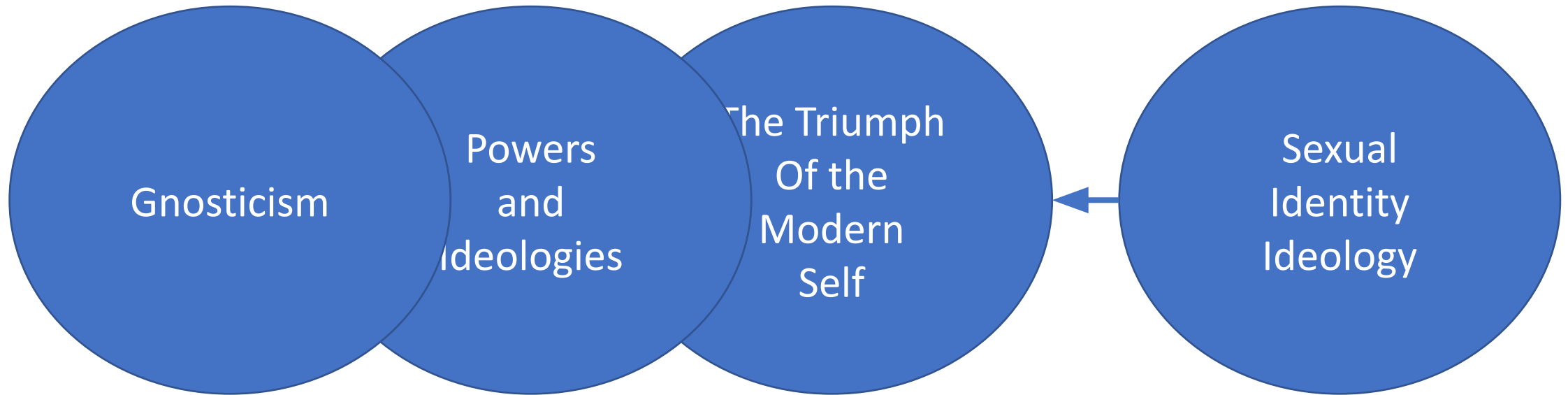


Culturally relevant issues

The sexual identity ideology

Framework, no policies

Architecture



The kingdom of God

1. The divine name **Yahweh** is key to understanding the essence of the kingdom of God. The kingdom comes when Yahweh becomes present, or intervenes to defeat the powers that hold Israel in bondage and liberates his people, becoming their conquering king in the process.
2. The becoming present of Yahweh takes place through his **manifest presence**. Unlike ANE deities, which are either conflated with nature, or connected with spirits (invisible entities), Yahweh is manifest in the fire and cloud, the Shekinah, or “weight” . He becomes visible to the senses.
3. This difference is famously dramatized in the story of **Elijah and the prophets of Baal**.
4. This manifest presence of Yahweh reaches its climax in **the incarnation**. In Jesus, God comes amongst us. John, who is likely engaging in an early form of anti-Gnostic apologetic, emphasises the physical reality: “The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:2-3).
5. Within the story of Jesus the climax of the revelation of the kingdom is **the bodily resurrection**. The gospel writers clearly emphasise the physical reality, and transcendence, of his body, which is the prototype of the resurrection of all believers.

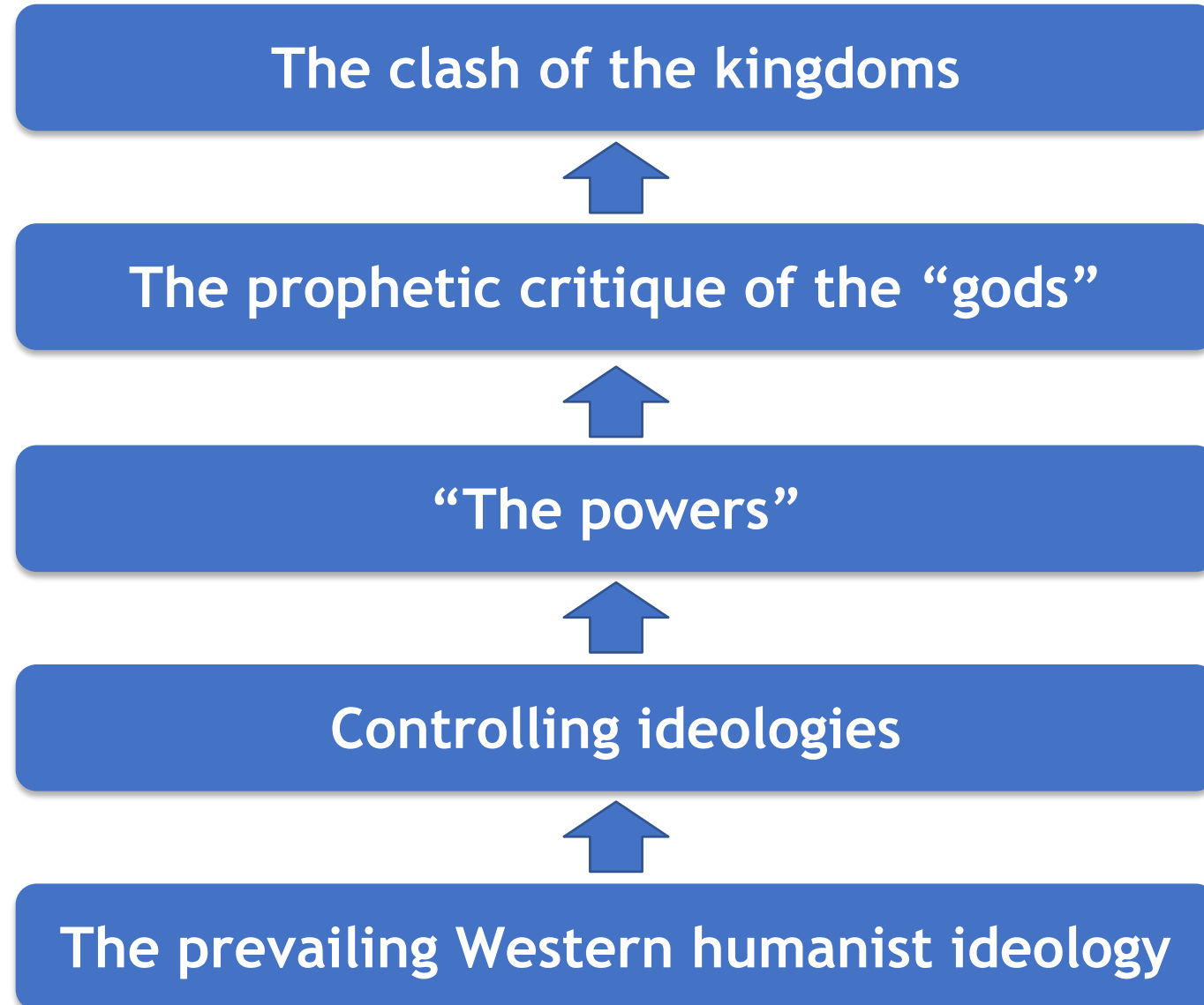
Sources I will be using

1. Derek Morpheu, *South Africa: The Powers Behind* (1989).
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4. The appendix on “The Powers” in Derek Morpheu, *Demonstrating the Kingdom* (2019).
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6. N. T. Wright, *Creation, Power and Truth: The Gospel in a world of cultural confusion* (2013).
7. Mark Sayers, *Disappearing Church: From Cultural Relevance to Gospel Resilience* (2016).
8. Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism and the road to sexual revolution* (2020).
9. Abigail Shrier, *Irreversible Damage: Teenage Girls and the Transgender Craze* (2020).

Our challenge today

1. How to not be cowered into silence.
2. Doing better than being anti “Woke”.
3. Helping our parents and young adults navigate the cultural pressures.

The required trajectory



Controlling ideologies

1. There are many beliefs, worldviews and ideologies in the history of ideas. But some, at certain times, become so prevailing that whole civilizations, cultures and populations become captured by them.
2. When this happens, humanity is always subjected to oppression.
3. The classic cases in the 20th century were Fascism and Communism.
4. Apartheid in South Africa was a version of German Fascism.
5. To this day, the Indian caste system oppresses millions of Dalits (untouchables).
6. Putin's "calling" to be a new Peter The Great and restore mother Russia is an old/new one.
7. Controlling ideologies have certain typical characteristics.

Their characteristics

1. They always have a spiritual base.
2. The “powers” or authorities in society not only preach their ideology, but enforce and impose it on the population. They engage in some form of social engineering.
3. Tolerance is not enough. There must be conformity. Conformity is established through control of the means of indoctrination (religion, education, media).
4. Most of the population are unable to think outside the ideology.
5. Those who resist experience various forms of censure, persecution, or ridicule.
6. The divine image in humanity is seriously damaged. Humans suffer

The current Western ideology evidences many of these

Simplistic cultural resistance, like being non “woke” will not help

The prophetic critique of the “gods”

1. The Genesis creation narrative.
2. The Exodus defeat of the gods. Royal, covenant, monotheism.
3. Psalm 82.

Psalm 82

God presides in the great assembly/divine council; he renders judgment among the ‘gods’:

How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

The “gods” know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

I said, “You are ‘gods’; you are all sons of the Most High.” But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler.

Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance.

The prophetic critique of the “gods”

1. The Genesis creation narrative.
2. The Exodus defeat of the gods. Royal, covenant, monotheism.
3. Psalm 82.
4. Isaiah’s mockery of the gods.
5. Daniel’s exposure of the “powers” of Babylon and Medo-Persia.
6. Jesus clash with the various “authorities”. The visible/invisible correlation.
7. John’s revelation of the dragon, the harlot and the beast.

8.

Not just the good news of the kingdom

Also debunking alternative narratives

Jesus

1. The clashes between Jesus and his opponents were really a clash between the rule of God and the powers of darkness.
2. The entire religious system of the Pharisees, Scribes and Temple Priests is located under the power of Satan. Jesus battles visible and invisible powers as the same reality.
3. His exorcisms are not simply one-on-one battles with individual demonic powers. Behind them is a system of darkness, now confronted by the kingdom of God.
4. The ultimate cosmic battle has various proxies operating at different levels.

The Revelation of John

1. The Dragon is Satan.
2. The Beast is the Roman Empire, inhabited by the Dragon.
3. The harlot is the city of Rome.
4. The False Prophet is the Roman emperor cult operating as a kind of propaganda agency.
5. The Roman system included the right to trade and do business.

A spiritual/religious, socio-political economic combo = “the world”

This entire system makes war on the saints

The powers are not inherently evil. They are God-ordained (Romans 13)

Paul

1. The gods of the nations were always the object of forms of worship that entrenched those in power, or the militia that fought for power.

2. Paul associates spiritual conflict with the battle for ideas:

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

3. The “rulers and authorities” that Christ triumphed over (Colossians 2:15) relate in some way to the “*stoicheia*” or “elements” that captivate the mind **through philosophies** (2:8).

4. The powers exercise their control over humanity through controlling ideas.

5. One of those is gnosis,

Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called **knowledge (*gnosis*)** which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the

Gnosticism and Sexuality

N. T. Wright: *Creation, Power and Truth*

We live, I suggest, in a world characterized by certain types of Gnosticism (4).

At the individual level, the great controlling myth of our time has been the belief that within each of us there is a real, inner, private 'self', long buried beneath layers of socialization and attempted cultural and religious control, and needing to be rediscovered if we are to live authentic lives (9).

... a quite different narrative, that of the Gnosticism which declares that the outer world, both the wider world of society and the church and the outward world of my physical body, are irrelevant and indeed misleading, and that I must find within myself the spark of life and truth by which to reorder my whole existence (10).

N. T. Wright: *Creation, Power and Truth*

If the outside world, including my own body and its male or female particularity, are not the good creation of a good and wise God, but rather the inessentials made by a blind and stupid creator, and if instead my inner 'experience' is what really counts, then I not only can but must be true to the spark of light, and indeed of desire, which I find most deeply within myself, even if it goes contrary to the apparent order of creation, the norms of traditional society, and the teaching of the Bible and the church (12).

The implicit Gnosticism of our culture has encouraged people to look for the park of sexual impulse or excitement, and conclude that this 'identity' is the thing which then defines them and legitimates whatever behaviour it urges (32).