

Digital Evangelism Conference 2020

Online Etiquette: Dr. Cyril Gary Jenkins, Phd

Blurb for the presentation “The Temptation of the Combox.”

Frequently, when we encounter balderdash, heresy, lunacy, invincible ignorance, and just plain wrong-headedness on the internet, our bounden duty is obviously to stand up for truth and to smite these scurrilous rogues with the edge of the proverbial sword of Truth. Yet we should practice a great deal of constraint, and learn the virtues of deleting comments before we hit ‘enter’. Perhaps we have read the comment wrong, or perhaps our protagonists have read the comment wrong and reflexively, thoughtlessly said something. Such things are but the beginning of problems when entering into debate on the web. We have to realize that often the medium (Facebook, twitter, comment boxes) distort to an amazing degree what we read and often what we say. In this regard, the medium both is and isn’t the message. Ultimately, real debate demands a lot of work. Think of how long the councils ran in the early church. The Leipzig disputation between Luther and Eck ran days, as did the Lincoln-Douglas debates. We think we can address issues with memes and snide remarks. Persuasion is an art that takes a lot of time. Thus to be effective we have to ask questions, lots of them, to our interlocutors: “Did you mean to say this?” “What underlies your thinking in using these words as opposed to those words?” “Are you speaking of ends, or means?” The best dialogues are ones where you don’t have to assert anything but get your auditors to come to your conclusion (e.g., read some Plato!). By asking questions, you remove yourself from the heat of the moment, place the onus on your putative opponent to be more precise, and also allows you to be in the proper frame of mind to pray while you are at the same time typing. The Pandora’s box that is the internet is one we are opening every day, but unlike Hesiod’s tale, it is one we can also close by actually praying about what it is we are doing in our discussions and comments before we hit “enter”.

Resource link for my talk.

When Trolls Attack

https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/areopagus/when_trolls_attack_christians_in_social_medi

Save us from the Gnostic Cannibals

https://www.ancientfaith.com/specials/ancient_faith_writers_and_podcasters_conference_2019/deliver_us_from_gnostic_cannibals

Humility, the Sine Qua Non of Scholarship

<https://luxchristi.wordpress.com/2018/06/14/humility-a-sine-qua-non-of-scholarship/>

Bio: Dr. Cyril Gary Jenkins (PhD, Rutgers 1999) is currently the Van Gorden Chair in History at Eastern University, the Director of the St. Basil Center for Orthodox Thought and Culture, CEO (pro tempore) of the St. Constantine School of the Lehigh Valley, author/editor of four books and the author of over a hundred essays, book chapters, and reviews. An Orthodox Christian since 2000, he is a member of St. Paul Orthodox Church, Emmaus, PA, and blogs at luxchristi.wordpress.com.