact on people’s lives anymore.

**Thesis Statement:** Even though mainline churches are resilient, and they have stood the test of time, main line churches have lost their gospel evidenced by its massive decline across denominational lines and lack of interest in social and political spheres.

1. The mainline denominational church has lost its gospel.
	1. The church continues to follow emotional and political fads, attempting to gain emotional draw.
		1. “In this image age in which ‘feeling is believing,’ rather than ‘thinking is believing’ or ‘being convinced by logical argument is believing.’ We don’t ask enough questions or the right kind of questions about the foundations of what we are doing.”
		2. “**“**The macro-structural social conditions that construct and perpetuate the spiritual marketplace in the United States are important and have been understood primarily from a rationalist perspective that focuses on logical thought at the expense of non-rational factors like emotions.”
	2. The church has moved to a universalist theology of the gospel.
		1. It is attempting to be nice.
		2. It wants to show God’s love.
2. This lost gospel is evidenced by the mainline church decline across denominational lines.
	1. “They estimated that approximately 70% of membership additions are reaffiliates (i.e., switchers who were already Christians when they joined the church), 20% are offspring, and 10% are proselytes.”
	2. The church isn’t reaching new people. A simple google search will reveal all the declining trends among churches across any denomination.
3. This lost gospel is evidenced by the mainline church’s decline in influence in both social and political spheres.
	1. Faith is considered foolish. Many believe it is for those who aren’t thinking.
		1. “The Church, for the believers, is the community of the people of God established by Christ Jesus in this world, living under the inspiration, power, and fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Being in the world, the members of the Church, like every human being, are rational and social beings; thus, they interact and engage within the cultural, social, and economic realities of the societies and nations where they exist.”
	2. The church is losing in influence to other competing factors.
		1. “Most congregants cited the pressures of modem life—competition from other Sunday activities, busyness, affluence, and the like—as reasons for declining church membership and attendance.”
4. This is not to say that the mainline church isn’t resilient and trying to fix the problem.
	1. The mainline church has had influence throughout history. Much of that history still influences modern society.
		1. “The Church was the main locale in which the development of representation, consent, and early bureaucratic institutions took place, and it contributed to creating, integrating, and maintaining the European multistate system.”
	2. The mainline church still exists. It isn’t dead. In fact, it is being transformed.
		1. All churches are declining due to the information age. However, the church is in the middle of a transition, this includes the conservative churches as well.
			1. “They estimated that approximately 70% of
			membership additions are reaffiliates (i.e., switchers who were already Christians when they joined the church), 20% are offspring, and 10% are proselytes.”
5. Furthermore, the church has stood the test of time.
	1. The church has always been part of history. But, it included itself in the social aspects of the world. Now, it isn’t.
		1. **“**The social and moral teachings of the Church, like every other social and moral discourse, are intrinsically connected. The intrinsic connection of the social and moral teachings of the Church is grounded in the fact that both concern the human person; that is to say, both are discussed with a personalistic and anthropological intent.”
6. The gospel church has lost its way by losing its gospel. As contrary as it sounds, it is focused on a false love.
	1. Benevolent love, in contrast, is the love that does not wait on worth. If complacent love respects value, benevolent love bestows it – giving what is good for a recipient to them regardless of what they deserve.”
	2. Jesus said to Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ that upon this rock he will build his church.
		1. That rock is Peter’s confession
		2. That confession, the gates of hell cannot prevail.
	3. The church has moved away from that gospel. Instead, it moves toward a universalist gospel trying to make everyone happy.
		1. This has led to its ultimate decline.

**Works Cited**

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